

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.

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