



Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

75 Pleasant Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148-4906

Telephone: (781) 338-3000
TTY: N.E.T. Relay 1-800-439-2370

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner
Date: June 4, 2014
Subject: Paul A. Dever Elementary School Level 5 Turnaround Plan Appeal

On Wednesday, May 14, 2014, the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) filed an appeal to the Level 5 School Turnaround Plan for the Paul A. Dever Elementary School (Dever). For the reasons detailed below, the modifications requested will not improve the Plan and I recommend that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) decline to adopt them. I have developed a comprehensive, focused Turnaround Plan designed to promote the rapid academic achievement of students at the Dever School. Under the strong leadership of the school's Receiver, Blueprint Schools Network, the Turnaround Plan commits to deliver a transformative academic and support program that will enable Dever's students to learn at high levels and be prepared to reach their full potential.

Background

G.L. c. 69, § 1J, as amended by St. 2010, c. 12, § 3, An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap, provides for sweeping changes to the operations and structure of a "chronically underperforming" or Level 5 school in the Commonwealth.¹ The law requires that I take decisive action by creating a turnaround plan for a Level 5 school, and provides the authority for necessary changes to be implemented at the school. Throughout the Achievement Gap Act, the Legislature repeatedly emphasized the necessity to act quickly in order to "maximize the rapid academic achievement of students" in the school. Timely action is essential to ensure that all

¹ "Level 5" refers to the placement of the school in the state's Framework for School Accountability and Assistance.

students, including current students, are afforded the opportunity and advantage to improve academically. Further, the Legislature recognized that significant change would be essential in order to create schools where student achievement could be maximized, as the status quo in these lowest performing and least improving schools is perpetuating the achievement gap that the Act was designed to address.

Prior to designation as a chronically underperforming school, a school must be designated underperforming (Level 4), implement a Level 4 Turnaround Plan, and fail to improve significantly. In 2010, 12 schools in Boston were designated underperforming, or Level 4. Of these schools, five schools² exited Level 4 status in 2013 into Levels 1, 2 and 3 after three years of implementing robust turnaround plans and receiving federal resources to support the plans' implementation. These five schools saw significant increases in student performance due to established systems and practices that set them on a trajectory for continued growth in student learning. Four other Boston schools designated Level 4 in 2010 remain in Level 4 and continue to implement Turnaround Plans for another year, and one school closed.³

However, the Dever's performance after three years as a Level 4 school revealed persistently low student achievement rates and failure to meet its measurable annual goals despite having access to the same resources and autonomies as the other more successful schools in the district. Dever has been providing an insufficient instructional program, the result of which is unacceptably low student academic performance. Therefore, I designated Dever Elementary School chronically underperforming or Level 5.

The breadth of academic weakness at the Dever is substantial. Overall, only 14% of students in tested grades⁴ at the Dever Elementary School scored proficient or advanced on the English Language Arts (ELA) MCAS exam in 2013, and only 31% scored proficient or advanced in Math (a decline from 2011). Over one-third of students scored in the "Warning"

2 The five Boston schools that exited Level 4 status in 2013 are: Blackstone Elementary School, Harbor Middle School, John F. Kennedy Elementary School, Orchard Gardens K-8 School, and Trotter Elementary School.

3 The school that closed was the Louis Agassiz Elementary School.

4 Grades 3-5 (MCAS is not offered in grades Kindergarten-2).

category in ELA (36%) and over one-quarter (29%) in Math. The median student growth percentile in ELA was 26; in Math, it was 49. Dever's scores on the MCAS Science assessment were also critically low in 2013, with only 1% of students scoring proficient (and zero scoring advanced).

The low performance of Dever's subgroups is also significant, given that English language learners (ELLs) make up over 42% of the school, and students with disabilities (SWDs) comprise 14% of the school. On the ELA MCAS, only 16% of ELLs in tested grades scored proficient or advanced; on the Math MCAS, 35% of the ELLs scored proficient or advanced. Only 3% of Dever's SWDs in tested grades scored in the proficient range on the ELA MCAS, and only 7% scored either proficient or advanced on the Math.

For 55% of Dever's students, English is not their first language (FLNE). In addition to the most common first language of Spanish (74.1%), the school also serves students who have Vietnamese (11.9%), Haitian Creole (3.4%), Cape Verdean (3.1%), and Kurdish (2.2%) as their first languages. Of the 93 FLNEs in tested grades whose first language is Spanish, only 8 (7%) were proficient (zero advanced) on the 2013 ELA MCAS, and 21 (23%) of those students scored either proficient or advanced on the Math. The second largest FLNE subgroup, the 20 students in tested grades whose first language is Vietnamese, fared better. Eight (40%) of those students scored proficient or advanced on ELA, while 17 (85%) scored proficient or advanced on the Math test.

Grade-level analysis revealed consistently low performance in ELA across tested grade levels (ranging from 13% to 16% proficiency) and consistently low performance in Math across tested grade levels as well (ranging from 24% to 38% proficiency). Student achievement results have been consistently low in all grade levels in both ELA and Math between 2010 and 2013, concluding with grade 5 where only 13% of students are proficient in ELA and 24% are proficient in Math. It is clear that the majority of students leave the school unprepared for success at the next level.

The school and district had significant authorities and opportunities to improve during the three years that Dever was designated as Level 4. Yet, after it was designated Level 4, Dever failed to implement the comprehensive, rapid changes needed to create substantial turnaround.

The school was well-resourced to do this work. In addition to its other district, state, and federal grant funds, a federal School Redesign Grant (\$2.3 million over three years) was awarded to the school to help implement its turnaround strategies. Despite having the tools needed to make significant system changes to the school – tools that other Boston schools used to improve significantly and exit Level 4 status – by the end of the 2012-2013 school year, Dever was only able to meet 45% of the measurable annual goals (set by both ESE and the school itself) that were included in its Level 4 turnaround plan.

In addition, the school failed to capitalize on additional learning time for its students. Teachers were paid an additional \$4,100 per year for working additional hours as part of the Level 4 Turnaround Plan strategy, although the additional time did not lead to improvements in student performance. Further, the school failed to implement a coherent and well-aligned curriculum that is necessary to accelerate learning and significantly raise achievement for all students. Despite the efforts of the past three years, students are still achieving below grade level expectations.

As a consequence, in October 2013, I designated Dever Elementary School a Level 5 school, and working with Blueprint Schools Network, the non-profit organization I named Receiver for Dever in January 2014, developed a Turnaround Plan for the school that is designed to maximize and accelerate student achievement. As I developed the Preliminary Turnaround Plan, I considered and incorporated recommendations from the local stakeholder group (LSG). I also considered modifications to the Preliminary Level 5 Turnaround Plan proposed by the LSG. I incorporated suggestions and modifications consistent with swift improvement in student performance, but rejected language that maintained current practices and policies which have led to the school's unacceptably low performance.⁵ I issued the Final Turnaround Plan on April 24, 2014.

The Dever Level 5 Turnaround Plan includes the decisive measures that are required to deliver a well-rounded educational experience that prepares all Dever students to succeed. Our first job, as this school enters receivership, is to secure the basics of a coherent, school-wide academic program and a well-functioning school. Strong, focused implementation of the strategies contained in Dever's Turnaround Plan will provide the best opportunity to address the

⁵ I have included my response to the LSG as Exhibit 1 to this memorandum.

school's underperformance through a renewed sense of urgency and a drive for excellence to ensure *all* of Dever's students receive the high quality education they deserve.

Why implementation of the Dever Final Level 5 Turnaround Plan will maximize the rapid academic achievement of students at the school

The turnaround work at Dever will be realized only through substantial, school-wide reform, which is what the plan entails. Given the depth and breadth of reform needed to turn around the Dever, I believe there are five strategies that are most likely to result in both short-term gains and long-lasting improvement: accelerate all students' language development and literacy in English and provide families with the opportunity for content-rich Spanish language development for their students; improve instructional quality and maximize time for core instruction; use data to drive instruction; establish a culture of high expectations and college and career readiness; and hire and cultivate a high-performing faculty. The strategies' effectiveness will be enhanced by the school's emphasis on using both school and external partner resources to address students' educational, social service, and other needs in order to facilitate students' learning. The Dever Level 5 Turnaround Plan I have created is focused on these key Priority Areas.

Blueprint and I recognize the value of multi-lingualism in preparing students for college and career readiness in today's multicultural world, and are committed to preserving a focus on multilingual education at Dever. The skills acquired in learning an additional language are valuable to prepare students for college and careers, and have been shown to enhance cognitive development, which helps support student learning across all content areas.

Therefore, effective language development is at the center of our model for Dever's turnaround and the rapid improvement of academic achievement for its students. We also know Dever serves families from diverse cultural, economic, and linguistic backgrounds and look forward to celebrating this diversity every day in Dever's classrooms, curriculum, and school community. In addition, the Dever will offer a content-rich Spanish language instructional program for families that want this instructional approach for their children.

With Dever's student performance data at distressingly low levels, there is nothing more important than improving the school's instruction. Recruitment, development, and retention of

strong teachers is critical. Having high quality teachers in the school, however, is not enough. They need to be supported by systems and resources that allow their teaching practice to grow, and to constantly strengthen their practice. They need structured time to collaborate in order to create and present a coherent, comprehensive education to students. And they need instructional leadership and coaching that will help them hone their craft and be the best teachers they can be. Dever's staff will ensure every student receives the individualized services, support, and instruction they need to be successful. Frequent, effective, and on-going family and community outreach and communication will be essential to the effectiveness of Dever's turnaround. Stakeholder input provided through the ELL Parent Advisory Committee and the School Site Council, along with less formal methods, will be a valuable asset as we implement the Turnaround Plan.

I have selected the non-profit organization Blueprint Schools Network to join me in this work, based on its experience and its vision for Dever. Blueprint is well-prepared with the experience and expertise needed to serve as Receiver for Dever Elementary. Its leadership team has successful experience in education; members of the team have served as teachers, principals, Chief Academic Officers for both public and charter school networks, and as Director of Human Resources for a public school district similar in size and scope to Boston. This experience spans all levels of school management and operations and includes time working in urban settings with low-income student populations. Blueprint's team has experience working with schools and districts to establish the conditions and systems that are needed to successfully and sustainably manage school transformation using a research-based turnaround framework.

Blueprint's three-year partnership with Denver Public Schools (DPS) to support Denver's Summit Schools Network (DSSN) illustrates Blueprint's approach and operations. The DSSN consists of ten schools in Denver's far northeast region, where 86% of students qualify for free and reduced-price lunch, 92% are students of color, and 35% are English language learners. Blueprint and DPS collaborated on virtually every instructional and operational component necessary to launch, oversee, and sustain effective schools, including budget, data, human resources, procurement, communication, and community outreach efforts. Blueprint also provides extensive day-to-day monitoring and support for DSSN schools through its regionally-based staff and a series of formal site visits (occurring every four to six weeks). During these

visits, Blueprint evaluates each school's strengths and areas for improvement based on observational and focus group data and reviews the actions taken to address areas for improvement identified during the prior visit.

The DSSN began in the fall of 2011 and quantitative data for the first two years of the intervention show positive results for student learning. After one year of partnership (2011-12), all grades in all DPS partner schools that implemented Blueprint's turnaround framework outperformed DPS in percentage point gain for students scoring either proficient or advanced in both math and reading. After two years of partnership (2011-13), Blueprint's DPS partner schools achieved their highest rates of students scoring proficient and advanced in reading, writing and math in five years. In elementary schools, the percent of students scoring proficient or advanced in math increased from 32% to 50% and in reading increased from 32% to 43%. For ELL students, in all subjects during this period, median growth percentiles were above 50, indicating accelerated growth; the percentiles were higher for exited ELLs (78 in reading; 75 in math). I am confident in Blueprint's ability to create dramatic positive change at Dever, including for its ELL students.

Blueprint and I believe that, by combining outstanding teaching, professional development, constant reflection on data to improve teaching and learning, and an emphasis on family and community involvement, Dever can become a school where rapid academic achievement is the norm.

BTU'S appeal to the Dever Elementary School Turnaround Plan

Working with my staff and in consultation with Blueprint Schools Network, I have reviewed the modifications to the Turnaround Plan proposed by the BTU and recommend that none of the modifications should be adopted. My rationale follows for each section of the BTU's appeal.

The Turnaround Plan's compensation system promotes teacher performance.

The compensation plan included in the Turnaround Plan will be implemented in two phases. This is due to the fact that the district and the Receiver agreed that the new compensation plan could not be programmed into the large and complex City of Boston Human

Resources and Payroll System in a timely basis to pay teachers accurately beginning in August 2014. For its part, the Receiver felt strongly that it needed to focus its team on executing the new Turnaround Plan and preferred to implement a new salary structure in the second year. The combination of these two forces compelled me to introduce the Career Ladder model in the second year.

Beginning July 1, 2014 teachers will be compensated using the current BTU salary schedule. Teachers will receive the negotiated 3% across the board salary increases and step and lane entitlements. In addition, returning teachers will continue to receive \$4,100 for the previously negotiated ELT stipend, and newly hired teachers will receive a \$2,000 stipend. In preparing the compensation model, we used the existing teacher census in the two Boston Level 5 schools (Dever and Holland) to generate the information below:

- the average teacher would receive \$4,747 more than the current salary
- the average salary would increase from \$82,221 to \$86,968
- teacher salaries would range from \$61,482 to \$108,891
- individual teacher salary increases would range from \$2,375 to \$7,771

Other points to note:

- Inevitably, there will be pressure to contain salary costs in Boston's next teacher contract, given the challenges of matching revenues and expenditures experienced this year and presumably the following year, given that there will be an additional year of 3% salary increases.
- The Boston teacher salary and annual across the board increases in the current contract are significantly higher than the teacher salaries in the other Level 5 schools.
- Boston's average expenditure per in-district pupil was \$18,126 in 2013, the most recent year for which financial data is available.
- Boston's average expenditure per pupil was 20% more than Holyoke at \$15,049, and 48% more than New Bedford at \$12,254.

The new compensation model will be implemented in July, 2015. Teachers hired in Year 1 will be transitioned to the career ladder based on their current step and will then be able to move up the ladder more than one level at a time if they receive exceptional evaluations. Teachers will no longer depend simply on seniority, educational credits and degrees to receive

salary increases. All teachers will engage in peer collaboration, job-embedded professional development, and instructional supervision to help them improve their teaching practice.

The implementation of the performance based compensation system at Dever Elementary School is an essential strategy for attracting and retaining strong teachers and for maximizing the rapid academic achievement for students. Below are some key elements of the compensation plan:

- **Emphasis on student outcomes:** The new system rewards what matters -- student performance -- and will attract effective teachers who are driven by outcomes.
- **Incentives at key career points:** The system incentivizes teachers to stay in teaching at the time when many educators consider leaving the profession (after three years, by providing a \$5,000 bump between Developing Level II and Career I).
- **Leadership opportunities:** The system provides leadership opportunities through the Advanced and Master positions and provides appropriate compensation in these roles.

The BTU's main argument is that "no teacher can teach for long at the Dever School under the conditions of the Final Turnaround Plan" (BTU appeal, page 3). Yet, for some teachers, the current compensation model, which bases pay raises solely on time served in the district and credits earned, is increasingly cited as a disincentive for high performing teachers to stay in teaching, and threatens to undermine morale. Critics of the status quo salary schedule argue that, in fact, misaligned compensation systems are "thought to be especially acute in difficult-to-staff schools where the working conditions are more difficult, yet the compensation, due to the single salary schedule, is often similar to schools with better working conditions."⁶ Thus, using the district-wide salary schedule in Boston as the salary schedule at the Dever ignores the working conditions and challenges of teaching at the school.

The professional compensation system to be implemented in Year 2 of the turnaround takes a different approach. The system is expressly modeled on the professional compensation system that is in place in the Lawrence Public Schools. As noted above, the Turnaround Plan includes a compensation system that differentiates among teachers and provides a career ladder

⁶Thomas Dee and James Wyckoff, 2013. "*Incentives, Selection, and Teacher Performance: Evidence from IMPACT*." NBER Working Paper No. 19529).

where advancement is based on a holistic measure of teacher effectiveness.

This sophisticated, differentiated compensation system holds promise for improving student outcomes and is supported by the research. For example, recent research by Thomas Dee and James Wyckoff on Washington, D.C.'s IMPACT program found that financial incentives linked to multiple measures of teacher performance (i.e., observational measures as well as student achievement data) improved the performance of high-performing teachers (effect size = 0.24).⁷ Dee and Wyckoff maintain that their results provide "reasonably credible evidence" on the effects of these performance based compensation systems such as the IMPACT system in DC and the structures described in the Dever's proposed compensation plan.⁸ Dee and Wyckoff conclude that "overall, the evidence presented in this study indicates high-powered incentives linked to multiple indicators of teacher performance can substantially improve the measured performance of the teaching workforce."⁹

As evidenced by some initial successes in the Lawrence schools which have similar working conditions (same length of work day and work year), similar teaching models, similar student populations, and a similar compensation model, I am confident that the working conditions and the career ladder compensation plan included in the Dever's Final Turnaround Plan will actually attract high potential and highly effective teachers who want to work in a challenging environment with the type of professional support and dedication to serving students with the greatest needs. Data from Lawrence teachers and the Receiver are also supportive. Data from the TELL Mass Survey of Lawrence educators shows positive trends between the 2012 administration (prior to the district's implementation of its Turnaround Plan) and in 2014, a year and a half into the Plan's implementation. Lawrence educators' responses were higher than statewide averages and showed substantial increases in areas crucial to improving school culture and student achievement, including: having sufficient time for collaboration and instruction; being trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction and to take on leadership roles; and experiencing increased levels of trust and mutual respect.¹⁰ Receiver Jeff Riley reports

7 Dee and Wyckoff, 2013.

8 Dee and Wyckoff, 2013, page 1.

9 Dee and Wyckoff, 2013, page 28.

10 TELL Mass Survey Results 2014, <http://2012.tellmass.org/reports>.

that there is a high rate of external teacher applicants to fill open positions in Lawrence elementary and middle schools, which have all adopted a longer work day or work year with comparatively lower stipends for the extra time:

- LPS Elementary schools report 1500 candidates for 40 positions.
- UP Academy Leonard and UP Academy Oliver report 450 candidates for 23 positions across the two schools.
- Spark Academy reports 448 candidates for 12 positions.

Blueprint has reported that many teacher candidates are attracted to the Dever, in part, because of the investment in properly preparing teachers for the start of the school year, including professional development support, time with colleagues, time to learn about the students they will teach, general school environment, and the support teachers will receive to do their work throughout the year. Similarly, teacher application levels are high as the Receiver fills positions in the school. As of June 1st, Blueprint reports that it has received 684 applicants for 48 total teaching positions at the Dever. Of note, Blueprint has hired 50% of the school's teachers as of the end of May; 37% of these teachers speak a second language. As these numbers show, the school is succeeding in attracting teachers to fill openings.

The Boston Teachers Union has requested that the Turnaround Plan be modified so that teachers would be paid at the contractual hourly rate for all hours worked beyond the standard contractual work year. The BTU has calculated the amount of added hours to be 657.5 hours per teacher. At the BTU 2014-2015 contractual hourly rate of \$45.06 per hour, the annualized total additional cost would be \$29,627 for each teacher. Such increases are neither sustainable nor affordable given the City of Boston's finances and given the funding streams for the Level 5 schools. While Boston will meet its obligations under the statute in allocating funds in an equitable manner to the Dever, the municipal share of the school's budget will be reduced for next year, consistent with school budgets across the district. In the first year of the Turnaround Plan alone, the BTU proposal would add over \$1,500,000 to the anticipated cost of implementing the Turnaround Plan with the longer instructional day and the longer work year.

I recommend that the Board decline to adopt the modification requested by the BTU. The proposal is not necessary to attract and retain effective teachers, is not financially affordable and sustainable, and is not required by the statute.

The alternative dispute resolution process in the Turnaround Plan is necessary to ensure that decisions related to working conditions are handled swiftly and consistently with the requirements of the Achievement Gap Act.

The BTU alleges that the alternative dispute resolution process that is included in the Turnaround Plan fails to meet the requirements of the law because “the Commissioner has presented no evidence whatsoever that dismantling the contractual grievance and arbitration procedure will help to maximize the rapid academic achievement of students at the school.”¹¹ The Board should decline to adopt the BTU’s requested modification because the dispute resolution process included in the Plan will lead to the fair and prompt resolution of employee disputes.

Simply put, a Level 5 school requires a different process for resolving employee disputes than what is provided for in the district’s collective bargaining agreement, for two reasons:

- the decision makers in a Level 5 school are different than the decision makers in non-Level 5 schools; and
- there is additional urgency in a Level 5 school for working condition issues to be resolved quickly.

As to the first issue, the Turnaround Plan includes a dispute resolution process that allows decisions to be made by the appropriate parties. For example, the current grievance and arbitration process included in the BTU’s collective bargaining agreement requires the Superintendent to hear and decide grievances at Step III. But, the Achievement Gap Act expressly provides that a Level 5 school Receiver has full operational and managerial control over the school. Likewise, the Board’s regulations provide that a Receiver for a Level 5 school has all of the powers that the Superintendent previously had over the school.¹² Therefore, the

¹¹ See BTU appeal, page 4.

¹² 603 CMR 2.06 (5)(a) (“A receiver appointed by the commissioner for a school in Level 5 pursuant to M.G.L. c. 69, s. 1J(r), shall have all of the powers that the superintendent previously had over the school and all of the powers

process to resolve employee disputes at a Level 5 school should not involve the Superintendent, but should involve the Receiver. The dispute resolution process in the Turnaround Plan does exactly that.¹³

With respect to the second issue, the dispute resolution process included in the Dever School Turnaround Plan is designed to provide prompt resolution of concerns. The time frames in the alternative dispute resolution process are accelerated so that disputes will be resolved quickly. In comparison, in the traditional grievance and arbitration process, it is not unusual for more than a year to elapse between the time an incident occurs, a grievance is filed, and an arbitrator issues a decision. Resolving concerns quickly will lessen distractions and allow teachers to maintain their primary focus on the students and the classroom.

The alternative dispute resolution process included in the Turnaround Plan, moreover, does not sacrifice process for speed. It provides a full and fair opportunity for teachers to raise issues of concern. The teacher may include a union representative at every stage.¹⁴ The resolution process also provides teachers with the opportunity to meet with the Principal or the Receiver to discuss concerns; and it requires the Principal and the Receiver to provide their decisions in writing.

Finally, the BTU erroneously claims that the alternative dispute resolution process will be the exclusive mechanism for resolving all disputes. To the contrary, the Turnaround Plan explicitly provides that the dismissal of a teacher with professional teacher status will be governed by the process set out in state statute, G.L. c. 69, § 1J(o), not the alternative dispute resolution process. (See Turnaround Plan, page 46.) Section 1J(o) provides that a teacher with professional teacher status may seek review of a dismissal decision through an expedited arbitration process.¹⁵

granted to a receiver for a Level 5 school by M.G.L. c. 69, s. 1J. The receiver shall report directly to the commissioner.”)

¹³ See also the memorandum to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education dated June 4, 2014 from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s Legal office.

¹⁴ Turnaround Plan, page 47.

¹⁵ The statute provides, in part: “A teacher with professional teacher status in a school declared underperforming or chronically underperforming may be dismissed for good cause; provided, however, that the teacher receives 5 days

For these reasons, I recommend that the Board decline to adopt the BTU’s requested modification, as the dispute resolution process included in the Plan is legally sound and will lead to the fair and expeditious resolution of disputes that arise at the Dever School.

Dever’s current instructional program has not promoted the rapid academic achievement of all of its students.

The BTU’s appeal proposes that “the turnaround plan should be modified to stipulate that the dual language program at the Dever will be continued.” The BTU appeal suggests that I did not give due consideration to the data the LSG provided as evidence that the program is successful. The argument presented by the BTU is that the persistently low MCAS results of students at the school are not an indication of the success or failure of the dual language program and that the dual language program has not had sufficient time to lead to improvement in MCAS results.

The BTU correctly notes that ESE has not attributed the low achievement results of the school solely to the dual language program. In fact, what I indicated in the Turnaround Plan is that neither the dual language program nor the courses taught only in English are contributing to rapid gains in English language arts achievement for Dever’s students: “The number of students functioning at proficient or higher levels in ELA is exceptionally low across both the English-only and dual language programs, with the English-only students performing slightly better.”¹⁶ In mathematics as well, the differences in proficiency levels between students in the dual language classes and classes taught exclusively in English are not substantial. **Student performance is very low in both the English-only and dual language classrooms of Dever’s academic program.**

As I stated earlier, the *totality* of Dever’s instructional program, which is comprised of various courses, curricula, and sub-programs, is leading to very low student MCAS scores, among the worst across the Commonwealth. In ELA, Dever’s scores have declined since it was

written notice of the decision to terminate which shall include without limitation an explanation of the reason why the commissioner or superintendent is not retaining the teacher in the school; provided, further, that the teacher may seek review of a termination decision within 5 days after receiving notice of the teacher’s termination by filing a petition for expedited arbitration with the commissioner”

16 Turnaround Plan, page 86.

designated a Level 4 school in 2010. At that time, only one in four students were proficient on the ELA MCAS. That percentage has plummeted to a point where only one in seven students reached proficiency on the 2012-13 ELA MCAS. This is simply unacceptable. Only 1 in 3 students are proficient in Math; this has also declined since 2010. In addition, as students progress through the school, the MCAS scores decline, with the proportion of Warning scores higher at 5th grade than at 3rd and 4th grade.

The LSG submitted a timeline for the dual language program’s development at Dever.¹⁷ It shows the numbers of classrooms/students brought into the program each year, from the first cohort of two Kindergarten classrooms (40 students in school year 2009-10) to the current school year 2013-14 (455 students of the 550 students enrolled at the school, in 19 classrooms). The BTU has correctly noted that the percentage of students taking a state assessment who have participated in the dual language program was only 11% in 2012 and 28% in 2013. However, there is little evidence to suggest that the increased sample of students in the dual language program who have taken MCAS has positively impacted student results on state assessments.

As the table below indicates, even as the percentage of tested students who participated in the dual language program increased to 28% in 2013, the school fell to a four-year low of only 16% of 3rd graders proficient on the ELA MCAS.

Percentage of tested students scoring proficient or advanced on ELA MCAS, 2010-2013

	2010 %	2011%	2012 %	2013 %
	P/A	P/A	P/A	P/A
Grade 3 ELA	19	17	24	16
Grade 4 ELA	20	24	19	14
Grade 5 ELA	43	19	26	13
All Grades ELA	26	20	22	14

In January 2014, the LSG submitted data accompanying its recommendations for the Turnaround Plan; the BTU refers to these data in its appeal as evidence that the dual language

¹⁷ See Exhibit 2. This document was submitted by the LSG along with its recommendations in January 2014.

program is working and should not be eliminated. These data include attendance data from students in all grades; data about “student violations”¹⁸ in selected months between School Year 2012-13 and School Year 2013-14; and Kindergarten through second grade scores on the Text Reading and Comprehension (TRC) assessment between School Year 2010-2011 and School Year 2012-2013. In some grades, attendance improved in the period between School Year 2011-2012 and School Year 2013-2014; in others, it remained flat or declined. When comparing the months of September through December between School Year 2012-2013 and this year, in each month, this year’s student violation totals have decreased as compared to last year. Regarding the TRC data, even among the three grades for which data were submitted, there is variability, with 1st and 2nd grades scoring notably below Kindergarten in all three years.¹⁹

While the increased literacy levels in Kindergarten and first grade on the TRC are encouraging, unfortunately, this movement appears to lose traction as the literacy levels exhibited in second grade have been relatively unchanged over the last three years, and the ELA MCAS results in grades 3-5 remain at alarmingly low levels. In addition, the Achievement Network data the LSG submitted for grades 3-5 show that Dever students scored below the network average on both the first and second ELA assessments of the year.²⁰ Where attendance has improved and student violations have decreased, these incremental improvements are encouraging. However, the data that appear to show some improvement in the early grades have not translated into future academic success as students progress through the school. I am particularly concerned that the fifth graders are leaving Dever woefully underprepared for the middle school academic challenges that await them.

Additional data about challenges to Dever’s successful implementation of an effective dual language program

The enrollment of Dever’s first cohort of 40 Kindergarteners in its dual language

18 Information was not provided about what infractions are included in the student violation data.

19 Kindergarten scores ranged from 75% at/above grade level in 2010-2011 to 92% at/above grade level in 2012-2013 (declining in 2011-2012); 1st grade scores ranged from 48% at/above grade level in 2010-2011 to 58% at/above grade level in 2012-2013 (declining in 2011-2012); and 2nd grade scores ranged from 62% in 2010-2011 to 66% at/above grade level in both 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. Available in “Dever Supporting Documents” submitted by the LSG in January 2014, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/sss/turnaround/level5/schools/>.

20 Available in “Dever Supporting Documents” submitted by the LSG in January 2014, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/sss/turnaround/level5/schools/>.

program in the fall of 2009 just preceded the school’s designation as a Level 4 school, a change in leadership, and a significant turnover of administrators and staff. The changes that occurred in the context of being in a “turnaround mode” may have added to the challenges encountered in the successful implementation and scale-up of any highly functioning dual language program. At the same time, there was a decision to effectively combine the Dever with the physically adjacent McCormack Middle School, a Level 3 school, thus doubling the size of the school and complicating the turnaround process further.²¹ The combination of these competing imperatives – turnaround of a highly dysfunctional elementary school while merging with a middle school, and complicated by early implementation and scale-up of a dual language immersion program²² – would prove a daunting challenge to building an academic program and creating a new K-8 professional culture.²³ Moreover, addressing the requirements of the Level 4 Turnaround Plan while simultaneously creating and building an effective dual language program would confuse the primary goals and measures of progress at the school throughout the three years of turnaround.

As the Local Stakeholder Group and the BTU appeal both point out, research is clear that “in order to obtain the full benefits [of dual language programs] students need to remain in dual

21 In September 2013, Dever’s then-principal Michael Sabin, in an article about the obstacles during the three years of the school turnaround, identified the challenges posed by merging the Dever and McCormack schools, stating, “Change comes slower in a large school. It slowed down the turnaround.” In the same piece, Interim Superintendent John McDonough also acknowledged the “heavy burden” of merging the two schools while also trying to turn around Dever within a three-year window. (“Schools facing takeover reflect on obstacles,” by James Vaznis. *The Boston Globe*, September 20, 2013.)

22 Interim Superintendent McDonough also described these competing priorities (turnaround, the merging of the two schools, and the creation of the dual language program) in his remarks at the Level 5 roundtable event at the school on October 9, 2013.

23 It is worth noting that there is also a sub-separate Therapeutic Learning Community (TLC) sited at the school that serves approximately 35 students with substantial social and emotional issues. The TLC is an English-only program. One goal of Dever’s TLC program is to have opportunities and flexibility to integrate students into mainstream classes as appropriate during the day and at appropriate points throughout the year. Unfortunately, in grades K-2 where there are only dual language mainstream classes, this would mean moving TLC students to a dual language setting for which they are completely unprepared. It is unclear whether this has prevented Dever from serving all students in the least restrictive environment.

language programs for a minimum of five years, and preferably for six to eight years.”²⁴

Unfortunately, this is not happening with Dever’s student population. Mobility and attrition rates at the school have been high. For instance, of the original 40-student cohort who entered the two Dual Language classrooms at Dever in Kindergarten in 2009-2010, only 14 currently remain at the school as 5th graders. In addition, approximately 15-20% of Dever students transfer in or out of the school throughout the year, preventing them from interacting with the dual language model for a full school year.

While attrition and high rates of mobility affect all schools, its impact in dual language schools is greater because newly-arriving students cannot easily be integrated after the second grade if they do not demonstrate the skills and motivation to learn a second language. Attrition threatens not only the number of students at the school, but also the integrity of the dual language model.²⁵ At two other Boston schools with dual language programs, the Rafael Hernandez (K-8) and Joseph Hurley (K-8) Schools, for example, students seeking enrollment above the second grade must apply to the school, attend an orientation with their families, participate in an informal interview, and take a language proficiency assessment in Spanish and English to determine their ability to succeed in the dual language program. Researchers from the Gaston Institute identify this best practice of assessing the child's readiness as a way of further promoting family buy-in and preventing attrition.

The Dever, like many schools across the country, has had difficulty recruiting, hiring, and retaining teachers with the knowledge and skills to implement a program that immerses students in two languages. This model puts high demand on teacher teams with paired language classrooms, both for their planning and integration of curricula and instructional strategies. Teachers have not received sufficient professional development and supports to implement a dual language instructional program effectively. It was reported that by February 2014, only one all-staff professional development session for dual language was provided.

On February 25, 2014, a team of nine people that included the Executive Director and staff from Blueprint, representatives from ESE, and the Boston Public Schools Office of English Language Learners participated in a full day site visit to Dever. During the visit, the

²⁴ *Two-Way Bilingual Education in Boston Public Schools: Required Features, Guidelines and Recommendations*, by Virginia Diez and Faye Karp, Mauricio Gaston Institute, University of Massachusetts (May, 2013), page 44.

²⁵ Diez and Karp, page 38.

synchronicity of the instruction between teachers of each language who share the same two groups of students appeared to be inconsistent. In addition, the team discussed the 50-50 partial immersion model currently being implemented in the school. Previously, students received core instruction for one week in English and the following week in Spanish, in a different classroom with a different teacher. During the focus group conversation with teachers, it was reported that while some students seemed to do fine with this, others struggled for a day or two with the transition. To address this challenge, beginning this school year, the school tried an alternate schedule in certain grades, where students began spending two weeks in English and two in Spanish, to minimize the negative impact of the number of transitions involved for elementary students. However, the academic impact of this shift remains unclear.

The articulation of curricular materials, both horizontally across grade levels and vertically up through the grades, presents a further challenge. During classroom observations, the site visit team noted use of materials below grade level in both English and Spanish. Teachers have reportedly been spending a lot of time writing curriculum and translating reading materials into Spanish; they also reported that they do not have access to many outside resources from which to draw. While finding high quality curricular materials in both languages is a challenge for many dual language programs, the practice raises questions about the quality and consistency of the translations being presented to Dever's students. Also concerning is the lack of data on students' mastery of Spanish and the absence of Spanish-language interventions; the school does not currently have small group or pull-out intervention supports for students who need additional time and support to build their Spanish language skills.

During the 2013-2014 school year, I have heard strong advocacy from some families and organizations requesting that I continue Dever's dual language program. However, through this process, we have also encountered parents who did not volunteer for a dual language program and who are not sure why their children are experiencing Spanish as part of their instruction. This spring, Boston Public Schools called all 385 Dever families (calls placed in English and in Spanish),²⁶ offering the opportunity to transfer their children into another BPS dual language program beginning in School Year 2014-2015, as the Dever program is being discontinued. Twenty-nine students' families went to BPS Welcome Centers and requested dual language

²⁶ Information provided by Boston Public Schools.

opportunities for their students at other BPS schools next year. BPS made individual phone calls to the families of all 29 students to discuss alternate options within the district. Of the 29 students, 17 were placed at other district dual language schools, eight students' families ultimately chose for the students to remain at Dever, and four students will transfer to other BPS non-dual language schools next year. I recognize that families have many priorities to consider when selecting schools for their children. It appears that for the majority of the Dever's current families, however, placing their children in a Boston school with a dual language program was not their top priority in choosing a school for next year.²⁷

The implementation of Priority Area 1 in the Dever Turnaround Plan will lead to effective language development in English and Spanish and promote academic achievement across the school.

Our first job as Dever enters its first school year implementing the Level 5 Turnaround Plan is to secure the basics of a sound academic program, in literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, and physical education, and implement a comprehensive academic curriculum. In particular, because literacy is an essential tool for developing proficiency in all academic subjects, effective language development is at the center of our model for Dever's turnaround and the rapid academic achievement of its students. A unified, systematic approach to English language development (ELD) instruction and acquisition of literacy is essential for serving Dever's linguistically and culturally diverse student population. Dever requires an approach that offers a comprehensive set of ELD strategies interwoven with the instructional program, such as those outlined in the Turnaround Plan, while respecting and retaining Spanish language instruction and continuing the inclusive culture already begun at the school.

The Plan includes strategies for supporting students to acquire English language skills and learn grade-level academic content, and provides the opportunity for families to choose content-enriched Spanish language instruction for their students. Key features of this model include:

- Strong English literacy instruction,

²⁷ I recognize that some of the families who elected to keep their children at Dever next year may want the opportunity for their children to further their Spanish language development and pursue a curriculum that honors their heritage, or learn Spanish as an additional language. For that reason, I have incorporated a content-rich Spanish language instruction program into the Dever curriculum. Please see pages 10-11 of the Turnaround Plan.

- Explicit English Language Development (ELD) instruction,
- Daily Spanish language instruction that incorporates multicultural history, geography, literature, arts, and music, and
- Effective sheltered instruction for English language learners in content areas.

The English and Spanish language development strategies described in Priority Area 1 of the Plan will offer a more comprehensive and effective approach to serving the language development needs of all current and future Dever students than the current academic program.²⁸

English Language Development and literacy for all students

Dever will devote significant time to English language development throughout the school day, both explicitly through ELD instruction and integrated into all content areas. Effective whole school ELD programs are essential to English language learner success. As stated in *English Language Learners at School: A Guide for Administrators, Second Edition*, “The goal is for schools to develop educationally sound instructional programs that everyone (parents, teachers, district personnel, community members) understands and supports, and to implement those programs effectively so they can deliver results for all learners, especially ELL/bilingual learners. By instructional programs for ELLs, we mean all of the instruction that an ELL student receives in a day, not just time spent with an ESL or bilingual specialist. Program coherence is key.”²⁹

The Dever Turnaround Plan describes a whole school instructional model focused on research-based ELD strategies. Effective ELD program models share five key characteristics, identified below. Each of these five program elements is addressed in the Dever Turnaround Plan.

28 The Holyoke Teachers Association (HTA), in its appeal to the Board regarding the Turnaround Plan for the Morgan School in Holyoke, directed the Board’s attention “to the Dever Level 5 plan that includes a comprehensive and systematic approach to the delivery of education to ELL students.” HTA appeal to the Morgan Final Level 5 Turnaround Plan, footnote 33, page 25. Available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/sss/turnaround/level5/schools/>

29 Hamayan, Else & Freeman Field, R. *English Language Learners at School: A Guide for Administrators, Second Edition*. Philadelphia: Caslon, 2012.

a. Effective programs ensure that ELLs attain proficiency in English and are given equal access to the core curriculum.

Strategy 1³⁰ makes clear that Dever’s staff will provide all students with instruction that is intentionally planned in all curriculum and content areas. Also, Strategy 3 identifies that the school’s learning environments will provide additional language development support. This includes targeted language supports – core strategies that are researched-based and proven to work with ELL students – that are used to increase language development (see Appendix F in the Turnaround Plan).

b. Effective programs make use of multiple ongoing authentic assessments.

Strategy 1 indicates that the school’s instructional strategies will be differentiated based on data about language proficiency levels, and by student needs. Strategy 1 and Strategy 7 also state that all students at Dever will be provided with instruction that is assessed and monitored for progress regularly through frequent data collection and analysis.

c. Effective programs have teachers who are fully credentialed and certified to work with ELLs.

Strategy 5 addresses highly effective staff as being essential to the successful implementation of language development strategies. Dever School will recruit, retain, and cultivate highly qualified teachers who have the SEI endorsement and/or have demonstrated success in serving ELL students. All instructional staff and school administrators will attend the SEI training which will equip them with a common understanding of sheltering content as well as the instructional skills necessary to work with ELL students and their families.³¹

d. Effective programs provide ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators.

All elements of Strategy 5 address the training and support that teachers and administrators need to serve ELLs effectively. Ongoing professional development will equip teachers to address the challenges ELL students face in accomplishing the

30 All strategies in this section can be found in Priority Area 1 of the Dever Turnaround Plan, unless otherwise noted.

31 See Exhibit 3 for core strategies taught in the SEI Endorsement Course.

dual task of learning the English language while simultaneously meeting grade-level expectations.

e. Effective programs promote active parental involvement and value students' native languages and cultures.

Strategy 6 focuses on this key characteristic of effective ELL programs. Dever will have an ELL Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) (comprised of families of students enrolled in the school's ELL programs) that will advocate for serving ELL students effectively. In Priority Area 4, Strategy 3 also includes the celebration of the school's cultural diversity as an integral component of the school's culture and identity.

Spanish Language Development

Dever will offer a content-rich Spanish language instructional program for Dever families that want this instructional approach for their children. Blueprint and I recognize that some Dever families are native Spanish speakers who want their children to have an opportunity to further their Spanish language development and pursue a curriculum that honors their heritage. Other Dever families who are not native Spanish speakers may want their children to learn Spanish as an additional language. Dever's Spanish language offering will be tiered according to the varying levels of Spanish proficiency at the school; the program will incorporate multicultural history, geography, literature, arts and music into language instruction.

Achieving fluency in more than one language is an asset that will benefit students throughout their lives. The skills acquired in learning an additional language are valuable tools that prepare students for college and careers and the demands of today's global economy, and have been shown to enhance cognitive development, which helps support student learning across all content areas. Research shows that beginning language instruction in the early elementary grades is optimal for producing high levels of language proficiency.³² In addition, research indicates that early foreign language exposure can help students achieve higher levels of cognitive development at an earlier age.³³

32 Wilburn Robinson, D. (1998). The cognitive, academic, and attitudinal benefits of early language learning. In M. Met, (Ed.) *Critical issues in early second language learning*. Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.

33 Bialystok, E. and K. Hakuta, *In Other Words: The Science and Psychology of Second-Language Acquisition*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 1994.

The Massachusetts Foreign Languages Curriculum Framework “sets the expectation that all students in the Commonwealth’s public schools will become proficient in at least one language in addition to English by the time they graduate from high school.”³⁴ The Framework articulates the five strands for the overall content and skills of foreign language learning, teaching and assessment. The content-enriched Foreign Language in Elementary School (FLES) offering that Dever will provide addresses all five strands described in the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework:

a. Communication: Students use the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

A primary goal of the content-rich Spanish program will be to promote the development of proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in Spanish. Recognizing that Dever students may have a wide range of prior experience with the language, their Spanish proficiency will be assessed in order to provide course offerings matched with their level of experience. These assessments will also help teachers better target student supports in Spanish. The cognitive skills and knowledge gained in Spanish will support students’ success in their other course work.

b. Cultures: Students gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures.

Multicultural history will be a key component of the course, along with literature, arts, and music to encourage cultural understanding. In Priority Area 4, Strategy 3 also includes the celebration of the school’s cultural diversity that will be an integral component of the school’s culture and identity, throughout the school day and included in the Spanish course.

c. Comparisons: Students develop insight into the nature of language and culture by comparing their own language and culture with another.

Almost 60% of Dever’s students do not speak Spanish as their first language. Participating in the Dever’s Spanish language program will allow them to compare their native languages and cultures with the content they learn in Spanish class. For native Spanish speakers, they will have an opportunity to understand home languages and

³⁴ Massachusetts Foreign Languages Curriculum Framework, August 1999, page 3. Available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/foreign/1999.pdf>.

cultures of their classmates. In addition, having the opportunity to explain their native language to peers may provide Spanish speakers with additional insight into their first language.

d. Connections: Students make connections with other subject areas and acquire information.

The Turnaround Plan describes a Spanish program that is designed from the outset to make connections with other subject areas across the curriculum. Students will use other subjects – including history, geography, literature, arts, and music – as tools to help them learn Spanish; in the process, they will make connections among various components of the school’s curriculum.

e. Communities: Students participate in communities at home and around the world in other languages.

As described earlier in this memorandum, many of Dever’s students speak languages other than English at home; over 40% of students speak Spanish at home. For those students and families who are Spanish speakers, parents will have an opportunity to further education in Spanish for their children as appropriate to individual learning needs and language proficiency. For students who are new to Spanish, the content and skills learned in the course will give them a new way to communicate.

We will continue our work to learn more about Dever families’ interest in the content-enriched Spanish language program, and to understand the Spanish language proficiency levels of the school’s students.

Dever’s language development strategies will be monitored vigilantly to ensure effectiveness; we will consider the feasibility of alternative language programs in future years.

Blueprint and I will monitor implementation to ensure that the academic strategies described in the Turnaround Plan lead to rapid improvement in all students’ language development. Over the coming years, as students’ foundational language skills become embedded, we will examine the feasibility of transitioning to an alternative language program (e.g., dual language/two-way immersion) if such a program could further advance students’ language skills. Transitioning to such a program would be contingent on the establishment of

conditions that have been shown to enhance effectiveness of these programs in Boston and elsewhere in the Commonwealth. Conditions that would need to be considered include:

- Policies to maintain students in the program for multiple years;
- Practices to require proficiency in both languages for students entering the program in later grades;
- Structures to support students who do not speak the language(s) of instruction; and
- Development of above-grade level course work so that advanced students could remain at Dever.

Conclusion

I believe that the Dever Elementary School's Level 5 Turnaround Plan is educationally sound, well reasoned, consistent with the law, and designed to maximize the rapid achievement of students at the school. The Receiver I have chosen to implement the plan has a well-documented track record of success in underperforming schools, including schools that serve a high proportion of English language learners, and the plan for the Dever School builds directly on these successful practices. The plan focuses on ensuring that each child experiences excellent teaching every day using a well-rounded and engaging curriculum. It also ensures that students will have supports to address social service and health needs so that they can arrive and remain at school ready to learn. At the same time, I recognize that some Dever families want their children to have an opportunity to learn Spanish. Dever will offer a content-rich Spanish language instructional program for Dever families that want this instructional approach for their children.

Ensuring that a well-functioning and effective educational program is in place at the Dever will be challenging work for students and educators alike, but it is essential. I am confident that by implementing this plan, Dever's students will have the significantly better educational experience and outcomes they need and deserve.

EXHIBITS

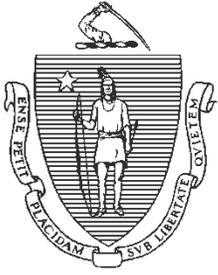


Exhibit 1

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

75 Pleasant Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148-4906

Telephone: (781) 338-3000
TTY: N.E.T. Relay 1-800-439-2370

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner

Proposed Modifications to the Dever Preliminary Turnaround Plan: Information regarding adopted modifications

To: Superintendent John McDonough
Michael O'Neill, Chair, Boston School Committee
Dever Elementary School Local Stakeholder Group
From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner
Date: April 24, 2014

Today, I released my final Level 5 school turnaround plan for Dever Elementary School.

Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 69, § 1J(p), the Superintendent, the Boston School Committee, and the Dever Local Stakeholder Group had the opportunity to propose modifications to the plan. (Proposing modifications was not required.) The Local Stakeholder Group submitted its proposed modifications and Superintendent McDonough provided a letter on April 7, 2014.

I appreciate the thoughtful input from the Local Stakeholder Group and have considered the modifications it proposed. Below, I first provide information about the modifications I have chosen to adopt and where they were incorporated into the final turnaround plan. Second, I indicate those I have declined to adopt and my rationale for doing so. Finally, I address other "clarification" areas identified by the Local Stakeholder Group.

Modifications I have adopted in the final Dever turnaround plan

Priority Area 1:

- *Page 10, regarding substantially separate classroom program: "Emotional Impairment" language should be included here. "Least restrictive environment" should replace "mainstream classroom environments when appropriate."*
 - This language has been incorporated into Priority Area 2, Strategy 4.
- *Page 10, regarding substantially separate classroom program: Specific training for teachers in the Emotional Impairment strand should be a high priority.*
 - This language has been incorporated into Priority Area 2, Strategy 4.

Priority Area 2:

- *Page 22, Restructuring the ELA block: The LSG recommends that Blueprint carefully review how this priority is currently addressed at the school, and provides detailed information about the time allotted to different ELA components.*
 - I agree that the ELD strategy we will use at Dever can be described in more detail. Substantial additional information regarding the ELD strategy is now provided in a new Appendix F.

Priority Area 3:

No modifications were proposed in this Priority Area.

Priority Area 4:

No modifications were accepted in this Priority Area.

Priority Area 5:

- *Strategy 1, regarding hiring high performing and high potential leaders, teachers, and related service providers: If Blueprint will be hiring mostly early career teachers, they should articulate a strong induction and support program in later drafts of this plan.*
 - A support program for early career teachers has been incorporated into Priority Area 5, Strategy 2.

Appendix A:

No modifications were proposed to this Appendix.

Appendix B:

No modifications were proposed to this Appendix.

Appendix C:

No modifications were proposed to this Appendix.

Appendix D:

No modifications were proposed to this Appendix.

Appendix E:

- *Regarding the bar graphs (page 87) depicting 2013 MCAS data for Grade 5 comparing dual language class results to English-only class results: LSG reports there was no dual language class in grade 5 in 2013, only an SEI class.*
 - A new, more clearly labeled version of the graph has been incorporated into Appendix E.
- *Regarding language around the sources of information and data that Blueprint and ESE have reviewed: Bullet 4 could more accurately read: “Information gathered by Blueprint during a site visit conducted on 2/25/14, School Site Council meetings on 2/11 and 2/25, conversations with teachers, parents, and school leaders.”*

- The language of this bullet now points readers to the timing of activities in the list of fact finding activities at the end of Appendix E.
- *Regarding language (page 90) that students whose first language is neither English nor Spanish do not have access to intervention supports for Spanish language development: All instruction delivered in Spanish includes Spanish Language Development Strategies.*
 - This language has been clarified in Appendix E.

Modifications I have declined to adopt in the final Dever turnaround plan

Priority Area 1:

All modifications were accepted in this Priority Area.

Priority Area 2:

- *Strategy 1, Increase Instructional Time: Concerns were raised about the appropriateness of an 8-hour school day for all of the school's student populations. Students in early childhood programs and in the Emotional Impairment strand were of specific concern.*
 - I decline to adopt this modification because I believe elementary school students can benefit significantly from an extended school day, if it is structured to provide for students' needs. Other schools have shown that increasing instructional time can lead to academic benefits for all learners when the schedule provides carefully structured learning, enrichment, and break periods that are responsive to students' age and program-appropriate needs.

Priority Area 3:

No modifications were proposed in this Priority Area.

Priority Area 4:

- *Strategy 2, regarding behavior intervention groups: Additional details about the structure and staffing are requested for the behavior intervention groups.*
 - I decline to adopt this modification because the groups' staffing and structure are currently under development and will be tailored to the behavioral needs of Dever's students. Blueprint has been meeting with long-standing Dever partner Wediko Children's Services to understand existing work and identify gaps in this area. The Dean of School Culture will facilitate these groups.
- *Strategy 3, regarding family and community engagement: Parent representatives on the LSG would like to know Blueprint's plan for introducing families to teachers and community.*
 - I decline to adopt this modification because information about the school's orientation for families and ongoing communication with families is already included in the plan. The specifics of the family orientation are under development; more information about the orientation will be provided to families in August.
 - For information about the outreach to Dever stakeholders that Blueprint has completed to date, including outreach to families, please see Appendix E in the turnaround plan.

Priority Area 5:

- *Strategy 1, regarding hiring high performing and high potential leaders, teachers, and related service providers: “High performance and high potential” criteria should be more clearly articulated here.*
 - I decline to adopt this modification because information regarding the competencies and skills possessed by high performing and high potential teachers are included in the “performance-based interviews and evaluations” and “candidate screening” sections of Strategy 1.
- *Strategy 1, regarding hiring high performing and high potential leaders, teachers, and related service providers: The LSG has serious concerns about the capacity of Blueprint to recruit the number of “high quality and high potential” teachers needed to staff the school given the proposed salary structure.*
 - Blueprint has already received applications from candidates who are aware of the compensation structure outlined in the turnaround plan. In School Year 2014-2015, candidates will be paid using the existing Boston Public Schools salary schedule; a performance-based compensation system will be used beginning in School Year 2015-2016. (For more information about Dever’s compensation structure, please see Appendix A in the turnaround plan.)

Appendix A:

No modifications were proposed to this Appendix.

Appendix B:

No modifications were proposed to this Appendix.

Appendix C:

No modifications were proposed to this Appendix.

Appendix D:

No modifications were proposed to this Appendix.

Appendix E:

- *Regarding the list of factors contributing to low achievement in Dever’s Dual Language Program (page 88): There have been no scheduling challenges in implementing the dual language program. The school has made adjustments to the schedule, with teacher input, to maximize instructional time and time for teacher collaboration.*
 - During ESE’s and Blueprint’s visits to the school, we have heard from multiple sources that the frequent transitions in the schedule, which involved both switching languages and switching classrooms on a weekly basis, were challenging for some students and some staff members.
- *Regarding the list of factors contributing to low achievement in Dever’s Dual Language Program (page 88): There are no criteria for matching student populations with the dual*

language model of instruction. A thorough analysis of the current research would refute claims that any subgroup is not well-served by this instructional model.

- While we have clarified the language in the list of factors, I decline to adopt this modification because the research indicates dual language programs are less likely to have significant impact for students when the student population is highly mobile (preventing them from remaining in the program for the length of time required to see results), and/or when students do not have either of the languages in the dual language program as their primary language.

Response to other “clarification” areas identified by the Local Stakeholder Group

In its proposal, in addition to specific recommendations regarding changes to the plan text, the Local Stakeholder Group included several items it identified as “clarifications,” and provided additional data for my review. Below, I have responded to these groups of items.

- *Items expressing 1) concern that ESE is attributing the cause of the school’s lagging progress to its dual language program and 2) lack of support for ESE’s discontinuation of the dual language program.*

Dever’s chronically low achievement is school-wide and is the result of a number of factors and conditions. ESE has not and does not now attribute Dever’s low achievement to its dual language program. I am concerned about the performance of all of Dever’s students, and am focused on how we can rapidly change the trajectory of that performance. Dever’s staff and community have made efforts to build an effective dual language program. However, this instructional approach is not leading to the rapid growth in academic achievement that students need.

I reached the decision to place the Dever into Level 5 due to the persistence of unacceptably low achievement rates, despite its status as a Level 4 turnaround school since 2010. Dever is providing an ineffective instructional program, the result of which is unacceptably low student academic performance. For example, on the 2013 MCAS:

- Only one-in-seven (14%) of Dever students scored proficient or advanced in English language arts.
- Less than one-third (31%) of Dever students scored proficient or advanced in Mathematics.
- Only 1% of Dever’s 5th grade students scored proficient or advanced in Science.

The school and district had significant authorities and opportunities to improve during the three years that the Dever was designated as underperforming (Level 4). The school has failed to implement a coherent and well-aligned curriculum in grades K-5 that is necessary to accelerate learning and significantly raise achievement for all students. Despite the efforts of the past number of years, the majority of students are still achieving below grade level expectations in reading, writing, mathematics, and science. This is not a matter of moving an adequate school program to good or great levels of performance. Our first job, as this school enters receivership, is to secure the basics of a sound literacy program, mathematics program, and a well-functioning academic

curriculum. We need to establish an adequate instructional program and quickly move it to higher levels of functioning.

It is clear that many members of the Dever community strongly value the cultivation and development of multi-lingualism of their students. At the same time, we have encountered parents who are not sure why their children are experiencing Spanish as part of their instruction and who did not volunteer for a dual language program. Therefore, as part of the turnaround plan, we will offer a content-rich Spanish language instructional program to Dever families that want this instructional approach.

We recognize that some Dever families are native Spanish speakers who want their students to have an opportunity to further their Spanish language development and pursue a curriculum that honors their heritage. Other Dever families are not native Spanish speakers and may want their students to learn Spanish as an additional language. For all interested families, the Dever turnaround approach will offer a content-rich Spanish language program that will incorporate multicultural history, geography, literature, arts and music into language instruction.

For parents who are interested, Dever will provide daily Spanish language instruction to students. Students will be grouped for this instructional block according to their Spanish language proficiency. Dever is employing Spanish speaking teachers for this component of the program. Dever's Spanish program will be developed to meet the expectations of the Massachusetts Foreign Languages Curriculum Framework and include best practices and strategies used in exemplary programs currently being implemented state-wide and across the nation.

In future years, as students' foundational language skills become embedded, Blueprint and ESE will examine the feasibility of transitioning to an alternative language acquisition program (e.g. transitional bilingual education, dual language/two-way immersion) if such a program could further advance students' language skills. Transitioning to such a program would be contingent on the establishment of conditions such as policies to maintain students in the program for multiple years; practices to require proficiency in both languages for students entering the program in later grades; structures to support students who do not speak the language(s) of instruction; and development of above-grade level course work so that advanced students can remain at Dever.

- *Items regarding previous or new data submissions*
The Local Stakeholder Group has provided data for ESE and Blueprint to review, both accompanying its submission of recommendations in January, and again with the submission of its modifications proposal. Both ESE and Blueprint appreciate receiving all of the data that have been submitted, and have reviewed all of the materials provided by the LSG. As we looked across all data sources, we have not seen the level of rapid academic improvement that is needed in order to turn around Dever Elementary School.

- *Items regarding review of existing Dever materials, structures, and programs*
In addition to our consideration of the data submitted by the Local Stakeholder Group, Blueprint has been present at the school, looking extensively at the academic program and gathering evidence to help formulate our strategies for the turnaround plan. The strategies utilized by high-performing, urban, high-poverty schools, incorporated throughout the Level 5 turnaround plan, are not currently being implemented to maximum effectiveness at Dever.
- *Items comparing strategies in the preliminary turnaround plan with work currently or previously underway at Dever*
In its proposal, the Local Stakeholder Group indicates that some of the strategies in the Dever preliminary turnaround plan sound like work currently or previously conducted at the school (e.g. data strategies, ELD strategies). If you read the turnaround plans from Level 4 schools, you will find some of these same strategies. What we have learned over the past few years of turnaround (and captured in our *Emerging Practices Report*, available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/sss/turnaround/default.html>), is that intense focus, consistent implementation, and effective execution of similar strategies has made the difference for schools exiting from Level 4 status. Over the period of the receivership, I will work with Blueprint to concentrate our efforts on achieving this same high level of focus, implementation, and execution at Dever.

Exhibit 2

Dever-McCormack Dual Language Program Development Timeline

2006-2007 Dever School Language Acquisition Team (LAT) identifies need to improve upon sheltered English instruction/immersion (SEI) model. Team begins to research one-way immersion and dual language program models

2007-2008 Dever leadership attends Abriendo Puertas conference at Barbieri School in Framingham. Dever leadership secures approval from OELL to convert SEI program to dual-language model. Dever teachers begin to visit dual language schools (Hernandez and Hurley). Dual Language Program Developer identified. Two LAT members are sent to California Association of Bilingual Educators (CABE) dual language conference in San Diego.

2008-2009 Dual Language Program Developer writes and receives \$100,000 grant from EdVestors to support program development. Dual language study group is formed. Group members study current research and begin planning for replication of the Hernandez 50-50 model. Boston Dual Language Consortium is founded. Consortium includes a leadership group (principals and school leaders) and a professional development collaborative. Study group and LAT members begin recruiting families for Cohort 1.

2009-2010 Cohort 1 begins K2 with two classrooms (40 children). Dual-language teachers meet weekly with coach. All teachers receive professional development on dual language instruction. Site visits to Hernandez and Hurley continue. Teacher consortium holds first professional development session at Dever School. *Level 4 status announced Fall 2009

2010-2011 Under new leadership, Cohort 2 enrolls. New leadership team creates Grade 2 cohort. K1 adopts a 70-30 program. Seven classrooms are implementing dual language (K1, 2 classes at K2, 2 classes at Grade 1, 2 classes at Grade 2). Dual Language Team created for professional development. Team leader sits on ILT. Team meets biweekly. Leadership decides to convert all four classrooms in K2 to dual-language for Fall 2011. Leadership begins to hire strategically to have bilingual staff in place for program expansion.

2011-2012 First full K2 cohort enrolls (4 classrooms, 100 students). Eleven classes are now dual language (K1- GR 3) ELLs in grade 3 outperform non-ELLs on ELA MCAS. Dual language team attends Massachusetts Association of Bilingual Educators (MABE) conference in Providence, RI.

Leadership applies for and receives \$75,000 grant from EdVestors to support the planning and development of the middle school dual language model.

2012-2013 Fifteen classes are now dual language (K1- GR 4, 355 students).
Dever-McCormack School hosts the MABE dual language conference. Four DMC staff members present workshops.
Planning begins for middle school model. MABE facilitators support planning.

2013-2014 Nineteen classrooms are now dual language (455 students).
DMC dual language program is now the largest program in Boston Public Schools.

Exhibit 3

Core Strategies Taught in the Full Teacher SEI Endorsement Course, 2013-2014

- Vocabulary
 - 7 Steps
 - Tiered Vocabulary
 - Cognate Awareness
 - Sentence Frames
 - Word Wheels
 - Lexical Arrays
 - Word Form Chart
 - Word Families
- Reading
 - Identifying and Analyzing Text Features
 - Think-aloud
 - Reciprocal Teaching
 - Partner Reading
 - Analyzing Text Genres and Organization
 - Close Reading with Text-dependent Questions
 - Double Entry Journals
- Writing
 - Cut-n-Grow
 - Information Gap
 - Language Experience Approach (LEA)
 - RAFT
 - Ratiocination
 - Round Table
 - Sentence Combining
 - Write-around
- Interaction Strategies

Anticipation Guide

- Clock Buddies
- Continuum
- Divide & Slide
- Exit Ticket
- Expert Groups
- Final Word Protocol
- Gallery Walk
- Graphic Organizers
- Jigsaw
- Last One Standing
- Numbered Heads Together

- Quick Write
- Snowballs
- Thinking Notes
- Think-Write- Pair-Share
 - T-P-S
 - T-P-Square-S
- Turn & Talk
- Visual Scaffolding
- Zip Line