FREE weekly strings programs offered to grade 5-8 students

Students may register through the beginning of March

New Bedford Public Schools will offer free, weekly group lessons and free loaner instruments for interested students in grades 5 through 8.

The free classes and loaner instruments were made possible through a partnership between New Bedford Public Schools and SouthCoast Connected, a local nonprofit. SouthCoast Connected funded the purchase of 26 string instruments.

"My husband Gerry and I are very excited about expanding our partnership with the NBMS from after-school athletics to include music," said Colleen McGee Kavanaugh, co-founder of SouthCoast Connected. "The string instrument program continues our mission to encourage kids to stay in school."

All lessons and instruments are free for NBPS students who commit to the program.

Superintendent of Schools Pia Durkin said, "The skills used in learning an instrument build passion and persistence for

learning, in addition to providing an opportunity to excel in an area that many of our children may not have believed could be available to them. This is another example of the New Bedford community contributing to the building blocks that create an excellent school system."

"Rebuilding our string instrument program is one of the last pieces we need as we build an excellent music program," said Kerri Quinlan-Zhou, director of fine arts for New Bedford Public Schools. "Research shows that students who play an instrument do better in school and are more engaged overall. We want to make sure that our students have this opportunity to succeed."

Lessons will be given at all three middle schools after-school. Students in grades 5 through 8 may register through the beginning of March.

Normandin's strings classes are Thursdays from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Keith's are Mondays or Thursdays from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. Roosevelt's classes are Fridays from 2:45 p.m. to 3:45 p.m., and 3:15 to 4:15 p.m. on Wednesdays at Roosevelt with a Portuguese and Spanish speaking instructor.