

Bernadette Coelho appointed New Bedford High School Headmaster

Superintendent Pia Durkin has appointed Bernadette Coelho as Headmaster of New Bedford High School following a three-tiered interview and selection process that yielded highly qualified candidates from across the country.



Ms. Coelho is an experienced NBHS administrator, and has worked at the high school since 2006 – as acting Headmaster since January and before that as the Registration and Pathways Administrator. In that role, she served as head of all guidance counselors, school adjustment counselors, graduation facilitators and attendance officers.

She also co-chaired the School Redesign Team at New Bedford High School. Before serving as Registration and Pathways Administrator, Ms. Coelho was the lead graduation facilitator and dropout prevention specialist at New Bedford High.

“I am confident that Ms. Coelho is truly the right person at the right time to lead New Bedford High, and her impressive history at the high school is a testament to her passion for our students,” said Superintendent Durkin. “She is a dedicated and respected leader who is committed to the students of New Bedford High. Her work for nearly a decade in improving graduation and decreasing the dropout rate continues to show

real results. Ms. Coelho has the confidence of the staff and the community.”

New Bedford High School’s graduation rate for 2013-14 was reported in January by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to be 70.3 percent for the school’s adjusted four-year cohort, the highest since the state began recording it in 2006. The dropout rate has steadily declined under Ms. Coelho’s leadership, from a high of 7.4 percent in 2007-08 to 3.5 percent in 2013-14.

“I look forward to ensuring excellent teaching and learning for all our students. I know with the hard work and dedication of the staff, we will return New Bedford High School to a flagship that the entire community will be proud of,” said Ms. Coelho. “I appreciate the confidence of Dr. Durkin as well as the school community as I continue to lead our school.”

In addition to the state licensure for school principal, Ms. Coelho holds a Master’s degree (M.Ed.) in Educational Leadership from American International College in Springfield and a bachelor’s degree from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. She has also undergone training by the National Institute for School Leadership. Before her career in education, Ms. Coelho served as a public relations director and a news reporter.

She has served on the board of directors, including as president, of Coastline Elderly Service, as well as on the New England Association of Schools and Colleges Reaccreditation Local Stakeholder Group, the NBHS School Redesign Team, the NBHS Literacy Committee and the NBHS Wellness Committee.