



NEW BEDFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
PAUL RODRIGUES ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
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ANDREW O'LEARY
SUPERINTENDENT

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DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT

December 3, 2024

Dear Committee Members,

I am looking forward to convening with you and discussing capital facility improvements at our December meeting.

Together, the city and district are charged with maintaining, improving, and replacing one of the oldest stocks of school buildings in the Commonwealth, the educational and occupational environment for 13,000 students and over 2,000 staff. Our students shouldn't have to compromise because of where they are. Our teachers shouldn't have to compromise because of where they work.

Through my two decades working with and within our buildings, it became abundantly clear that boilers, windows, doors, plumbing, electrical, security, and mechanical systems required significant updates or replacement. Prior to 2015, there were several plans and promises, but little meaningful change. There's a lot of talk about master plans for school construction, but what was truly needed was a strong internal team with a flexible strategy.

I am pleased to note that we are approaching a decade of record investments in our buildings. We have built a strong facility, finance, and capital planning team and crafted an exciting financing model that combines city, federal, and state dollars. We have opened a new building, replaced roofs and windows, redesigned class and office spaces to meet modern standards, and overhauled outdated systems—all to create the learning spaces our students deserve.

While we can be proud of our progress, we remain constrained by the level of available funding and the limited and irregular opportunities to support school construction and renovation. For example, we have exhaustively documented how difficult it is for New Bedford Public Schools to obtain an on-ramp to the Massachusetts School Building Authority's grants. Counterintuitively, vocational and charter schools in New Bedford and statewide have easier access to flexible debt financing, a mostly unnoticed conflict with the promise of true educational equity.

While state and federal partners can and should do more, the MSBA's New Construction and Accelerated Repair Programs remain our most effective pathways. These programs have been a lifeline to modernize our schools, but our needs demand even more. Our attached report maps out the most effective means to apply MSBA opportunities in the coming decade.

I look forward to sharing more at the meeting and working with you to ensure that our facilities meet the needs of future generations.

Sincerely,

Andrew O'Leary, Superintendent of New Bedford Public Schools

