# 2016–17 Level 5 School Annual Evaluation ReportJohn Avery Parker Elementary School, New Bedford, Massachusetts

### Receiver: Superintendent Pia Durkin

## Introduction

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) contracted with American Institutes for Research (AIR) to collect evidence from each Level 5 school on the progress toward implementation of the turnaround plan in Year 3 of Level 5 status. AIR facilitated the collection of information from the receiver throughout the year for the quarterly reports detailing highlights and challenges in each priority area during the previous quarter and progress toward benchmarks. In addition, during a 2-day monitoring site visit, AIR staff collected data through instructional observations using Teachstone’s Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS),[[1]](#footnote-1) key stakeholder interviews and focus groups, an instructional staff survey, and a review of extant documentation (e.g., turnaround plan, quarterly reports, and other documents) in November 2016. In spring 2017, subsequent data were collected by reviewing extant documents and conducting follow-up instructional observations and interviews with the school principal and the receiver. The data collection and analysis processes were purposely developed to ensure that the data were reliable and valid and that findings were informed by the appropriate key informants. For Level 5 schools, data were collected during the monitoring site visit process and follow-up activities to inform ESE’s statutory requirement to annually evaluate each Level 5 school’s progress toward implementing the turnaround plan. AIR’s Level 5 school review process focused on the specific turnaround priorities and subpriorities from each school’s turnaround plan.

## Highlights of Turnaround Plan Implementation at John Avery Parker Elementary

Overall throughout the 2016–17 school year, John Avery Parker Elementary (Parker) staff increased the rigor of instruction by meeting regularly in grade-level and vertical teams to closely study curriculum frameworks, plan lessons, reflect on student work, and plan next steps for teaching and learning. In addition, their PRIDE time intervention model has become a powerful driver for targeting academic supports for students, using data to address specific standards where students need support. Because all adults in the building are assigned a group of students to work with during PRIDE time, and because students are regrouped throughout the year, PRIDE also has been instrumental in building a school culture where all staff share responsibility for the success of all students.

In 2016–17, Parker focused on developing a culture of learning for both students and adults where student growth could be celebrated. Parker offered leadership opportunities to three staff through lead teacher positions. School leaders continued to focus on refining the behavioral system and designated one of the lead teacher positions to take ownership of positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) implementation. Parker also continued to build staff capacity to incorporate sheltered English immersion (SEI) strategies into all lessons through professional development and walk-through procedures to monitor implementation of these strategies. Parker created the building-based support team (BBST) as a structure to support the unique academic and social-emotional needs of their struggling students.

The school continued to emphasize the importance of data-driven instruction, and Parker staff continued to use student data binders and monitor student data through teacher collaboration time (TCT), professional learning communities (PLCs), and planning time. Parker emphasized student motivation and ownership of work through the continued use of data walls in all classrooms, the implementation of student-developed goals and monitoring of these goals, and the Wall of Fame to highlight students who have shown growth.

Family and community engagement continued to be a focus at Parker, with the family resource center manager (FRCM) holding responsibility for planning regular social events. These events often emphasized hands-on activities where parents were shown learning strategies that they could use to support students at home. In addition, the FRCM identified families in need of targeted supports and connected them to community resources as needed. Teachers at Parker were expected to develop a family engagement plan, and, as a result, 95% of families attended parent teacher conferences and 50 more parents than in the 2015–16 school year volunteered in classrooms. Parker continued to focus on chronic tardiness and developed the “Punctual Pete” initiative to get students into the building on time.

Lastly, the school continued to strategically leverage autonomies as needed to refine the school schedule, staff assignments, and student supports in response to ongoing analysis of data. For example, Parker staff suggested a different approach to summer programming that maintains targeted summer learning opportunities while extending school-year learning time for all students.

## End-of-Year Findings

### 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.

Across the school, Parker staff consistently reviewed student work to improve core instruction. Throughout the year, teachers chose six students (two in need of low support, two in need of moderate support, and two who need intensive support) and submitted their work weekly to the school instructional leadership team (SILT), which consists of the principal, the instructional coach, lead teachers, and the FRCM. In addition, each month, the teachers submitted writing samples from all students. The SILT reviewed these data for student progress and reflected on the most impactful teaching strategies. The SILT also used the information gathered to inform how the PRIDE intervention groups were structured and to determine how best to leverage the lead teachers to support teachers and students. In addition, teachers used the information gained from this analysis to design lessons that targeted areas where students needed support while also challenging them where they were ready for more.

In 2015–16, Parker implemented intervention blocks called PRIDE and continued with this practice during the 2016–17 school year. These daily small-group intervention blocks provided
60 additional minutes of English language arts (ELA) and mathematics instruction for advancing core instruction and providing Tier II and III supports as needed. Two lead teachers provided teaching and coaching during PRIDE time. Students were grouped based on specific content standards where they needed support and rotated through different teachers during the year, whilestaff focused on reviewing, reinforcing, or enrichment (RRE), depending on student need. This was a shift from last year, where students in the different groups generally worked on the same concepts, but instruction was tailored toward each group’s level. Students were regrouped for PRIDE time every 6 weeks, although this schedule could fluctuate depending on student need. All Parker educators, including special education, English as a second language (ESL), and lead teachers, took on groups during PRIDE time and worked with different students during the year. This approach helped educators develop a deep sense of responsibility for the success of all students at Parker, not just those assigned to their core classroom. It also has contributed to a culture where teachers openly share tips and strategies with each other as they learn what approaches work best with their students. For the coaching aspect, the lead teacher followed up with classroom teachers during core instruction to ensure that they were using the modeled strategies. The PRIDE time model has been successful in the lower grades (PK–2), reflected in an increase in midyear Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) proficiency. Based on data for students in Grades 3–5, Parker leadership reported that PRIDE time needs to be used to dig deeper, and they have plans in place to transition PRIDE time into a more formal response to intervention model for these upper grades. Parker will bring in a reading specialist for the 2017–18 school year to offer more formalized supports and more frequent progress monitoring. Parker plans to continue with the PRIDE model as is in the lower grades.

Parker also focused on developing a culture of learning for students and adults, and established structures to celebrate successes for students. For example, Parker displayed a “Wall of Fame” used to promote student motivation. On Fridays, teachers sent students who had shown growth in reading, writing, or mathematics to the main office to get their picture taken and hung up on the “Wall of Fame.” This structure emphasized growth and movement and was not restricted to higher performing students. This was a part of Parker’s mindset shift to motivate and celebrate students who are performing at all levels. In addition, AIR instructional staff survey responses indicated that, on average, instructional staff agreed that school leadership made high expectations a priority and that high expectations and positive regard for students were a priority for the majority of staff.

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

Throughout the 2016–17 school year, Parker staff focused on ways to increase time on instruction. During the 2016 Summer Academy, teachers, with support from lead teachers, developed student profile folders that highlighted strengths, areas of growth, and data from Summer Academy Benchmarks. These student profile folders were provided to the 2016–17 instructional staff as baseline data for students coming into their classrooms. During the 2016–17 school year, teachers were responsible for incorporating all student data into student data binders and using the information to inform their lesson planning and student supports. Parker continued to use the schoolwide data tracker so that administrators could monitor ELA scores by unit test and mathematics scores by topic assessment for each grade level.

Parker continued to implement PBIS, which helped establish a common language and a defined set of behavioral expectations. The school had a PBIS team led by one of the lead teachers and included teachers and support staff. The team tracked data on student discipline and used the information to identify and address hot spots such as specific times of day when students were having a hard time meeting behavioral expectations. To build more consistent implementation of the system and focus on the whole child, Parker developed a BBST. The purpose of this team was to remove barriers (nonacademic or academic) that were hindering student success. This team served as a system to support the needs of struggling students through an established process for both referral and evaluation. The supports they provided could include academic supports, social-emotional supports, referral to an outside agency, or other behavioral supports as needed. With the rollout of the BBST, all staff attended a professional development session
co-led by the district instructional supervisor of special education and the lead teacher, who walked through how to navigate the BBST system and how staff can support the initiative within their classrooms.

The BBST has further emphasized the ownership of all students by every staff member, one of Parker’s key focus areas this year. In 2017–18, this team will continue to be responsible for reviewing student data, identifying students in need of additional supports, developing action steps, and monitoring the interventions to ensure they make a difference for students. For example, when the BBST was tasked with looking at a particular student struggling with behavior, the team would review the student’s behavior over the span of the day and take into account: “When is this student having the most trouble? Do we see this problem with one particular teacher? How is the teacher responding to this behavior? What can we do to limit this kind of behavior?” The staff reported improvements based on the work the BBST has done and plan to continue with this model.

School leaders remained focused on the inclusion of SEI strategies in every lesson. All instructional staff are now SEI-endorsed and are expected to incorporate SEI strategies into every lesson. The district ESL leader provided professional development, and ESL teachers also hosted a hands-on professional development session. The implementation of SEI strategies was monitored during regular learning walks focused specifically on English language learners (ELLs) and the teachers’ use of strategies to best support all students. These learning walks will be used to develop action plans for continued support for SEI strategies.

Before the school year began, Parker offered a Summer Academy that provided 105 hours of instructional time to students. Teachers were involved in the development and delivery of instructional materials during the Summer Academy and also used the time to begin planning for the school year. In summer 2017, Parker will be partnering with the BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life) summer program at Power Scholars Academy. Leadership at Parker was not satisfied with the attendance for the summer program in 2016 and has opted to take part in this
5-week, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m.–3:30 p.m. (with the option for extended-day care) BELL program. Fifty-five Parker students in Grades 2–5 will participate in this program, which includes academics in the morning taught by New Bedford Public School staff and enrichments in the afternoon provided by the YMCA staff. This program emphasizes college and career readiness and provides students with the opportunity to take part in full-day field trips on Fridays. Students are invited to apply for this program, and Parker and the district have developed a major campaign to excite families and the community about this program. In addition, the Parker school year will begin 7 days sooner than in the past, providing all students with 56 additional hours of instruction by removing the optional summer hours and incorporating them into the regular school year. This approach ensures that all students receive additional instruction while still providing targeted supports in the summer for those who need it most. The professional development that teachers previously engaged in as part of the Summer Academy will now be spread throughout the school year, including additional time just prior to the start of school.

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

Parker staff increased their emphasis on data-driven instruction and focused on looking at data with the goal of personalizing supports as much as possible. Parker established structures for teachers and leadership to review a range of student data multiple times a week through teacher collaboration times (TCT), teacher planning time, PLCs, and instructional leadership team meetings. Data sources reviewed include state assessment data, benchmark assessment data, writing samples and other classwork, PRIDE data, Galileo, DIBELS, and ACCESS (for ELLs), as well as attendance and student discipline referrals.

Parker staff developed data binders for each student. These binders were used to monitor student progress and determine appropriate action steps. Teachers used these data binders individually or with grade-level teams to check student mastery, differentiate instruction, and determine what needed to be retaught. Teachers also submitted them weekly to be reviewed by school leaders who tracked progress by class and by individual student. The review of data to assign or reassign students to PRIDE groups generally occurred during TCT or planning time. Some data (e.g., exit tickets, classwork) were viewed by teachers daily to inform more immediate instructional changes and to track student engagement. In addition to data binders, Parker used a schoolwide data tracker for common formative assessments and district performance assessments. AIR instructional staff survey responses indicated that, on average, staff at Parker agreed that the school had teams and processes in place for examining data to determine students’ needs.

At Parker, teachers were encouraged to have students set and monitor their own goals. Teachers reviewed rubrics with students so that they could reflect on their progress on at least a weekly basis. Teachers were expected to have a data wall in their classroom that was continually updated with the most recent common formative assessment so that students could see their progress. This reflects the mindset shift at Parker for all staff to know each student, support all students’ growth, and allow students to understand and celebrate their growth.

Moving forward, Parker will be switching from Galileo to the STAR assessment. This transition will allow Parker to have more timely data, as they will not have to wait 6 weeks for the test results. In preparation for this transition, Parker’s plans to roll out STAR include the opportunity for the principal to get training from principals in the district who are already using STAR, visiting schools that are using STAR to see it in action, and hiring staff from STAR to provide on-site training for staff. The district also is planning a Principal PLC for principals who have made this transition to share some lessons learned.

In addition to looking closely at academic data, Parker staff have increased their use of nonacademic data to inform target supports for students and inform systems, structures, and adult practice at the school. For example, the PBIS system and related schoolwide information system helped Parker staff identify specific times of day when there are spikes in the number of disciplinary incidents, allowing them to be more proactive in helping students develop strategies to manage their own behavior and focus on learning. In addition, as mentioned in Priority Area 2, when a particular student was identified as needing intense support, the BBST reviewed a wide range of data to help understand the root of the student’s struggles and monitored the supports put in place for the student.

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

Family and community engagement continued to be a focus at Parker. This year, Parker focused specifically on ensuring that events serve as learning experiences for parents to help their child at home and to create a culture of active involvement in the school. Through the FRCM and the family engagement committee, regular social events were planned to bring the community into the building, with an emphasis on hand-on activities where parents were shown learning strategies that they could use to support students at home. Some of the events that Parker offered during the 2016–17 school year included an open house, family literacy night, prekindergarten night, and community potluck dinner.

Staff at Parker also were expected to develop family engagement plans. These plans included strategies to encourage volunteering at the school or helping in the classroom and promoted more family involvement with students’ academics (e.g., showing parents how to support their students with schoolwork). This year, Parker held parent teacher conferences in January and February to give all parents and guardians the opportunity to meet with the teacher. Ninety-five percent of students had a parent or guardian attend a conference.

Parker continued to focus on Tier III student attendance. This year, attendance incentives and a schoolwide campaign to reduce tardiness were put in place. Students and families were reminded every day about being on time by the presence of “Punctual Pete” in the lobby. Families who were late were given a “Punctual Pete” business card that reminded them of the school times and asked to set up a time to meet. Parker has seen tardiness decline since the rollout of “Punctual Pete.” The FRCM reached out to and met with families that had major problems with tardiness to identify the barriers to getting students to school on time and help eliminate them.

1. See Teachstone’s website for more information: <http://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/336169/What-is-CLASS_Info_Sheet.pdf?t=1432824252621> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)