

New Bedford High School Fitness Center Completed

New facility hailed by trainers as state-of-the-art opens with the new school year

New Bedford High School's new fitness center has been completed, with fitness experts and coaches hailing it as a state-of-the-art, college-level center.

A much larger space than the small fitness room used by New Bedford athletes, the fitness center includes 12 half-racks, a turf area for speed and agility training, space for stretching and core training exercises, and will add medicine balls, stability balls, and service a large number of student athletes and students in physical education classes.

Boys' and girls' teams can use the fitness center for various prescribed workouts relative to the variety of sports at New Bedford High School, and the center can be utilized as a part of the high school physical education curriculum for training. Compared to the smaller fitness room, the new center offers space to accommodate more than 30 students performing the same exercises, or the range of 50-70 students when engaged in a variety of training. Less than a dozen students could utilize the previous room.

The center also aligns closely with NBHS students' academic futures: the growing interest of graduates in college majors or careers involving physical therapy, kinesiology and exercise science, training and conditioning, physical education and other related careers means the fitness center is a tool for furthering education and interest in those subjects.

The total cost of the project was \$400,000, which will be paid for through the city's Capital Improvement Program.

The weight room is one of several school facilities upgrades, including the construction of two new elementary schools in the South End and the installation of new windows, doors and boilers at several other elementary schools, along with numerous other improvements.

The fitness center will be dedicated at a later date to New Bedford High School alumnus Bobby Watkins, one of the school's most dominant football players who went on to the Chicago Bears after a standout college career at Ohio State University.

"I believe that New Bedford High students deserve far better than the small, antiquated weight room that had gone largely unchanged since the school opened forty years ago. Our community appreciates the value of sports and fitness as part of students' educational experience, and the fitness center is a testament to our commitment to the well-being of New Bedford's students," said Mayor Jon Mitchell.

School construction projects have been approved by the City Council, which was supportive of the fitness center.

"The new fitness center gives our student athletes the tools and equipment needed to maintain the tradition of excellence in New Bedford sports," City Council President Joseph Lopes said.

In thanking Mayor Mitchell and the City Council for making it a reality, Superintendent Dr. Pia Durkin called the Fitness Center "a fantastic new asset" for the school. "New Bedford High now has one of finest in-house fitness training facilities of any school district in the state. More importantly, it is part of a full spectrum of academic and extracurricular programming, which continues to demonstrate that New Bedford is the school district of choice," she said.

Headmaster Bernadette Coelho noted "this latest addition to our growing portfolio of campus facilities underscores our

continued commitment to our students, where we continue to enhance opportunities in academics, the arts and now a fitness program utilizing a state of the art facility that is second to none.”

“The new center is a functional training facility for diverse athletic populations and physical education classes,” said Norm Meltzer, certified strength and conditioning coach for Division I and professional athletes, who served as an advisor for the facility’s design. “New Bedford High School’s fitness center is a college-level facility with enough space to service so many more athletes than previously possible. It will be an excellent training tool for high school students and athletes, especially those graduates interested in playing sports in college.”

Thomas Tarpey, Director of Physical Education, Health and Athletics, worked with Perform Better, a fitness company which specializes in the design of functional training, rehabilitation and sports performance facilities, to plan and install the fitness center.

Of the installation, Perform Better general manager Chris Poirier noted “Perform Better is proud to be associated with New Bedford High School’s new strength and conditioning facility. Having done hundreds of weight rooms and sports performance facilities, New Bedford’s stands out as one of the top locations, showcasing everything from state of the art equipment to high-end flooring and turf. New Bedford should be proud to have a strength & conditioning facility that is second to none amongst high schools and colleges throughout the country.”