Education is a collaborative effort. It isn’t just done under the auspices of administration and teachers; it is a journey that provides hope, structure, knowledge and ideas through the efforts of the family, the educator and most important, the student. My name is Ross M. Grace, Jr., I was recently elected as a member of the New Bedford Public School Committee.

 I began in public education over 20 years ago as a school adjustment counselor at the old Normandin Jr. High School. I continued my work as a S.A.C. at Sgt. William H. Carney Memorial Academy and then served as the assistant principal at both Carney and Keith Middle School in my 17 year tenure. My adult career has been shaped by the belief that we can transform the world one child at a time when we have the skills, values, resources and support to meet the child at where they are to help them get to where they want to be.

 Our campaign ran and did well because our team was made up of educators who had or currently work in the classroom. Our platform and ideals resonated with the citizens of New Bedford because the ideas we intend to initiate come from front line teachers. Having worked in the schools as an administrator, I realized that while the child comes first, the best way to invest in our students is to invest in our teachers. When teachers feel respected, supported and validated, it translates into the classroom. School environment and culture matter! How we see our students and how we relate to our peers matter! As a member of our school committee, I am committed to standing by your side and having your best interests for your classroom as priority. When students, families and educators work together, we transform lives and society.

 We ask that you keep in mind the importance and necessity of being involved. We encourage you to be part of the process and allow your voices to be heard. We have a unique knowledge of what our students need because we spend so much time with them. We get to know our students in a way that reports, data, and testing fail to reflect. I can not be effective in this role without you!

 As I am new to this position, I promise my most sincere commitment to you. We have some projected goals that include expanding services and resources to assist our students with the physical, mental and emotional challenges during these trying times. We support our para-professionals in attaining a fair contract and livable wage to support their families. We believe that constant assessments and high stakes, state mandated testing has an adverse effect on the culture and environment of our school buildings and shapes how we view and perceive our students; our children are more than test scores. We want our staff and administrators to reflect the diverse cultures and ideas of our student population. We want to highlight the achievement of our students and teachers and show our community the incredible work that goes on in our classrooms in spite of the overwhelming challenges. We want to make sure that our educators and students are safe and feel safe when they walk into our buildings. As a school committee, we want to diminish our insular approach to decisions, become more transparent and we want you to know that your voice matters!

 I will be doing my very best to visit our schools and talk with you. In the meantime, you should feel free to contact me by email at rgrace@newbedfordschools.org or on my social media pages on Facebook or Instagram.

 These are amongst the most important times that we as educators face. In this fast past, rapidly evolving and uncertain time that we live in, we are at a crossroad on how to best prepare our students for the world ahead of them. We can only do this together! When we invest in and support our students and each other; when we remember why we first chose the noble career of being an educator and hold true to our values, we make this world a better place! It starts with you! Thank you for your time and please be involved! Contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

Ross M. Grace, Jr. MSW

New Bedford Public School Committee