

Level 5 Schools 2015–16 Quarter 3 Report: Paul A. Dever Elementary School

School Information		Student Enrollment and Demographics	
Location	Boston, Massachusetts	Total SY 2015–16 Enrollment	498
Current Status	Level 5	Percentage SWDs	14%
Receiver Name	Blueprint Schools Network	Percentage ELLs	48%
Year Designated Level 5	2013	Percentage Black	28%
Year Designated Level 4	2010	Percentage Latino/Hispanic	60%
Grade Span	PK–5	Percentage Asian	7%
Number of Full-Time Staff in SY 2015–16	76	Percentage White	4%
		Percentage Multirace	2%
Priority Areas			
<p>Priority Area 1: Rapidly accelerate all students’ language development in English and provide families with the opportunity for content-rich Spanish language development for their students.</p> <p>Priority Area 2: Improve instructional quality and maximize time for core instruction.</p> <p>Priority Area 3: Use data to drive instruction.</p> <p>Priority Area 4: Establish a culture of high expectations and college and career readiness.</p> <p>Priority Area 5: Hire and cultivate high-performing and high-potential staff.</p>			

Content provided by Blueprint Schools Network.

Executive Summary

A brief summary of the turnaround efforts that have taken place in the third quarter, from January 2016 through March 2016.

In Quarter 3, the Paul A. Dever Elementary School (Dever) focused on accelerating student learning through setting clear expectations and providing targeted instructional support. Dever administrators are conducting walkthrough cycles from February through June with specific focus areas aligned to the Educator Evaluation Rubric and Dever’s instructional priorities. Dever is redefining its needs-based student group structure to maximize instructional time and leverage available human capital resources in order to provide targeted interventions and accelerate student growth in English language arts and mathematics. Dever also is ramping up its work to improve attendance and engage families in support of the school’s academic and school culture goals, hosting events such as writing showcases and Winter Movie Night.

On March 4, 2016, Principal Laura Miceli resigned to attend to family health needs. Blueprint named Connie Helton, Ed.D., as acting principal and immediately began the search for a new principal for the 2016–17 school year. Dr. Helton has served as Blueprint’s network director and has directly supported Dever since March 2015. During that time she has worked to improve the quality of teaching and learning through leadership capacity building and systems development. Dr. Helton is a familiar presence at Dever and is well acquainted with the school, staff, and

students. A former fourth-grade teacher, Dr. Helton has taught mathematics in middle school and music in elementary school and college. She was a successful elementary school principal for 17 years and holds a master's degree in education with certification in educational leadership and a doctorate from the University of Central Florida with a dual concentration in curriculum and instruction and educational leadership. In Florida, she served as executive director of the state's Department of Continuous Improvement Initiatives with responsibilities for the state accountability system, school improvement, district accreditation, and instructional technology.

Updates on Priority Areas

Priority Area 1: Rapidly accelerate all students' language development in English and provide families with the opportunity for content-rich Spanish language development for their students.

- **Highlight:** The Assistant Principal of Operations and Instruction facilitates a weekly common planning time (CPT) structure for the Spanish teachers. The focus of these CPTs rotates on a three-week cycle between lesson planning, data analysis, and student work analysis. The Assistant Principal of Operations and Instruction also conducts weekly one-on-one meetings with each teacher. In addition to biweekly 60-minute Spanish language classes, students receive 10 minutes of Spanish language connections to the Second Steps social-emotional program during weekly community time as well as two or three additional 10-minute minilessons per week. The minilessons (known as Arriba con Español or ACE Time) are taught by Spanish-speaking staff members and focus on Spanish-language vocabulary from Second Step. Dever filled the vacancy for its second Spanish teacher in January.
- **Highlight:** English as a second language (ESL) teachers use the Reach curriculum to build students' English language skills. The ESL team completed all ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners) testing in January. In addition to this annual assessment of English language proficiency, Dever is monitoring students' progress in each language domain using fall, winter, and spring benchmarks.
- **Highlight:** Dever is working to increase students' use of Imagine Learning, the online software program that provides individualized English language development instruction. After facing technical difficulties with accessing the program, Dever revised the schedule to stagger usage throughout the day, and the technology specialist has worked closely with the Imagine Learning team to address technical issues and improve access. The technology specialist created a usage tracker for each homeroom, and the homerooms are working toward the goal of an average of 100 minutes per week. Initial data from Imagine Learning indicates growth in students' reading levels with increased usage.
- **Challenge:** With the resignation of an ESL teacher in February, Dever's other four ESL teachers regrouped students and shifted schedules in order to continue to serve all ELL students with required minutes. Dever and Blueprint are recruiting and interviewing for a long-term substitute for the position during the remainder of the school year.

Priority Area 2: Improve instructional quality and maximize time for core instruction.

- **Highlight:** Dever is redefining its needs-based group structure to maximize instructional time and leverage available human capital resources in order to provide targeted interventions and accelerate student growth in English language arts and mathematics. During students’ English language arts needs-based group time, a second adult (ESL teacher, special education resource teacher, literacy interventionist, coach, or administrator) pushes in to classes in Grade 3–5 classrooms to lead a small student group through guided reading and support students with accessing PARCC passages. In Grades K–2, teachers are implementing student-guided reading groups and are using the Read Well program for intervention and assigning independent reading at students’ lexile levels. In mathematics, teachers will begin using VMath to provide differentiated instruction and the AP of Academics, AP of Operations and Instruction, and Math Fellow Coordinator will provide additional targeted mathematics instruction in all Grade 5 classrooms. The Therapeutic Learning Community (TLC) program also is maximizing its human capital resources to address students’ needs by utilizing paraprofessionals to support needs-based groups across TLC classrooms.
- **Highlight:** Dever administrators are conducting instructional walkthrough cycles from February through June with specific focus areas aligned to the Educator Evaluation Rubric and Dever’s instructional priorities. These focus areas are well-structured lessons, variety of assessments, adjustments to practice, subject-matter knowledge, and quality of effort and work. Each cycle is designed to focus both teachers’ and observers’ attention on clearly observable teacher and student behaviors that are present in high-functioning learning environments. Prior to each cycle, administrators provide clear verbal and written explanations of the expectation for teacher performance and student look-fors. Within 24 hours of each walkthrough, observers provide bite-sized, actionable feedback.
- **Highlight:** Dever continues to implement biweekly grade-level team meetings with the goal of increasing teachers’ capacity to plan instruction and utilize data. On Tuesdays, teachers use CPT meetings to review upcoming learning targets as set out in unit plans and discuss resources and strategies for achieving each learning target. Teams then break out to work on tasks such as scripting out “Teach To’s” or developing exit tickets with the support of the coach and the Assistant Principal of Academics. On Thursdays, CPT meetings are focused on analyzing and interpreting data and making data-driven decisions based on current data as described in Priority 3.
- **Challenge:** It has been challenging for administration to implement an effective observation and feedback cycle because of many competing priorities during the administrator’s workday, such as responding to behavior needs. Going forward, schedules have been created and will be monitored to ensure that all administrators meet this expectation.

Priority Area 3: Use data to drive instruction.

- **Highlight:** Dever conducts weekly grade-level data meetings focusing on academics (English language arts and mathematics in separate meetings), behavior, and attendance on a rotating basis. At each meeting, teachers identify one to three students to discuss with the team. They present current data, student strengths, and areas of concern for each

student and then the team collaboratively determines action steps or interventions. Each teacher then returns after the four-week cycle to report on progress and review progress monitoring data.

- **Highlight:** Dever recently completed the third round of ANet interim assessments. On February 16, staff in Grades 2–5 participated in a three-hour planning meeting to celebrate successes and develop action plans based on the students’ English language arts ANet data. Teachers analyzed students’ responses to the English language arts passages, text-based questions, and writing prompts and then developed action plans for reteaching and reassessing prose-constructed responses (PCRs). As a follow-up to the ANet data cycle, teachers engaged in reflection meetings on March 7 (English language arts) and April 4 (mathematics), during which they analyzed constructed response student work samples and calibrated scoring using rubrics.
- **Highlight:** Dever is making student data and goals more visible across the school. Classroom data trackers are being rolled out to highlight monthly attendance rates, Fountas and Pinnell scores, DIBELs, MAP, and average scores on English language arts PCRs and mathematics CRs. In addition, schoolwide goal posters have been displayed in every classroom.
- **Challenge:** Although Dever has established structures for data collection and analysis, teachers’ capacity to use data to inform instruction continues to be inconsistent across the school. To address this challenge, the coaches and Assistant Principal of Academics continue to facilitate data meetings, model effective practices, and individually coach teachers.

Priority Area 4: Establish a culture of high expectations and college and career readiness.

- **Highlight:** In Quarter 3, Dever hosted several family engagement events focused on academics and school culture. Classrooms are holding writing showcases and inviting family members and other members of the school community to attend and listen to the students’ presentations. For example, the third grade held a Culture Celebration during which each student read an essay about their family’s cultural heritage, and families were invited to bring dishes representing their culture. Dever also held its third quarterly PBIS event, a Winter Movie Night, to celebrate students who reached goals for Dolphin Pride Points, and more than 90 families participated. Dever is planning several family events for the coming weeks, including a Scholastic Book Fair, Literacy Week, and PARCC Night. Thirty parents have registered to participate in Tech Goes Home, an initiative that aims to give families access to the technology skills, hardware, and access needed for 21st century success. The program will involve 15 hours of training facilitated by Dever’s technology specialist, as well as the opportunity to purchase a new computer and Internet access for \$50.
- **Highlight:** Dever’s Mid-Year Family Survey indicated high satisfaction from families on the progress that the school is making. Ninety-seven percent of families reported agreement that “Dever helps my student be successful in his or her learning.” Ninety-five percent reported feeling “welcomed, valued, and connected to the Dever community.” Ninety-five percent reported that they “regularly communicate with [their] child’s teacher about his or her learning.” Ninety-five percent reported that they “understand the Dever’s

turnaround efforts and goals.” The Mid-Year Family Survey had 78 respondents (an increase from the 55 respondents to last year’s School Climate Parent Survey) and will be readministered at the end of the school year. The survey was sent home with all students. According to student directory records, this represents approximately 350 – 400 households.

- **Highlight:** The Dever Attendance Action Committee was formed to increase the emphasis on improving student attendance. Dever identified several students who are no longer enrolled in the school but were accumulating absences, so the committee worked to locate students and confirm their withdrawals so that they could be removed from the roster. Every four weeks, grade-level teams meet to discuss attendance during CPT data meetings. Teachers were provided with tools and resources for engaging families in improving attendance. Teachers and other staff members log attendance-related communication in ASPEN, the school’s online database. The committee also is partnering with the Boston Public Health Commission’s Connecting Families to Schools program, which conducts home visits and provides families with additional supports and services aimed at improving attendance. Visual displays tracking monthly progress have been posted in the school lobby and outside each classroom. Classrooms with the highest attendance rate are rewarded with the opportunity to house a large stuffed dolphin in their room for the month. The year-to-date attendance rate is currently 91 percent.
- **Highlight:** Dever is strengthening schoolwide discipline systems by tracking students’ referrals to the Dever Reflection Center and sharing successful deescalation strategies with teachers in order to prevent or reduce future referrals. A fifth-grade student group has been formed to tackle bullying issues. The Assistant Principal of School Culture and the City Connects Coordinator continue to work on coordinating counseling and other social-emotional supports and services.
- **Highlight:** Dever is providing enrichment opportunities for students. Each week, 12 third-graders are transported to the Boston Ballet to participate in Citydance, a program that provides Boston-area students with a tuition-free introduction to dance education. In addition, a fifth-grade student currently is visiting the McCormack Middle School to participate in a sixth-grade mathematics class.
- **Challenge:** Dever was open for students on Wednesday to Friday of February vacation week, and the school noted an attendance challenge for many students who have siblings at other Boston Public Schools (BPS). The attendance rate during this week was 71 percent. To address this challenge, Dever created a series of Spirit Days to encourage attendance. Activities on Spirit Days included sing-alongs of the Dever School Song and a staff – student basketball game.

Priority Area 5: Hire and cultivate high-performing and high-potential staff.

- **Highlight:** The application process was completed for advanced and master educator roles on the Level 5 Career Ladder. Five teachers applied, and the selection committee chose two educators to receive this recognition. Beginning in school year 2016–17, these two teachers will be responsible for modeling exemplary practices, conducting professional development, and strengthening schoolwide systems for academics and school culture.

- **Highlight:** Dever facilitated two full-day professional development days in Quarter 3: January 4 and February 16. Sessions during these days focused on instructional and management strategies, lesson planning, guided reading, ANet data analysis, and vertical planning. Dever also reconfigured staff meetings to be more oriented toward professional development. These meetings, held on February 24, March 7, and March 21, have focused on student needs-based groups and providing feedback on open responses. Dever also is leveraging professional development opportunities through the district. For example, a fourth-grade teacher attended a BPS-led professional development session on aligning fourth-grade standards with high school success.
- **Highlight:** Blueprint and Dever have begun the recruiting season for the 2016–17 school year. Members of the human capital and program teams are attending recruiting fairs, posting job descriptions, and having conversations with candidates in order to build a pipeline of talent for next school year. Dever is making a concerted effort to increase the number of homeroom teachers who are ESL-certified, and several teachers have enrolled in BPS’s ESL Pathways certification program.
- **Challenge:** Principal Laura Miceli resigned in March to attend to family health needs. Blueprint named Connie Helton, network director, as acting principal and immediately began the search for a new principal for the 2016–17 school year. Blueprint, in collaboration with ESE, is recruiting a leader who is focused on results and has proven success in increasing student achievement and adult performance; provides visionary leadership and influences and motivates others to reach their potential; is solution-oriented and a creative problem-solver with experience in data analysis and creating and managing systems; sets high expectations and communicates them to a variety of stakeholders; understands, communicates with, and effectively interacts with people across cultures; possesses an unwavering belief that all students can learn and succeed; continually reflects and seeks feedback to improve their practice; has demonstrated perseverance in his or her career and education; thrives in a fast-paced, change-oriented environment; possesses strong pedagogical skills; and is highly effective at coaching other adults. These qualities are derived from research on the skills and competencies that promote effective leadership in a turnaround setting. The title has been changed to Executive Principal in an effort to attract an experienced instructional leader who is able to lead, implement, and achieve the vision, mission, and strategic goals of a school operating in the spotlight of an unprecedented education reform movement. Blueprint is posting the job description and conducting outreach across local and national networks. The selection process will include initial phone interviews, a review of school data, in-person interviews with the Blueprint team, school leadership, ESE staff, and members of the School Site Council. In-person interviews will include a leadership simulation activity, a mock observation and feedback session, and a “meet and greet” with school staff. References will be checked with supervisors, peers, teachers, parents, and community partners.