

School Resource Officers presence in New Bedford Public Schools to continue

School Resource Officers will continue to have a role in New Bedford Public Schools, Superintendent Thomas Anderson announced this evening at the July 12 meeting of the New Bedford School Committee.

After more than a year of evaluating the SRO program, he arrived at his decision, he said, after careful review of the district's disciplinary practices, which was conducted by the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy, a Boston-based nonprofit. "Based on the extensive review conducted by the district and the Rennie Center, I have concluded that at this time NBPS will retain the School Resource Officer program at multiple schools within the district," Superintendent Anderson stated.

The announcement comes after almost 14 months of review that initially began with revising the MOU, and then moved to working groups and online surveys with perspectives from student, staff and community input through virtual meetings.

New Bedford Public Schools' series of 'Community Conversations' began in October focused on the mission and efficacy of the district's longstanding School Resource Officer Program. Virtual discussions took place for students (Oct. 7), staff (Oct. 13), and the public (Oct. 14) to gather feedback, personal experience and public perceptions of the SRO program.

Community input continued in November with a virtual public share-out session and the establishment of working groups. The Rennie Center study was initiated early in 2021 in order to coalesce district findings through an independent lens.

Superintendent Anderson stated, "The time and resources invested in this process was to ensure this decision was arrived at through a very inclusive process... to allow all the thoughts and focal points to be carefully considered. I wanted to allow time for people to exhaust their thoughts. As I've said before, this is a very sensitive topic to me in my role as superintendent and personally. The focus on bringing people together that offered varying perspectives was critical in this review.

Continuous dialogue must always be part of how we work to improve our schools and how we grow as a community in New Bedford and across our country. I look forward to New Bedford having a program that can be emulated by other districts."