

Level 5 Schools 2016–17 Quarter 1 Report: Paul A. Dever Elementary School

School Information		Student Enrollment and Demographics ^a	
Location	Boston, Massachusetts	Total SY 2016–17 Enrollment	449
Current Status	Level 5	Percentage Economically Disadvantaged	68%
Receiver Name	Blueprint Schools Network	Percentage High Needs	87%
		Percentage SWDs	14%
Year Designated Level 5	2013	Percentage ELLs	48%
		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 2016–17	71	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>			

^a Student demographic data, including percentages of students with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs) is from the 2015–16 school year (SY 2015–16) due to the movement of students at the start of the school year. These data will be updated to reflect the 2016–17 school year (SY 2016–17) in Quarter 2 reports.

Content provided by Blueprint Schools Network

Executive Summary

Blueprint Schools Network (Blueprint) and Paul A. Dever Elementary School (Dever) continue efforts to accelerate student achievement and to provide a safe, nurturing, high-quality school for students and families. Entering the 2016–17 academic year, the Receiver and school are placing a first-quarter focus on leadership development, academic engagement, and school culture.

In June, Blueprint selected Dr. Todd Fishburn to be Dever’s Executive Principal. Dr. Fishburn is an experienced school leader and previously has served students and families in Delaware as a special education teacher, elementary and high school principal, and as Senior Data and Assessment Specialist for the Seaford School District. Blueprint also reconfigured the school’s leadership structure based on student performance data and teacher feedback. In 2016–17, Dr. Fishburn will lead a team that consists of two Assistant Principals (one focused on School Culture and one focused on Operations); two Instructional Deans (one focused on kindergarten through second-grade instruction, and one focused on third- through fifth-grade instruction), a

Therapeutic Learning Community Coordinator; a Math Fellow Coordinator; and a Dean of School Culture.

Blueprint and Dever’s leadership team have invested in structures and supports to promote positive student behavior and school culture. Summer professional development provided staff with training regarding the three-part positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) plan, core value lessons, Teach Like a Champion (TLAC) strategies, and Zones of Regulation. In addition, Dever uses Kickboard as an online, schoolwide data-tracking platform for behavior management. All classroom teachers collect, track, and communicate merits, reminders, and core values to students throughout the day, and provide timely information to parents using the system.

Blueprint and Dever teams also have placed a heavy emphasis on increasing academic engagement for our students. In addition to spending summer professional development time on literacy and mathematics priorities (analysis of grade-level standards and training in relevant instructional materials and models), weekly classroom walk-throughs conducted by Dr. Fishburn at the start of the school year are looking explicitly at how effectively summer professional development work on TLAC and student engagement strategies are being implemented in the classroom.

Given Dever’s new leadership team, positive staff feedback on summer training, and a strong first week of school, we are looking forward to a successful 2016–17 school year for our students and families.

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:** Tier 1 strategies for English language development and student engagement are being implemented across literacy blocks. Three professional development sessions in August trained teachers in the Reader’s Workshop model. Teachers also receive feedback on lesson plans for English language development every week from instructional deans. In addition, there is a schoolwide focus during Q1 on the Teach Like a Champion academic and behavioral expectation techniques of “100%” and “No Opt Out.”
- **Highlight:** During Q1, Dever is administering baseline literacy assessments (DIBELS, Fountas & Pinnell) for 2016–17 and will use that data during weekly grade-level meetings to drive instructional improvement. These assessments will be completed and data input by September 28, 2016.
- **Highlight:** The Spanish Language Development program is continuing for all Dever students in kindergarten through Grade 5. The lead Spanish language teacher is entering her third year at Dever, and the newest addition to the Spanish team comes with more than 10 years of instructional experience.
- **Challenge:** Last year, teachers reported that Dever’s “specials” offerings (art, music, physical education, and Spanish language) operated too often in isolation and that other

staff would benefit from a greater understanding of the programs. In response, the leadership team is facilitating opportunities during Q1 for each specials teacher to present their work and build connections with grade-level and core instruction priorities. The Spanish language team delivered the first presentation of their program’s vision, goals, curriculum, and expectations during all-staff professional development on September 8.

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

- **Highlight:** Leveraging its Level 5 autonomy, Blueprint added an additional instructional day to the 2016–17 school year calendar (186 instructional student days). Dever students in Grades 1–5 started school on August 30, six instructional days before Boston Public Schools opened. School hours continue to be 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. for students on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. On Wednesdays, students are released at 12:30 p.m. to provide weekly opportunities for staff development from 1:15 p.m. to 4:15 p.m.
- **Highlight:** Dever continues to maximize time for instruction within the master schedule by providing every student with 180–210 daily minutes of English language arts (ELA) and 90–120 daily minutes of mathematics. This year, all fourth- and fifth-grade students receive an additional mathematics block at their instructional level through the Blueprint Math Fellows Program. Dever has also made changes to the morning schedule to increase time available for learning. This year, breakfast is delivered to the classroom, which frees up an additional 15 minutes for a “Dever Determined” period at the end of each school day. During this period, students and teachers are engaged in lessons on Dever’s core values, growth mindset, goal setting, and reinforcing school culture and behavior norms. Dever’s longer school day allows for time to be spent on both core subjects and specials.
- **Highlight:** Dever’s leadership team planned and delivered two weeks of summer professional development for new and returning teachers. Blueprint administered a survey to teachers, paraprofessionals and support staff at the conclusion of professional development. Staff members rated 92% of the sessions they attended as “mostly” or “highly” effective. Sessions on Zones of Regulation, PBIS & Kickboard, Reading Workshop, and Team Building received the highest ratings.
- **Challenge:** Starting school early within a larger district and community context brings expected challenges of systems integration and orienting students who enroll at school after Dever’s August 30 start date. Staff and the Dever leadership team have developed plans to reinforce school expectations and core values as new students enter their classrooms.

Priority Area 3: Use data to drive instruction.

- **Highlight:** August professional development built staff understanding regarding assessment types, data use, and the teaching and learning cycle. The master schedule includes biweekly grade-level team meetings used for data analysis and planning, alternating behavioral data with academic data. In addition, the Achievement Network

(ANet) coach will provide coaching support specifically linked to interim assessments with in-person coaching prior, during, and after each of the four assessment periods.

- **Highlight:** Technology at Dever is facilitating easier access to student data. Dever has a one-to-one Chromebook program for students. In Q1, students will take the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) literacy skills assessment online and teachers are being trained on the electronic assessment in early September. The enhanced use of technology will also allow staff easier access to instructional and behavioral data for planning. All second- through fifth-grade teachers will continue to use the ANet online platform to access interim assessment results. In 2016–17, teachers will continue to document “merits,” “reminders,” and other student behaviors using the Kickboard online system.
- **Highlight:** Pam Denton has joined the Blueprint team as the National Data Analyst and is working on-site with the administrative and instructional leadership teams at Dever. Pam has more than 10 years of experience using data for strategic and instructional planning purposes, including district-level support of leaders and teachers in turnaround schools in Denver, Colorado.
- **Challenge:** In Q1, several Blueprint and Dever staff have had to get up to speed quickly with access to and familiarity with multiple data systems, including those at both the state and district levels. We do not anticipate this being a challenge in Q2.

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

- **Highlight:** On August 29, the evening before the start of the school, 114 families attended Dever’s 2016–17 open house. Turnout was substantially higher than in past years. Dever staff sent letters to families and issued multiple auto-calls, and teachers were required to call the families of each of their students. All students in attendance received Dever Elementary School T-shirts and the first 80 students to arrive at Dever’s open house received free backpacks filled with school supplies. Dr. Fishburn presented Dever expectations to families and every teacher met with families in both grade-level and classroom groups. Eleven of Dever’s community partners participated in a resource fair including Rosie’s Place, Daily Table, City Connects, Big Sisters Association of Greater Boston, South Boston Boys and Girls Club, Smart Smiles, Dorchester YMCA, Roxbury YMCA, MassSTART, Boston Children’s Hospital (School Intervention to Reduce Allergens in Inner City Schools and Childhood Asthma), and Geiger Gibson Health Center.
- **Highlight:** Dr. Fishburn has increased the number of ways in which he and the school community can connect with families. Within the first two weeks of school, all classroom teachers were required to make a positive phone call home for each student. In addition, time during Wednesday professional development is set aside for each staff member to write a “Dever Postcard” to a family highlighting a strength of their student from the past week. Principal outreach strategies for Q1 include a new principal webpage, principal Twitter account, and regular letters home with updates from the principal.

- **Highlight:** During the summer months, Blueprint and the Dever leadership team worked alongside Boston Public Schools and community partners to provide a warm, welcoming, college-going environment for students and staff. New Dever Core Values posters are displayed in all common areas. Yellow and blue lines in all hallways now provide a clear pathway for students during transitions and travel. Boston Public Schools Facilities Management upgraded the school’s infrastructure. Volunteers from the University of Massachusetts Boston and John Hancock repainted the playground area, restocked the outdoor gardens, and improved the amphitheater section of Dever’s campus.
- **Highlight:** A Boston College student looking to make a difference for a school in Boston chose to support Dever from a few schools suggested to her by Superintendent Chang. The student raised \$6,000 to purchase school and office supplies for the school. WDHD Channel 7 filmed a segment on site at Dever to capture the donation. The evening news segment can be viewed at <http://whdh.com/news/bc-student-raises-money-to-buy-supplies-for-dorchester-school/>.
- **Highlight:** August professional development emphasized high expectations for both students and staff. For example, the Teach Like A Champion strategy of “100%” sets the expectation that every student is engaged and participating when a task is at hand. The concept of “100%” was taught explicitly as a classroom strategy and then modeled during professional development. All staff members will use Doug Lemov’s *Teach Like A Champion* for a schoolwide book study built into yearlong professional development plans.
- **Challenge:** With the introduction of a new principal, Blueprint and Dever leadership recognize the need to begin the year with a solid team culture and strong staff morale. Strategies have included numerous team-building activities, providing meals, a focus on staff morale, and opportunities to meet the principal informally outside of school.

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

- **Highlight:** Dever began the school year fully staffed with all 71 positions filled, which includes 45 returning staff members, of which 27 are teachers and nine are paraprofessionals returning from the 2015–16 academic year. Blueprint and Dever’s goal is to develop a structured and supported leadership pipeline within the school. To accomplish this, returning teachers are provided with leadership opportunities (eight teachers are included on the Instructional Leadership Team, and Dever’s K–2 instructional dean is beginning her third year at Dever where she started as a second grade teacher). Every grade-level team is anchored by at least one returning teacher. Three of Dever’s six 2015–16 Math Fellows have returned for a second year to tutor fourth- and fifth-grade students through the Blueprint Math Fellows Program. One of Dever’s new paraprofessionals is a former Dever student and spent the last two years as a Blueprint Math Fellow at the school. In Q1, we expect to continue providing in-house opportunities for staff leadership, professional growth, and advancement.
- **Highlight:** Blueprint has recruited, selected, and promoted high-quality leadership talent to serve students, staff, and families at Dever Elementary School. Dever’s 2016–17 leadership team includes Dr. Todd A. Fishburn, Executive Principal, with more than 20

years of experience who is focused on ensuring all students have access to rigorous learning opportunities by building the capacity of staff to engage in conversations about diversity and culture and to provide high quality instruction; Rui Gomes, Assistant Principal of Operations, who has counseled urban youth for more than 20 years and has more than 10 years of school leadership and management experience; and Margaret Reardon, Assistant Principal of School Culture, who has more than 10 years of school administrative experience, including working with S.M.A.R.T., Boston's Crisis & Intervention Center, to serve BPS elementary schools in Dorchester, Brighton, East Boston, South Boston, and Back Bay. Other members of the leadership team are Anna McTigue, Therapeutic Learning Community Coordinator; Lynn Connor, Math Fellows Coordinator; Evan George, Dean of School Culture; Caitlin Trapani Walsh, K-2 Instructional Dean; and Al Thompson, 3-5 Instructional Dean.

- **Highlight:** Robust professional development in behavior and academic systems was delivered in August with ongoing professional development to be conducted on Wednesday afternoons and during identified common planning times. Dever is committed to providing instructional feedback aligned to school expectations through the following: (1) Lesson plan feedback was provided to teachers, and Dr. Fishburn personally visited every classroom multiple times within the first week of school; (2) Instructional Leadership Team members have collaborated with Dever's ANet coach to identify instructional priorities in mathematics and ELA, set the ANet assessment cycles, and finalize learning walk rubrics aligned to the school's engagement and academic priorities; (3) Every classroom will receive written feedback aligned to instructional priorities twice per month from the principal, followed by a verbal check-in the following day. Instructional deans will also provide regular coaching to teachers.
- **Challenge:** Recruiting, selecting, and retaining high-quality teachers and support staff with both the will and skill to engage in demanding yet rewarding work of school turnaround remains one of Blueprint and Dever's top priorities.