

# **First community survey draws extensive input on New Bedford Public Schools**

New Bedford Public Schools officials today presented the results of the first community engagement survey about the city schools. The survey generated widespread participation among parents, educators, employers, students, and other members of the community.

Dr. Pia Durkin, Superintendent, said that the survey, which will be conducted annually, measures community satisfaction with the efforts to improve schools across New Bedford. Survey topics related to overall quality of the school district, satisfaction with central offices, communication with district and school leaders, strategies aimed at improving the district, and parent/guardian engagement. Nearly 900 individuals completed the survey, administered online in multiple languages, during the months of May and June.

“The School Committee and I are delighted that so many people took the time to provide their perspectives on our public education system,” said Dr. Durkin. “The survey serves as a valuable tool to help us hear from the community about our progress toward providing a first-rate education to every child in the city.”

Dr. Durkin noted that the survey results underscore the community’s expectation for dramatic, urgent improvement. On the school system overall, 41% of respondents rated the New Bedford Public Schools “good” or “excellent,” while 57% rated the district “fair” or “poor.” However, 71% of respondents also “support” or “strongly support” the district’s plans for improvement.

“These results affirm what we hear anecdotally every day about

unevenness in school performance,” said Dr. Durkin. “We cannot settle for a system in which some students achieve success while many others do not. The survey highlights widespread community support for the steps we are taking to ensure excellence across the board.”

Other findings from the survey include:

- 84% of parents reported feeling welcome in their child’s school.
- 66% disagreed that the district shares relevant facts before decisions are made.
- 52% are dissatisfied with central offices.

The survey results will inform ongoing implementation of the District Accelerated Improvement Plan and guide other planning work moving forward.

Dr. Durkin noted that the annual survey is one of several steps the district is taking to improve community engagement at all levels, including a new Teacher Advisory Group, a redesigned district website to be launched this summer, a series of public meetings hosted in partnership with community and faith groups for input on the improvement plan, and regular reports on the district’s progress. The district also will continue to showcase “points of pride” throughout the year, building on the designation of June as “Celebrating Success Month.” Superintendent Durkin added that the survey results will be shared with central office staff and school leaders during professional development sessions this summer and fall to ensure continuous improvement toward overall district goals.

The survey was designed collaboratively by New Bedford Public Schools, K12 *Insight* and the District Management Council, and administered and analyzed by K12 *Insight*.

Complete survey results are posted on the district website, [www.newbedfordschools.org](http://www.newbedfordschools.org).

*New Bedford Public Schools serves approximately 12,600 students in pre-kindergarten through high school in 26 schools.*

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## **450 New Bedford teachers to participate in English Language Learners program**

As many as 450 New Bedford Public Schools teachers will participate in on-line training classes in the coming school year to improve instruction of English Language Learners (ELL).

Because of high demand among local educators during a registration day last month, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has added 14 Sheltered English Immersion classes (SEI) for New Bedford teachers. The sessions are designed to help teachers become proficient in strategies for teaching students whose first language is not English. All Massachusetts public school teachers are now required to complete the training by July 1, 2016.

Dr. Pia Durkin, Superintendent, and Sonia Walmsley, ELL Implementation Manager, with school principals, had strongly encouraged all staff to participate in the on-line registration opportunity on June 23. They learned on that day that all slots were filled by 12 noon. As a result, DESE officials created 150 additional slots, increasing New Bedford's allocation to 450.

"We are thrilled and proud that New Bedford's teachers are

taking so seriously the work of increasing their skills and expertise for our ELL students,” said Dr. Durkin. “This demonstrates the urgency that our teachers hold to serve a previously under-identified population and to do so with new tools and ideas they are eager to learn about.”

Dr. Durkin expressed thanks to DESE for supporting the district with these additional resources.

Ms. Walmsley added, “We are fortunate to have excellent instructors who will be leading the courses and are eager to share their skills with their colleagues.”

Ms. Walmsley noted that several New Bedford teachers have applied to teach the courses as well.

Approximately 1,029 students in the New Bedford Public Schools, or about 8% of the total enrolled, are identified as English Language Learners.

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## **New Bedford man sentenced for manslaughter for friend's heroin overdose death**

District Attorney Sam Sutter today announced that 51-year-old Christopher Anderson was sentenced to serve up to six years in state prison after pleading guilty to a number of charges related to the February 2011 heroin overdose death of his former girlfriend, Venus Chumack.

On Friday, Mr. Anderson of 80 Foxborough St., New Bedford, pleaded guilty to indictments charging him with manslaughter, reckless endangerment of a child, larceny from a building and

distribution of class A and B drugs. Superior Court judge Rene Dupuis today sentenced Mr. Anderson to serve four-and-a-half to six years in state prison.

On the evening of February 12, 2011, Ms. Chumack, 46, was caring for her 2-year-old granddaughter in her apartment at 927 Pine St., Fall River. At some point during the evening, while the child was asleep in bed, Mr. Anderson visited the apartment after being invited over by Ms. Chumack.

When the defendant arrived at the Victim's house, he brought crack cocaine and heroin with him. The defendant and the victim shared the crack cocaine. The defendant then provided the victim with a bag of heroin which she injected. A short time later, the defendant gave the victim another bag of heroin which she also injected. Shortly after injecting the second bag of heroin, the victim began to experience a drug overdose. She became unconscious and had trouble breathing. The Defendant dragged the victim into the bathroom and splashed water on her face in an attempt to wake her. After spending some amount of time with the victim in the bathroom, the victim's medical condition began to worsen. The defendant left the victim on the floor of her bathroom gasping for breath and making a gurgling sound.

Before leaving the apartment, the defendant stole several items from the victim's apartment including a lap top computer, an engagement ring, some cash, and other personal effects. The defendant put all of the drug paraphernalia in a box and hid the box under a living room chair. While all of this was going on, the young girl was sleeping in the victim's bedroom. The defendant was aware the girl was present in the apartment as further investigation revealed Anderson and Chumack exchanged text messages prior to the defendant's arrival in which both he and the victim discussed the child being in the apartment. Further, the room where the Defendant stole an engagement ring was the same room in which the child was sleeping. After collecting all of the items that he

intended to steal, the defendant left the victim's apartment and did not lock any of the doors. In doing so, he left the child alone in the apartment with the Victim dead in the bathroom.

On the morning of February 13, 2011, the victim's sister who also lived in the apartment building came to the victim's apartment to see if she wanted coffee. When the sister arrived at the victim's apartment, the sister noticed the door was unlocked and entered the apartment. Upon entering the apartment, the sister found the young girl sitting on the couch asking for milk. When asked "where is grandma?" the child replied, "bathroom." There, the victim's sister located the victim, who had been deceased for a number of hours. The sister immediately called 911 and an investigation into the death ensued.

The investigation was conducted by Fall River Police Det. Kelly Furtado and Massachusetts State Police Trooper Chris Dumont, who is assigned to the Bristol County District Attorney's office. During the course of the probe, they discovered the victim's cellphone and read the text messages between the victim and the defendant. Investigators also located a homemade ring underneath the victim's body in the bathroom. The ring was identified as belonging to the defendant. The police also learned that possessions of the victim were missing. With this information, the police began to focus on the Defendant as a person of interest.

On February 14, 2011, investigators located the defendant at this mother's house. There, the police spoke with the defendant who admitted being with the victim on the night of her death, and confirmed a number of details about the case investigators had already determined to be facts.

The police subsequently executed search warrants and recovered the victim's stolen property from the defendant's apartment.

The Manslaughter charge in this case was prosecuted under two theories – 1) That providing heroin to a person is inherently dangerous and reckless and that the victim's overdose and death was a foreseeable consequence of the reckless behavior of distributing heroin, and 2) that the defendant, after giving the victim heroin and after being aware of her overdose as a result of her consumption of the heroin provided by the defendant, formed a duty for the defendant to care for the victim and that his failure to seek medical attention for the victim was a reckless act that caused the victim's death.

The case was set for trial on Monday, July 14. On Friday afternoon, the defendant decided to plead guilty to all charges.

During this morning's sentencing hearing, Assistant District Attorneys Jennifer St. Laurent Sowa and Garrett Fregault argued for a five to seven year state prison sentence, while the defense recommended a three to five year prison sentence.

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## **Police searching for Assonet bank robbery suspect**



On July 10, 2014, a bank was robbed in Assonet by an individual who passed a note. Anyone with information on the whereabouts of Michael S. McLane is asked to contact Det. Shane Kelley at 508-763-4018 or call 911 if he is seen.

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## **Temporary Closure of New Bedford Airport Runways for Runway Improvements**

The New Bedford Regional Airport will close both of its runways next week for construction activity related to the Airport's runway intersection. The runway intersection work is associated with the reconstruction of the Airport's main runway, a vital component of the community's intermodal capability.



The closure will begin on Monday, July 14 at 9:00 p.m. and will continue until Friday, July 18 at 6:00 a.m. During this time, work will continue around the clock to limit interruptions to air traffic. Additionally, the Airport will remain open for helicopter operations and all Airport Administration functions, car rental facilities, the Airport Grille Restaurant and other airport businesses will continue to operate. Passengers are encouraged to contact Cape Air for an updated flight schedule.

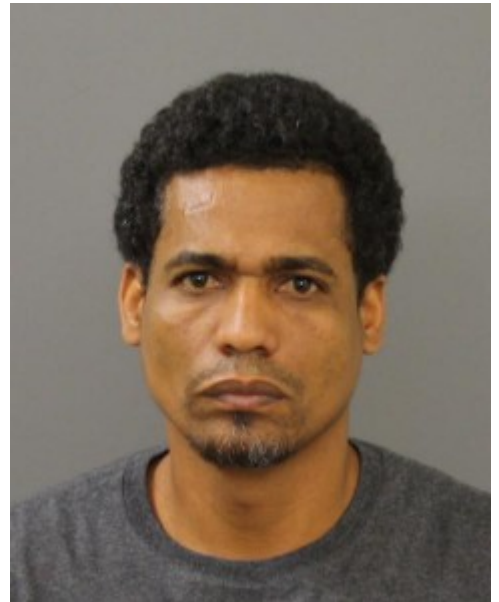
The New Bedford Regional Airport is a hub of economic activity and supports jobs for 234 employees, with a total estimated payroll of \$8.3 million dollars.

The Airport Commission is excited about the current and planned future improvement projects and hopes to use the facility improvements to attract future aviation related businesses to the area. The most recent economic impact study performed by Mass DOT revealed that the Airport has a total economic impact of over \$26 million dollars annually.

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## **Providence man arrested for trafficking heroin worth \$13,000 in New Bedford**

After an investigation by Detective Jonathan Lagoa, he was able to obtain a search warrant for a 2001 Honda Odyssey. Det. Lagoa had developed information that this vehicle was being used to make heroin deliveries in the south end of the city.



Yesterday afternoon at approximately 12:30pm members of the narcotics unit were able to find the vehicle being driven in the area of Dartmouth St. and Edward St. and conducted a motor vehicle stop. Inside of the mini van detectives recovered approximately 127 grams of heroin with a street value of nearly \$13,000.

The operator was placed under arrest and transported to District court for arraignment. The vehicle has been seized as the result of drug proceeds.

Edison Elixandro Perez Lara age 41  
188 Camden Ave. Providence, Rhode Island

– Trafficking Heroin in excess of 100 grams (8 yr felony)

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**PSA: Beware of Fairhaven  
phone scam!**



A resident of Fairhaven reported receiving a phone call from someone claiming to be fund raising for the Fraternal Order of Police on behalf of the Fairhaven Police Department. Please be advised that the Fairhaven Police Department is NOT conducting a fund raiser at this time.

Sergeant Kevin W. Kobza  
Fairhaven Police Department  
1 Bryant Lane  
Fairhaven, MA 02719

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**All New Bedford Beaches  
Reopened to Swimming**



Photo by Victor Lourenco.

The New Bedford Health Department has announced all of New Bedford's beaches have been reopened for swimming today.

The New Bedford Health Department closed East Beach located along East Rodney French Boulevard and West Beach located along West Rodney French Boulevard, as well as the beach inside Fort Taber Park on Saturday, July 5, 2014 in the wake of approximately eight inches of rainfall on July 4, 2014. Testing was conducted daily and the results of water samples collected yesterday from all municipal beaches indicate that water quality has returned to a level safe for swimming to resume at all New Bedford beaches. City health officials will continue to monitor the water quality at all municipal beaches for any significant changes.

For more information, please contact the New Bedford Health Department at (508) 991-6199.

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# Fresh Air Kids program a success!



*Local kids showcasing what the greater New Bedford area has going on, to New York kids!  
(Dolly G Photography)*

The Fresh Air Fund bus arrived Monday, July 7 at the Buttonwood Park Zoo. Many excited Fresh Air kids were dropped off and picked up by their Host Families. Each summer The Fresh Air Fund, an independent, not-for-profit agency, provides thousands of New York City children with unforgettable summer experiences.

If you'd like to know more information on this wonderful organization and possibly become a host family, read more about them: <http://www.freshair.org/>.

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# New Bedford's Beaches Closed to Swimming Today

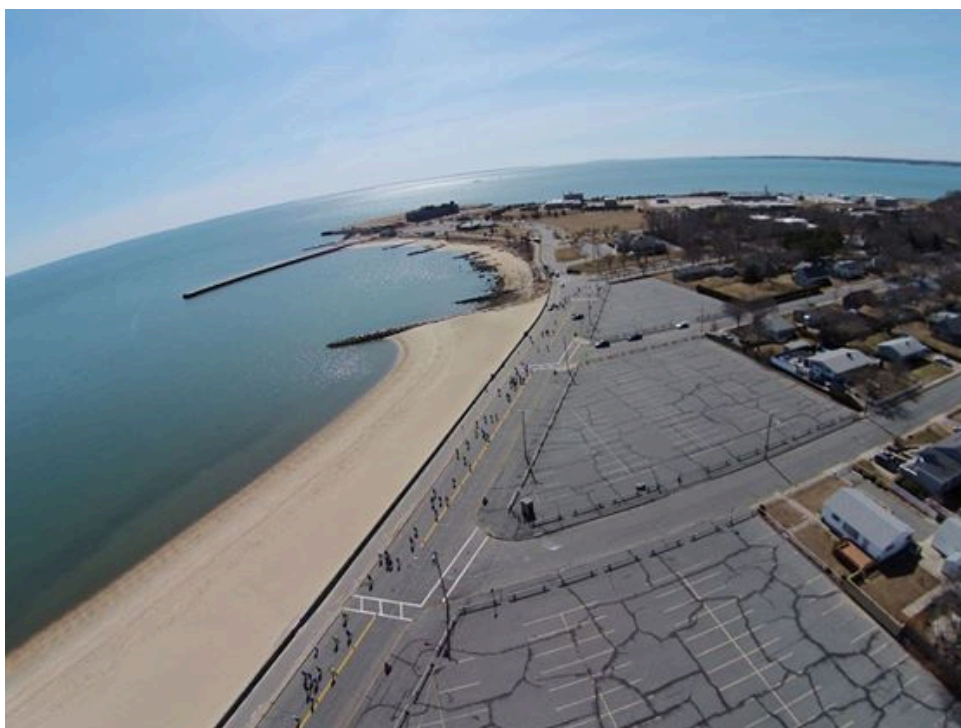


Photo by Victor Lourenco

The New Bedford Health Department has announced that East Beach located along East Rodney French Boulevard and West Beach located along West Rodney French Boulevard, as well as the beach inside Fort Taber Park remain closed to swimming today, Monday, July 7, 2014.

Significant rainfall during the holiday weekend raised the threat of elevated bacteria levels at these locations. The Health Department has closed New Bedford's beaches to swimming to protect public health.

The water at these beaches will be tested daily until acceptable water quality levels are obtained and swimming can resume. Additional testing will be conducted this morning, July, 7, 2014. If the test results indicate that bacterial

levels are within acceptable limits, the beaches will re-open on July 8, 2014. Further updates regarding openings and closures will be made as water quality results are received.

Additional information is available by calling the New Bedford Health Department at (508) 991-6199.