Level 5 Schools 2015-2016 Quarter 1 Report: John Avery Parker Elementary School

School Information		Student Enrollment and Demographics[a]	
Location	New Bedford, Massachusetts	Total SY 2015–16 Enrollment	291
Current Status	Level 5	Percentage SWDs	23%
Receiver Name	Dr. Pia Durkin	Percentage ELLs	26%
Year Designated Level 5	2013	Percentage Black	15%
Year Designated Level 4	2010	Percentage Latino/Hispanic	40%
Grade Span	PK–5	Percentage Asian	0%
Number of Full-Time Staff in SY 2015–16	32	Percentage White	37%
		Percentage Multirace	8%
Priority Areas			

Priority Area 1: Increase the rigor of Tier I (universal for all students), Tier II (targeted for struggling students), and Tier III (intensive for highest need students) instruction.

Priority Area 2: Create school structures and systems that support instruction and maximize time on task.

Priority Area 3: Increase the use of data to drive instruction.

Priority Area 4: Establish a school culture focused on achievement and engage families as partners in their children's learning.

[a] Student demographic data, including percentages of students with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs) is from the 2014–15 school year due to the movement of students at the start of the school year. These data will be updated to reflect the 2015–16 school year in Quarter 2 reports.

Content provided by Superintendent Pia Durkin

Executive Summary

On July 1, 2015, Principal Lynn Dessert began her tenure at Parker. In this role, she and her team implemented the second year of Summer Academy during the month of July. Summer Academy has two key components: (1) an academic program for students and (2) professional development and planning time for all Parker teachers and staff. While the Summer Academy is open to all students in Grades K–5 at Parker, some students were targeted for participation based on data from the end of year reading, English language arts, and mathematics data. This year, a key component of the student academic program focused on community partnerships with New Bedford Whaling Museum and Whaling National Historic Park. These partnerships enhanced the students' learning experience by hosting field trips and lending materials. In addition to working with students during part of the day, the Summer Academy provided time for staff to receive professional development and to plan for the upcoming school year. Professional development programming for staff included large and small group sessions, grade-level team meetings, common planning time, individualized coaching, data review, preparations for upcoming school year, and team-building activities. The professional development focused on early literacy and included strategies for supporting struggling readers, especially special education students and English language learners. During the beginning of the school year, teachers began to familiarize themselves with the newly arrived science kits and will receive professional development on

using and implementing these kits during whole-staff professional development and teacher collaboration time.

Updates on Priority Areas

Priority Area 1: Increase the rigor of Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III instruction.

- **Highlight:** Summer Academy focused on literacy and mathematics instruction through the theme of "Discovering New Bedford." Priority standards were identified from the end of the year Galileo Assessment results, and all reading material supported the theme and standards of focus. Literacy lessons used both fiction and nonfiction texts and artifacts to build literacy skills while seeking the answer to the essential question: "Who helped New Bedford become the city that 'lit the world'?" Students in Grades K and 1 focused their studies on learning about whales. Students in Grades 2–4 studied life aboard a whaling ship and life in a whaling city. Instruction was aligned to the four literary objectives: (1) concept development, (2) vocabulary development, (3) close reading, and (4) formative assessments. Mathematics lessons were determined based on the end-of-year assessment data and were differentiated by grade levels. For example, kindergarten and first-grade students focused on mathematics facts and fluency; second- and third-grade students focused on solving one-step word problems using addition and subtraction; and fourth-grade students focused on rounding, decimals, and beginning fractions.

- **Highlight:** Project-based learning, an instructional strategy that allowed staff to integrate Tier I, II, and III instructional strategies, was a key driver of the academic program during Summer Academy and was enhanced through community partnerships. During the student academic programming at the Summer Academy, students created community share projects with support and resources from community partners (including the Whaling Museum and the New Bedford National Park). Students participated in field experiences during the summer at no cost. In addition, both partners shared materials and personnel resources to support the planning and implementation of this year's Summer Academy.

- **Highlight:** Small-group professional development for teachers allowed Parker teachers to receive support in areas of need, as determined through last year's classroom observations. Teachers participated in one of three small groups, called professional learning communities (PLCs). The three PLC areas of focus were (1) early literacy, (2) reading comprehension, and (3) best practices and instructional integration. In the early literacy PLC, classroom and special education teachers focused on early literacy acquisition, including strategies for supporting struggling readers, students with special education needs, and English language learners. The reading comprehension PLC, composed of classroom, special education, and English as a second language teachers, conducted a deep dive into research-based best practices for teaching reading comprehension through the guided study of targeted readings, discussions, and explorations. Finally, the best practices and instructional integration PLC included specials teachers and support staff and focused on planning for opportunities to integrate Reading Street units and themes into their art, music, and physical education instruction.

- **Challenge:** The major challenge experienced during Summer Academy was getting the students who enrolled in the spring to attend the Summer Academy consistently for the

16 days offered. Both the family engagement manager and the behavior specialist made contact with families of students absent from the program, and consistently encouraged the absent students to attend. The low and inconsistent attendance limited staff's ability to ensure that students increased their literacy and math skills in order to be prepared to begin the new school year. In addition, pre- and post-assessments given in both math and literacy could not be fully completed for those students not attending on a regular basis. Since the beginning of the school year, students who missed substantial time during Summer Academy are receiving after school tutoring. In addition, the school has differentiated support for families, with those families whose children were frequently absent during the previous school year or Summer Academy receiving targeted support including teachers prioritizing developing direct relationships with them and the Family Resource Manager working directly with the families whose children are not attending consistently.

Priority Area 2: Create school structures and systems that support instruction and maximize time on task.

- **Highlight:** A schedule was created for Summer Academy that included structures and systems to support instruction and ensure students were fully engaged and learning with effective time on task. The student day for Summer Academy (8:30 a.m. to 1:45 p.m.) included four learning blocks. Students were divided into small groups by grade level using achievement data to allow for more targeted instruction. For example, students who were struggling in mathematics received instruction in priority standards as determined by the examination of end-of-year assessment data covering grade-specific topics including mathematics facts and fluency, one-step word problems, and rounding.

- **Highlight:** The Summer Academy allocated specific time for Parker staff to develop and plan for strategies to improve the rigor of and time for instruction. During Summer Academy, teachers received professional development and support aligned to the literary objectives: concept development, vocabulary development, close reading, and formative assessment. Additionally, members of Parker's support team (behavior specialist, family center manager, and team members) and the principal established a schoolwide behavior system, and collaborated directly with teachers to support their work in their classrooms. Finally, teachers planned for the upcoming school year. For example, teachers focused on the new curriculum maps, reviewed end of year student data to identify priority standards in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, and developed an instructional framework and schedule to address students' needs.

- **Highlight:** During August professional development days, the staff received training on school structures and systems. The training focused on "Bell to Bell" instruction, the response to intervention model, and organizational team support, along with scheduling. During this time, a professional development calendar was developed and planned around topics that will support the four turnaround plan priorities during the upcoming school year (professional development calendar attached).

- **Challenge:** On the staff survey from the previous school year, more than 80 percent of teachers indicated that the discipline system was not working effectively and many said they felt isolated in their work. Responding to these issues, Parker focused on creating a

more consistent schoolwide behavior system using the positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) model. The aim is to use PBIS to improve school culture and climate, thus improving the ability of all staff to maximize learning time. Additionally teachers are working in teams by grade level groupings during teacher collaboration time (TCT). The aim of this strategy is to improve connections and relationships throughout the school. Finally, every Friday teachers meet with the principal to discuss progress and issues related to student behavior and its impact on instruction.

Priority Area 3: Increase the use of data to drive instruction**.**

- **Highlight**: During Summer Academy, a plan was developed to use TCT during the course of the school year. During the upcoming school year, TCT will include a communication form to improve the collection and use of data toward the aim of ensuring all students meet grade level standards or higher. Teachers reviewed students' end-of-year Galileo and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills data, along with formative assessments and their own classroom observation data, during Summer Academy to identify priority standards to establish more targeted instruction in mathematics and ELA. These standards were assessed in the beginning and end of Summer Academy for those students who attended throughout the program.

- **Highlight:** Teachers received professional development focused on the Response to Intervention model in order to improve teachers' ability to support students. During the professional development, teams of teachers were trained to organize a time period during the day when every student received the educational supports (both intervention and enrichment). The aim is to ensure that all students were stretched individually according to need. During the professional development, a protocol was created to tier students into three categories: (1) benchmark, (2) strategic, and (3) intensive. During the 2015–16 school year, teachers will track each individual student's progress using available data and determine which supports are needed based on their performance. Students will then be placed into smaller groups based on their learning strengths and needs. Weekly during TCT, teachers will review student assessment data and make adjustments to the student groups. To facilitate this intervention cycle, two interventionist positions were established this year to ensure students are making significant progress in ELA and mathematics.

- **Highlight**: Data use is the primary focus of the professional development calendar for the upcoming school year. The series of professional development activities aim to build the capacity of staff to use a range of assessment data to identify students' strengths and needs. For example, one session will focus specifically on using Galileo Targeted Interventions and Performance Standards and using the benchmark assessment data from this program.

- **Challenge:** One of the key challenges Parker staff face is the sheer amount of data available to staff and helping staff to determine how to best use these data to support student learning. The professional development sessions and the implementation of the Response to Intervention model, along with the hiring of two interventionists are all designed to improve the coordinated use of data toward ensuring students receive needed supports.

Priority Area 4: Establish a school culture focused on achievement and engage families as partners in their children's learning.

- **Highlight:** The Summer Academy provided rich opportunities to engage parents, for example by inviting parents to see their children's work. For example, a community share was offered to all family members of Parker school. Fifty families attended and observed the rich learning opportunities the Summer Academy provided to Parker students. This event allowed staff to get to know families and increase communication with parents about their children's learning.

- **Highlight:** Parker engaged parents, students, and families in the rollout of the new school uniform policy. During the Summer Academy, the school staff communicated with families on several occasions to discuss the school uniform requirement for students during the upcoming school year. In addition, during the Summer Academy one project was focused on the topic of uniforms. As part of this project, students developed surveys focused on getting feedback about school uniforms, and students conducted research on the pros and cons of wearing uniforms. Parker staff engaged families through communications (using Blackboard Connect) to ensure all of Parker's families understood the importance of students wearing the school uniform to ensure readiness to learn without distractions. Students and staff shared the benefits of the uniform adoption during an August family event, in which 125 families attended. As a result of this multipronged effort, approximately 95 percent of students were wearing the uniform during the first week of school.

- **Highlight:** PBIS is being established and ongoing training began at Summer Academy. PBIS is a schoolwide system for improving student behavior in the classroom and throughout the school by implementing consistent positive behavior reinforcement strategies. The professional development for staff focused on what PBIS is along with the underlying logic to the model for communicating and reinforcing positive behavior constantly and consistently. The staff established schoolwide expectations for tracking progress in the implementation of PBIS and setting goals. In addition to having a school instructional support team, Parker has established a student and family support service team, which is facilitated by the principal and includes the behavior specialist and family engagement manager to ensure this priority area is effectively met.

- **Challenge:** One challenge is ensuring that all staff, students, families, and community members understand the expectations and are engaged in the implementation of the PBIS model. To encourage engagement, staff are reaching out to families and hosting meetings at local businesses where these families frequent (e.g., a local pizza parlor). During school site meetings and outreach meetings, Parker introduced families to the PBIS model. Additionally, information about the terms and hand signals used consistently by staff to address student behavior is described throughout the school so that all families understand the tenets of the program and have the opportunity to use these at home.