

NEW BEDFORD HIGH SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

READINESS SCHOOL PROPOSAL

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ABSTRACT: The New Bedford High School Leadership Academy is an autonomous small learning community set within a comprehensive, urban high school. Begun as an extension of the school's larger restructuring efforts, the academy seeks to develop flexibility and autonomy in the areas of curriculum, budget, scheduling, staffing and other district policies as required by the DESE's Readiness Advantage School initiative. The academy demonstrates a thematic approach focused on leadership skills and values to improve learning for many of the school's 'at risk' students. The design work completed this summer will be compiled into a written proposal submitted to the DESE by September 15th for approval. Preparation for September 2010 implementation will begin in the 2009-2010 school year as capacity-building, stakeholder engagement, curriculum writing, scheduling, and more, takes place.

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1. VISION AND GOALS

Vision: The vision for New Bedford Public School's students, as stated in the district's newly adopted Three Year Strategic Plan reads as follows, "*As whaler's oil provided light to the world, so shall New Bedford students shine with academic excellence.*" This vision for the students of New Bedford is grounded in the city's proud history as the world's richest whaling port during the 19th century. For most of that century, the whale oil gathered by New Bedford Whalers literally fueled lamps that brought light to overcome darkness across the continents. This powerful metaphor extends to our vision for the students of New Bedford's public schools, whose academic prowess will enable them to enlighten the world through contributions to fields such as science, medicine, and the arts, to mention only a few.

The focus of the Strategic Plan is to identify and meet the needs of all learners by focusing on 21st Century curriculum and skills. Toward this end, the district recognizes the need to restructure the existing 2,800-student comprehensive high school into smaller learning communities designed to provide meaningful learning experiences through innovative curriculum and instruction for students and to measure and monitor learning through multiple assessment strategies and a comprehensive accountability system.

Rationale: As is the case in many comprehensive urban high schools, the existing New Bedford High School is plagued by issues of under-achieving students, low attendance and dropout rates in excess of 12%. To overcome the institutional nature of the many roadblocks that have led to this state, a complete re-invention and break with past policies, structures, and practices is required. The autonomies inherent within a Readiness Advantage School model provide excellent vehicles for deep, meaningful change.

Specifically, the Readiness Advantage School structure will provide the autonomies and support to achieve the goals of the district Strategic Plan and Vision in four critical areas: 1) empowerment of teacher-leaders vs. a top-down, hierarchical administrative/management/governance structure; 2) centers of learning for the "whole child"

with innovative curriculum (e.g., standards-based, project based, thematic, real-world) and teaching (e.g., inquiry, creative and critical thinking) vs. the teacher-centered model focused on the traditional textbook and lecture-heavy instruction; 3) engagement, motivation, achievement, and college readiness for all students vs. a continued high drop-out rate; 4) engagement and development of student leaders for school and community leadership, civic engagement, business entrepreneurialism, educational leadership, and more.

Leadership Academy Vision: In the spring of 2009, the Restructuring Committee developed a shared vision for the high school that would guide decisions, create and sustain common values, and establish long-term objectives. We stated that the vision of New Bedford High School is to provide a supportive and enriching environment in order for all students to prepare themselves with the skills necessary to succeed in the 21st century. Building on this process and content, the summer design team developed a vision for our proposed Readiness Advantage School model. We believe strongly that the vision of the New Bedford High School Leadership Academy is to provide a holistic and innovative approach to learning, preparing scholars to lead in the 21st century.

2. DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN

The Readiness Schools' Initiative and the New Bedford Public Schools Three Year Strategic Plan are aligned in their overall goals to improve student achievement and school performance. The Strategic Plan for the district sets a forward-looking goal for leading students to 21st Century academic success. It places heavy emphasis on innovative instructional practices while calling for the inclusion of the arts as key components to student achievement. Throughout the plan, elements that refer to thematic instruction, focus on 21st Century skills, provide standards-based strategies, and support high order thinking are specified. The Three Year Strategic Plan explicitly lists dozens of key components that align specifically with the recommendations of the Readiness School proposal (see Appendix A).

To achieve the Strategic Plan, teacher-leaders have been engaged and empowered. Like most educational communities, many teachers and administrators have spent years working in a system where top-down decision making and textbook-centered, lecture-driven strategies is the norm for delivering curriculum. Clearly, a movement toward empowered and autonomous learning communities is an essential step in the implementation of student-driven curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The autonomies explicitly cited in the Readiness School Planning RFP are essential to the creation of truly empowered, teacher-led Professional Learning Communities; and the vigorous presence of these PLCs is the only practical way for the major paradigm shift from traditional instruction to a dynamic differentiated instructional environment to occur.

3. STATEMENT OF INTENT

Per signed assurances, the New Bedford Public School District is committed to the development of one or more Readiness Schools as part of the restructuring of our comprehensive high school.

4. READINESS CONVERSION CAPACITY

On a district level, the Central Administration's three-year Strategic Plan outlines many of the initiatives that our Readiness School seeks to implement. The impulse to transform New Bedford High School has grown not only from this bold push, but also from a rise in alarming data concerning student attendance, dropouts, failures and discipline incidents. Long term objectives within the district have also created opportunities for growth and initiative. Our district's partnership for the last three years with the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) has been instrumental in building the instructional leadership capacity necessary for district-wide and teacher-led change by training all administrators and curriculum directors, as well as a third cohort of engaged, proactive teachers. Many of these teachers have become valuable members of our Restructuring Committee and on-site advocates for thematic academies, standards-based instruction, common planning time, student-teacher advisors, and more. Our school and district has also integrated dropout prevention programs into many administrative and faculty programs. For many years, the NBHS faculty has been trained in the RISE (Revitalizing Instruction for Students and Education) program, empowering teachers to better educate all students (focusing on special

education) and provide mastery and meaning to instruction and assessment. Both of these initiatives work to increase instructional leadership capacity necessary for the school to realize its potential to change.

To make this possible, the Restructuring Committee was formed in the fall of 2008 by teachers, parents, students, community members and the administration. We were charged with assessing needs and creating restructuring recommendations for the incoming Superintendent in July of 2009. Both of these tasks were accomplished by the end of the school year in June 2009. We administered a survey of 2000 + students and almost 200 faculty on issues from classroom instructional practices, school culture, technology, family involvement, student development, leadership and professional development and post-secondary and extra-curricular activities. Our recommendations to the Superintendent included research and suggestions on smaller learning communities, scheduling implications, instruction and assessment, professional development, business and community engagement, contract issues and funding needs.

When we returned in the fall of 2009, the committee began working on a scheduling plan for incremental movement from block scheduling as well as larger issues implied in overall restructuring. In December 2009, the Superintendent recommended a more comprehensive approach to our work, from addressing the schedule change to exploring complete restructuring of our high school. We began simultaneously, 1) exploring research on different large urban high school transformation efforts around the country, 2) conducting site-visits to local models such as Boston Pilot Schools and Lawrence High School's thematic academies, 3) examining the data from our surveys (described above) done in March 2008, 4) creating a vision statement for our long term objectives and 5) beginning work necessary to draft a strategic plan before the end of this current school year, in order that we may begin the design phase of our efforts during the 2009-2010 academic year.

Towards the end of June 2009, members of the Restructuring Committee agreed that the most effective way to push forward institutional and attitudinal change necessary for our school to build capacity for change in September 2009 was to demonstrate various models of autonomous academies. Two groups emerged and took initiative. The focus of the first group was to design and implement an autonomous Leadership Academy for some of our most severe at-risk students while the second group created a Technology Academy within the school's existing facility and schedule. Professional development training on September 1st will provide faculty with a briefing on current restructuring efforts, including the proposals for Readiness Advantage Schools. Conversations among major stakeholders (the local teacher's union and School Committee) have also been held, building context for partnerships to grow.

5. AREAS OF FLEXIBILITY AND AUTONOMY

Autonomies created by the Readiness Advantage School model provide real opportunity for authentic innovation. New policies and processes, however, must be created to guide and direct the autonomies listed below. The governing council will hold this responsibility. Freed from existing school and district policies, the New Bedford High School Leadership Academy proposes to provide advanced learning to many of our most severe 'at risk' students, while demonstrating how autonomous small learning communities can effectively transform a school.

5.1 Curriculum Autonomy – The New Bedford High School Leadership Academy will design and implement thematically-based, holistic, innovative strategies to instruction and learning in order to meet the individual learning needs of each student. It will allow for more relevant acquisition and application of content across disciplines using an integrated, inquiry-based, and constructivist approach to learning. Such an approach builds a foundation for higher level, critical thinking and real-world problem solving, not simply the retention of content. It also reinforces all of the goals of 21st century learning central to the academy's vision, such as collaborative networking, leading by influence, initiative and entrepreneurship, gathering and analyzing information, and more. Teachers will adopt the role of a facilitator of individual, differentiated instruction rather than the disseminator of content-specific learning to the class as a whole. As students advance in grade, they will move in a continuum from teacher-directed to student-directed

learning, reinforcing leadership values and skills as well as sustaining individual ownership of the learning process. Power standards will guide not only the delivery of content, but also the measuring of individual and group student performance skills. Students will measure content (and these skills) through the use of portfolios, assessed by a panel of peers, teachers and parents. As a whole, the curriculum will support individual graduation plans for all students, determining learning needs as well as student-specific, data-driven objectives. Student-chosen thematic strands (or 'majors') will also supplement the curriculum by focusing student learning on leadership in specific fields, such as law and criminal justice, education, business, politics, health, and community-activism.

- 5.2 Budget Autonomy** – The New Bedford High School Leadership Academy will be budgeted using a weighted per pupil average. While the formula for constructing the actual academy budget will be drawn from models currently in use, we anticipated that the formula will be constructed first by using fiscal year data to determine average per-pupil expenditures for the district for FY 2010. Then we will develop methodology for adjusting per-pupil costs to include additional services (SPED, ELL, etc). We will then construct a model that assigns a value of 1.0 to a general education student without additional costs for services related to needs. Finally, we will build budget request using a formula such as the following:

$$\text{Sample Budget Request} = (n1 * PPE) + (n2 * 1.X * PPE) + (n3 * 1.Y * PPE)...$$

Where n1 is the number of general education students, n2 is the number of students with one additional needs-based additional cost (X) and n3 is the number of students with two additional needs-based additional costs(Y). PPE is the per pupil expenditure for the district projected for FY 2011. Once the budget total is finalized, the governing board will convene a committee of stakeholders who will determine the allocation of budget to meet the needs of the students in the Leadership Academy (salaries, resources, building costs, etc.). The driving force behind budget allocation will be to achieve the vision by supporting the curricular and instructional needs of the individual classrooms within the academy.

- 5.3 Staffing Autonomy** – Whether in the data of national research or the anecdotes of individual students, the teacher in the classroom matters more than any other factor influencing a child's education. In our academy, the selection of teachers will be based on an open enrollment, collaborative, and transparent process. Job descriptions will be drafted by stakeholders (parents, teacher's union, administration, students, and other teachers) during the design phase, aligning the academy's vision and teaching philosophy with specific and clear expectations for applicants. The interview process will involve a screening panel representing stakeholders. The interview process will also include an open rubric guided by weighted criteria as well as answers to specific ethical scenarios.

Students will be incrementally enrolled over a four year process. Each year, the academy will admit 125 new and repeating freshmen. Our initial recommendation is that 10-12 teachers along with 3-4 support staff would create an effective ratio of 15:1 per 125 students, growing with each subsequent year, resulting in a total staff of 45-55 members and 500 students.

- 5.4 Scheduling Autonomy** – Building time to support the learning of 21st century skills, development of professional learning communities, and engagement of key stakeholders is a priority of the academy's schedule. To that end, the creation of common planning periods, flexible use of class instruction time, development of lesson study, time for learning walks and time for students to meet with advisors is necessary within the school day. Teachers must also have opportunities to conduct home visits and participate in continual professional development within the school year's schedule. Training opportunities for students and parents must also be integrated into the academy's schedule for authentic relationships to develop between individuals, the school and the community. This would include, but not be limited to, internships, school-community events, and field trips. Final details concerning a master schedule, however, will be determined during the design phase of the 2009-2010 school year.

- 5.5 Behavioral Philosophy** – The relationships between adults and children pervasively influence all day-to-day interactions, and so the creation of meaningful relationships with students is one of the highest priorities for teachers in our academy. We strongly believe that leadership must be both articulated and demonstrated daily for this to occur. Leadership values will be collaboratively created and sustained in decision-making throughout the school. Leadership strands will not only guide curricular growth; they will

shape personal development. In all, the thematic focus of our academy is not, and must not be, delegated to instruction alone. We seek to create an empowering and engaging environment that meaningfully acknowledges the contributions and potential of students, teachers, parents, and all stakeholders. To that end, there must be a proactive and preventative shift in the approach to discipline policy and behavioral management in the new academy. A clear and transparent code of behavior must be created collaboratively with key stakeholders and consistently enforced with non-personalized consequences or judgments. De-escalation strategies must be developed, shared and used on a consistent basis. Therapeutic programs must be fully integrated into classroom management and school-based policies so that causes, not symptoms can be fully addressed, reducing recidivism. Data collection and analysis is also a key component to measure progress in these areas. Because of its smaller size, greater parental and community involvement is not a choice, but a necessity. Shared use of the building also creates opportunities and challenges for an autonomous school. In this case, our academy's policies concerning behavior and discipline must 'follow the child' and be enforced separately from those of the mainstream school. Students must also not be 'excluded' from our academy into the mainstream school due to behavior or discipline.

5.6 Governance Autonomy – The Leadership Academy will adopt a separate, distributive, governance structure based on the guidelines and by-laws of the Boston Pilot Schools' governing councils. Membership in the governing council will be open to students, parents, teachers, community representatives, higher education, School Committee members and administration. The functions of the governing council will include, but not be limited to, upholding and modifying the school mission and vision, approving the annual school budget, developing and approving all major school policies, hiring the principal, conducting their principal evaluation, and overseeing the school's accountability. In addition to the governing council, the Leadership Academy will establish consistent communication protocols, guidelines for effective meetings and regular opportunities for instructional leadership for teaching faculty and students. A parent council will also be established to increase two-way communication, involve parents in the educational program of the school, and provide early childhood instruction for parents, among other goals. Regular community focus groups will be established to provide feedback loops and modifications, as necessary. Academy administrators will also have job descriptions specifically guided by instructional leadership priorities, not simply building management decisions. Shared leadership will be achieved and community voices will be heard as a result of a governing body which includes a principal, staff members, parents, community members (partnership affiliates), and students, all of whom will be engaged in and influence the decision making process through means of voting. Our governing council members will be elected by members of their constituency, with community members being appointed by the elected governing body. Subcommittees may be formed to expedite deliberation on specific matters otherwise too cumbersome and time consuming for a larger governing body. All subcommittee proposals will be subject to a governing council vote for approval. Although still in the design phase, we anticipate that our Leadership Academy will work under a set of "written and approved by-laws that outline the board's membership, election procedures, terms of office, duties, officers, number of meetings per year, decision-making procedures, and methods of communication with the larger community."

5.7 Thematic Focus – The thematic focus of our academy is leadership. The curriculum and the day-to-day decisions will support the continual development and use of leadership skills and values. Students and teachers will use these skills and values to demonstrate ethical decision making in real-life scenarios. Vertical peer leadership opportunities will also be incorporated into learning activities across grade levels for students. In addition, leadership strands will focus student learning in projects, assignments, internships, graduation projects and more so they can develop skills and abilities in a field of their choice. Each student will be given the opportunity to select from among the seven strands of study offered (based on the Admiral Halsey Leadership Academy in Elizabeth, NJ):

- Students enrolling in the *Political Leadership Strand* will participate in coursework, internships and other activities that will build experience and develop skills in political science, local government, and public speaking.

- Students enrolling in the *Business Leadership Strand* will participate in coursework, internships, and other activities that will introduce them to the world of business and e-commerce and help them to develop a foundation in entrepreneurial, management, and administrative skills.
- Students enrolling in the *Education Leadership Strand* will participate in class, school, and real world activities that will give them a great deal of insight into what it takes to succeed in the education and childcare fields.
- Students enrolling in the *Community Activism Leadership Strand* will participate in coursework, internships and other activities that will introduce them to the world of social activism, strategic planning, non-profit development, public speaking, and issue outreach.

The Leadership Academy will also expand their strands incrementally to include military, law enforcement and legal, medical and community leadership. We strongly believe that these ‘majors’ for students will inspire and direct learning consistent with the school’s vision and support systems.

5.8 Professional Development – One axiom that is true for all public education is that continual growth is necessary for success. In the Leadership Academy, that growth – in the form of professional development – has to be site-based, job-embedded, sustainable, and data-driven. It has to focus on effective instruction and create support systems that last long after the training is over. We envision professional development serving many functions in the new academy. Professional learning communities will be sustained by the use of common planning time built into each teacher’s schedule. Best practices will be shared through learning walks. Research will be analyzed and disseminated in a ‘grand rounds’ form of professional collaboration. Co-teaching training will be provided for all instructional staff. Due to the partnerships formed with community, business and higher education groups, new funding mechanisms and support systems will be available for professional growth centered on leadership development. Retreats and summer workshops will be provided for teachers, students and parents. Such preparation will sustain a shared vision and allow opportunities for self-reflection and objective evaluation to take place.

5.9 Stakeholder Engagement – Clearly developed and culturally sensitive communication and administration protocols will meaningfully engage stakeholders in the process of establishing and sustaining an effective Leadership Academy. Transparency in all academy matters will be achieved using multilingual, electronic, print, and broadcast media. Civic engagement will be modeled by our governing council, consisting of representatives from each segment of the stakeholder population. This will ensure decision making incorporates various stakeholder perspectives, ultimately working toward a shared vision with common goals and objectives for the Leadership Academy. An open, collaborative, partnership with the local teacher’s union will be maintained on areas of impact involving hiring, evaluation, work agreements, scheduling, and budget. Teacher visits to student homes and parent invitations to participate in daily activities and special events will assist in developing a caring school community. Connections that build cultural competencies and bridge language barriers will create a new school-community relationship of respect and trust. Community organization and institution partnerships will provide a network of resources for student access to internships and support of Leadership Academy goals and objectives.

5.10 Partnerships – The New Bedford High School Leadership Academy will seek to build engagement of all stakeholders in order to serve and develop the thematic focus and leadership strands for the academy (see Thematic Focus above). Partnership with higher education (Bridgewater State College, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, and Bristol Community College), local military offices, community and business organizations, local hospitals and medical groups, law enforcement agencies and cultural organizations will help in the development of student internship programs as well as teacher internship programs to assess and guide the leadership strands. Partner relationships will also help advising and mentoring students as a means to demonstrate leadership not as an individual characteristic, but as a sense of social responsibility. In addition, new relationships from partnerships with the Leadership Academy will generate trust from consistent and open collaboration of a variety of projects and initiatives.

5.11 Facilities Use and Resources – The Leadership Academy has developed a four year facility expansion plan that coincides with our four year incremental enrollment plan, capping our student population at 500 students at the end of four years (as previously stated). We will increase the number of classrooms used by eight rooms in the first three years to seven rooms in the fourth year, capping the total usage at thirty

one rooms for classroom activities. This plan will allow the academy to grow, in four years, to one whole 'house' within the mainstream school of New Bedford High School. Having the classrooms within the same general geographical area is necessary to build and sustain a shared, distinct identity. In order for the Leadership Academy to be successful, we require some additional resources including leasing of inexpensive laptops, digital projectors, and laser printers that will allow for a portable computer lab and easy access to technology, remodeling of classrooms as needed, and a bell-less schedule allowing the instruction to determine the day instead of the bell. In addition to the 31 rooms needed, we understand the need for shared usage of some facilities and resources, including but not limited to: Libraries and Resource Centers for research, gymnasium for physical education, cafeteria for breakfast and lunch, auditorium for assemblies, the nurse's office for health issues, and busses for transportation.

5.12 Admission Criteria – The Leadership Academy seeks to specifically target 'at risk' students for the majority of available seats in its new school, by a 3:1 ratio. We will aggressively recruit students from the incoming 9th grade from each of the district's three middle schools, as well as freshmen who have repeated the year. A voluntary application process will start in the 8th grade, backlogged with a waiting list to be part of the academy. Each year the Leadership Academy will admit 125 students from incoming and repeating freshman with incremental enrollment of 125 students per year for four years, reaching a total of 500 students. If more than 125 students apply, a lottery will be used to determine selection. To determine eligibility, weighted risk indicators, such as an F or D in a core subject, history of poor attendance, behavioral history, test scores below grade level, retention after grade 3, free or reduced lunch status, family dropout history, and multi-agency involvement will be used. Students who do not meet the risk indicators, but voluntarily wish to apply, will also be admitted (25% of available seats will be reserved for them). After the selection, an interview with the family and student will be the beginning to build a relationship and communicate the school's vision between all members.

6. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals and Objectives: The design phase of our Leadership Academy will involve a critical analysis of many of the aforementioned areas of opportunity which now exist in the current NBHS model. Equipping our Leadership Academy students with skills enabling them to be effective citizens of the 21st century will require detailed planning of instructional practices beginning with lowering student-teacher ratios. Smaller class sizes will allow educators to facilitate individualized learning plans, effectively direct appropriate student behavior, incorporate literacy strategies into instruction, and plan and administer more hands on lessons and field trips intended to meaningfully engage students in learning. Meaningful professional development of educators will be demonstrated through skillful meeting facilitation, the adoption of positive professional attitudes and behaviors among colleagues, and recognizable focus on educational research. Instructional decisions will be guided by thoughtful collection and analysis of data and consistent application of reflective practice. Competent and caring educational leaders will share the responsibility of modeling leadership protocols keeping a common vision in clear view for all members of the school community. Creating, supporting and sustaining an enriching learning environment are also strategic priorities.

We seek to develop a 21st century curriculum, adopt a pervasive atmosphere of academic rigor, and build systems of professional learning communities as support mechanisms for all teaching faculty. It is also our stated objective to create a sense of instructional leadership in all stakeholders in our school so that students can prepare themselves with the skills they need to be successful in the 21st century. These objectives will also directly address the specific needs of our mainstream school. Alarming high dropout rates, low attendance, a leadership deficit, poor stakeholder engagement, failing grades and a rise in discipline incidents are just some of the current problems that will be met by our objectives listed above. All of these will be possible through the creation of an autonomous small learning community that the Readiness School program supports.

Potential Barriers: Potential barriers to meeting these goals exist in New Bedford High School as they do in many large urban schools across the country. Some of these barriers are structural while others are attitudinal. Structural barriers include potential union negotiations, time-on-learning requirements, the teacher/student ratio, budget allocations due to potential decreases in Chapter 70 funds, lack of adequate and current resources (textbooks and technology), and a reactive discipline policy. Attitudinal barriers include a teaching and learning

culture instilled in a 'chain-of-command' mentality, loss of administrative authority and control, low teacher and student morale, professional development mandates, and a bureaucracy that doesn't value initiative. All of these barriers, though inherent in the system and culture of the school, can and will be overcome through the implementation of this proposal.

School Improvement Plan: The Leadership Academy has a natural alignment with many of its goals with the New Bedford High School's (NBHS) School Improvement Plan (SIP). The NBHS SIP addresses many objectives, such as increasing the graduation and attendance rate, building partnerships with parents, community, and area businesses, delivering meaningful professional development, individual student support, identifying and addressing individual needs of students, creating flexible time and structure in the school day – acknowledging *one size does not fit all* – and providing instruction centered in the areas of interest to the students. All of these areas have already been addressed in Part 5 of this proposal, demonstrating the use of flexibility and autonomy in the Readiness Advantage School model.

7. THE WAY FORWARD

In the 2009-2010 school year, much work will be done to build capacity for change and prepare students, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders for incremental implementation of the new academy. Such tasks include, but are not limited to the writing of governing by-laws, selection and appointment of a governing council, development of a hiring protocol with specific job descriptions, creation of the enrollment criteria and application process, writing of curriculum, negotiation of memorandums of understanding with the local union, drafting of a tentative budget plan, composition of a student handbook, development of a master schedule, holding of focus-group sessions with parents, business and community stakeholders, compilation of funding sources, recruitment of teachers and students and more.

In September 2010 the new academy will open. Implementation activities will include using data to measure progress on our stated objectives and state standards, common planning time to create and support authentic instruction and professional learning communities, and feedback loops with stakeholders to make course corrections as needed in community relationships and policy. Partnerships with higher education, community organizations and businesses will actively support curricular goals through internships, field trips, scholarships and more. Formative assessments of teachers and students will also be used during implementation to gather anecdotal feedback on growth, attitude, policies, and learning outcomes. Development and expansion of the leadership strands will also occur in the first and subsequent years of the academy. Finally, dissemination of the Readiness Schools autonomies and the strategies that support them will be one of the highest priorities in the long term objectives of the mainstream high school's restructuring efforts. The Leadership Academy will be a demonstration of a holistic and innovative approach to learning, supporting our community with scholars prepared to lead in the 21st century.

Major stakeholders involved in the design and implementation activities include community partners, such as the Whaling Museum, PAACA (Positive Action Against Chemical Addiction), 3rd Eye Unlimited, Youth Court, the NAACP, the Ocean Explorium, ArtWorks, the Zeiterion Theatre, and more. Parents and guardians will also play an integral role in the design and implementation of the academy. Churches and neighborhood groups will also be invited to participate. Coalitions with higher education will not only help guide the process, but will create a mutually beneficial partnership in the school's research and development. Bridgewater State College has already played an influential role in the proposal's summer design work. Bristol Community College and the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth also have built relationships with teachers and students at New Bedford High School over the years. The Leadership Academy will continue to deepen those relationships through the Center for University and School Partnerships at UMASS as well as articulation agreements with BCC. Most importantly, both students and teachers will be instrumental in the design work for 2009-2010.

A suggested timeline follows:

Month	Objective
September	Submit to DESE, Create job descriptions, develop hiring protocol, negotiate with union (ongoing), continue to build parent, community, business and higher education partnerships (ongoing)
October	Submit to Screening Committee, write governing by-laws, seek funding sources
November	Submit to Innovation Plan Committee, recruit teachers, budget development, community focus groups on design and process
December	Introduce to 8 th and 9 th grade students, compose student handbook with student input, begin writing curriculum (ongoing), selection and appointment of governing council
January	Develop master schedule, begin admission process, select teachers, administrator and support staff, community focus groups on curriculum and admission process
February	Train incoming teachers (ongoing), compose behavioral policy, consult with therapists on integrated support model, schedule incoming students
March	Selection and purchasing of necessary materials and classroom resources, develop a shared facilities use plan
April	Dissemination of Readiness School model for the mainstream staff (ongoing), community focus groups on leadership strands and behavioral philosophy
May	Summer professional development planning
June	Community focus groups on implementation process, feedback loops and data measurement of performance contract progress