

**Dever Elementary School Local Stakeholder Group
Recommendations to the Commissioner
Submitted January 6, 2014**

Dever Elementary School was designated by Commissioner Chester as chronically underperforming (“Level 5”) on October 30, 2013. Massachusetts law indicates that within 30 days of a school being designated as chronically underperforming, the Commissioner shall convene a local stakeholder group to solicit the group’s recommendations for the Commissioner’s Level 5 School Turnaround Plan.

The Dever Elementary School Local Stakeholder Group was convened on Friday, November 22, 2013. The statute allowed 45 days for the local stakeholder group to complete its work. The Local Stakeholder Group met four times during this period, on the following dates and times:

- Meeting #1: Friday, November 22nd, 2:00-4:00 pm
- Meeting #2: Tuesday, November 26th, 5:00-7:00 pm
- Meeting #3: Monday, December 9th, 10:00 am-12:00 pm
- Meeting #4: Tuesday, December 17th, 10:00 am-12:00 pm

The meetings were held either at the school or at a facility in the neighborhood. All of the meetings were open to the public. All meetings were facilitated by an ESE staff member or a consultant hired for this purpose. All meetings were also observed by at least one ESE staff member.

The membership of the Dever Elementary School Local Stakeholder Group is listed below. The committee’s membership meets the requirements of the statute as outlined in M.G.L. Chapter 69, Section 1J, subsection m.

Position, per statute	Designee
The superintendent or designee	John McDonough; designated alternates Rasheed Meadows, Melissa Dodd
School committee chair or designee	Michael O’Neill; designated alternate Eileen de los Reyes
Local teachers’ union president or designee	Ana Arroyo Montano
Administrator from the school, who may be the principal, chosen by the superintendent	Sarah McLaughlin; designated alternate Mike Sabin
Teacher from the school, chosen by the faculty of the school	Cristin McElwee
Parent from the school, chosen by the local parent organization. (Note: If school or district doesn’t have a parent organization, the Commissioner shall select a volunteer parent of a student at the school.)	Barbara Donnelly
Representatives of applicable state and local social service, health and child welfare agencies, chosen by the Commissioner	Michael Clontz, LICSW, Asst. Director, School-based services at WEDIKO Children’s Services

Representatives of applicable state and local social service, health and child welfare agencies, chosen by the Commissioner	Roger Rice, Executive Director, META, Inc. (Multicultural Education, Training, and Advocacy)
For elementary schools, a representative of an early education and care provider, chosen by the Commissioner of the Department of Early Education and Care	Mary Kinsella, Vice President, Boys and Girls Clubs of Dorchester
Community member, chosen by the chief executive of the city or town	Orlando Perilla, Executive Director, Harbor Point Community Task Force
Total number of members allowed by statute: Not more than 13 individuals	Total number of members on the Local Stakeholder Group: 10

The Dever Elementary School Local Stakeholder Group worked diligently to execute its charge to provide recommendations to the Commissioner as he creates his turnaround plan for the school; these recommendations are designed to maximize the rapid academic achievement of students.

The Local Stakeholder Group offers the following recommendations for the Commissioner’s consideration.

Overarching Recommendation by Consensus of the LSG members

RECOMMENDATION: Continue, expand, and improve the culturally responsive Dual Language school model articulated in the *Two-Way Bilingual Education in Boston Public Schools: Required Features, Recommendations and Guidelines Report* (pp 39-45).

Context

The members of the Dever Local Stakeholder Group (LSG) share the conviction that the Dual Language Model is an appropriate and effective lever for turnaround for the Dever Elementary School. A well-implemented school-wide model will further galvanize a set of shared goals focused on high quality instruction, and provides a touchstone for data-based decision making at the school, classroom, and student levels in this very large elementary school (see Dever Data Packet, p 2).

We offer evidence to support our recommendation that building on and accelerating the foundational work already done in Grades K-2 to build a school-wide dual language model during the past few years—especially during these last three years of Level 4 Turnaround status—will lead to dramatically increased achievement for all Dever students. For over three years, our work at the Dever has been structured around seven core improvement priorities:

- Unified Culture
- Effective Instruction
- Rigorous Curriculum
- Data Focus
- Adult Teamwork
- Family and Community Support
- Extra Time on Learning

The Dever Data Packet we have provided in the supporting documents includes recent assessment results that show evidence of the success of dual language instruction in accelerating student growth in literacy from Kindergarten-grade 2. The school has also shown evidence of improvement in attendance, school climate and behavior, and mathematics.

We also submit that a strong Dual Language model will make the Dever a school chosen by increasing numbers of parents of both bilingual and single language Boston Public School children (ELL students and native English speakers). With strong implementation and proper supports for this model, the Dever could provide the district and the state with a flagship for Dual Language instruction in other schools.

Specific recommendations regarding the design and implementation of the Dual Language Model

The following sub-recommendations specific to the Dual Language Model as it is currently being implemented are from the Dever Dual Language Program supporting document submitted with these recommendations:

1. Continue to implement the Dual Language 50-50 model, as developed, until at least through SY 2016-2017. This will allow the program to be fully developed.
2. Continue to evaluate the development of the program annually using the Center for Applied Linguistics Guiding Principles document.
3. Maintain the current faculty members with full Principal autonomy in hiring for vacancies that arise.
4. Continue to organize and support peer visitations within the school and across programs.
5. Continue to refine curriculum units as additional information about the PARCC assessments are released.
6. Continue to invest funds in Literacy Team staffing. This bilingual team of teachers who are certified in ESL, Moderate Special Needs, and Elementary Education provide critical interventions and supports to students.
7. Work with the district and the state to identify a standardized assessment to fully assess knowledge and skills of Dual Language Learners.

During our discussions, the LSG highlighted the importance of continuing or adding the following elements as important to continued progress:

1. Preserve the additional 100 hours of PD time currently in place (this time is beyond the standard BTU contract provisions).
2. Ensure that new measures of success include measures for dual language and keep fully disaggregated data in order to properly target interventions.
3. Test students in both their dominant language and second language to prevent confusion between language issues and/or cognitive challenges.
4. Determine the best approach to including the current Therapeutic Learning Community, sub-separate classrooms in the Dual Language school-wide model.
5. In addition, at least some LSG members recommended that there be a focus on enabling students with disabilities to access content in their dominant language.

Recommendations: Maximizing the engagement and support of family and community members for student learning

As one of Dever's seven improvement priorities, we have been working to increase and deepen the engagement and empowerment of parents and community as advocates for the Dever students. Stakeholders suggest sustaining the following strategies now in place:

1. Continue to stipend Dever teachers to tutor Dever students four times a week at the Boys and Girls Club to provide another way for teachers to connect with families around academic work.
2. Sustain the transparent and active School Site Council as a vehicle for parent voices in school decision making.
3. Continue to “make a big school smaller” by focusing parent engagement at grade levels, linking teacher conferences with parents to academic concerns; e.g. reviewing assessment results. Ensure this strategy is in place for all grade levels.
4. Continue to deepen the community relationship with Harbor Point Association, including linking Harbor Point families with the Dever and services available through the school.

Stakeholders would also recommend the following to further maximize engagement:

1. Consider re-hiring a full time bilingual Parent and Community Outreach Coordinator at the school.
2. Provide more opportunities for parent conferences.
3. Encourage participation in Parent University.
4. Poll parents to see what times and activities are most useful to them.

Recommendations: Maximizing assets and talents of partners to improve student learning

The Dever’s whole school culture relies on a core set of partners to support the academic and social-emotional needs of students. Wediko, Open Circle, City Year and City Connects work together, and have a liaison on the Administrative team to align them to the school’s seven Improvement Priorities (see “Context” section above). Data provided in the Dever Data Packet show improvement in several important cultural indicators—attendance, violations, and a teacher survey—as evidence of partners’ positive impact on the climate for learning.

Two additional key partners are already building capacity in the Dever staff by providing predictable and consistent cycles for structured monitoring of student academic progress and to target appropriate interventions to student needs in literacy and mathematics on an ongoing basis. Achievement Network (ANet) has provided teachers of Grades 2-5 with regular five week assessments in ELA and mathematics as well as training and support for incorporating these formative results into their instructional planning. Teach Plus offers needed support with staffing (recruiting and retaining high quality teachers) as well as coaching the team leaders to lead regular data meetings and inquiry cycles.

We want to acknowledge the time and deliberate investment required to build strong and effective partnerships. We would emphasize the characteristics that make these core partners effective and essential components of Dever students’ educational experience:

1. Developed deep relationships with a smaller set of core partners, deliberately selected for their link to one of the specific focus areas and contribution to the goals for that area;
2. Embedded in the school, present in the building and know the students and are known by them as part of the school;
3. Shared accountability along with the shared goals;
4. Structure for coordination—Leadership Team for social emotional service providers; and finally
5. Time for partnerships to develop and grow.

Several additional steps could enhance partners’ positive impact on student learning:

1. Increase the language capacity of all partners working with the school.
2. Increase amount and frequency of times in the regular administrator meetings for the partners’ Leadership Team to report on progress and troubleshoot any issues.

3. Provide closer links with community resources for Tier II and III interventions for behavioral strand students; for example, provide clinical services at the school site for psychiatric needs.
4. Enlist a partner who could increase the staff's capacity to meet the Tier II and Tier III needs in literacy for the large number of students who enter the Dever well behind grade level in literacy.
5. The district should continue to cultivate the relationship with University of Massachusetts Boston School of Education whose campus is on the Harbor Point peninsula, specifically in service to the needs of, and opportunities at, the Dever.
6. Ensure the relationship with the Harbor Point Community continues to grow. Give strong priority to families with children who reside at the complex for enrollment at the Dever Elementary School to enhance the neighborhood feel in this large school.

Supporting Documents

1. 2013 Dever Data Packet: includes most recent assessment results showing improvements in math and literacy; improvements in daily student attendance rates and reduced incidences of behavioral issues; survey results showing teachers spend more time on instruction with new school-wide behavioral expectations and increased social-emotional supports available.
2. Dever-McCormack Dual Language Program Development Timeline: includes summary timeline, program strengths and additional recommendations.
3. SY 2013-2014 BPS Data Packet: includes ACCESS assessment data disaggregated by language levels and Students with Disabilities.
4. Two-Way Bilingual Education in Boston Public Schools: Required Features, Recommendations and Guidelines Report, Gaston Institute, May 2013. Includes characteristics of effective programs within the district to which the Dever is now adhering, as well as citing national research on the positive school-wide impact of Dual Language instruction on high need student populations.

Appendix: Purpose, Intended Outcomes, and Discussion Topics
for Paul A. Dever Elementary School LSG Meetings

Upon designation as a Level 5 school, state law requires that the Commissioner develop a Turnaround Plan for accelerated improvement and outlines a timeline and process accordingly. The first step in this process is for the Commissioner to convene a local stakeholder group. The guidance below is designed to help Local Stakeholder Group (LSG) members understand that process.

Purpose of the Level 5 School LSG

- To engage in an evidence-based conversation regarding the core issues and challenges facing Dever Elementary School and identify what the school community believes are the key challenges creating barriers to its students' academic progress.
- To make recommendations to the Commissioner about the key components of his turnaround plan for the Dever, "in order to maximize the rapid academic achievement of students."

The Commissioner has chosen to increase the intensity to a Level 5 intervention for Dever because he believes that despite the efforts taken during the first three years of turnaround, a different mix of interventions and practices are required to put the conditions in place for an educational experience that prepares all of Dever's students to succeed. He looks forward to the LSG's ideas for how to create substantial change at the school – change that will secure rapid improvement in the academic achievement of students.

Intended Outcomes

Through the LSG's discussion and exploration of the data, to generate a set of rigorous, evidence-based recommendations that will provide the Commissioner with input directly from the Dever community and advise him as he creates his Level 5 Turnaround Plan.

The Local Stakeholder Group will consider

- The key **issues and challenges** facing the school, and the district's support of the school;
- The impact and sufficiency of the **strategies and supports** employed by the school to date – what has worked, what has not worked;
- The **school's and district's capacity**—including its systems, polices, and use of resources—to fully implement proposed strategies; and
- The **interventions and practices** that are most likely to promote rapid improvement of student achievement.

Within 45 days of its initial meeting, the stakeholder group shall make its recommendations to the Commissioner. Meetings of the local stakeholder group shall be open to the public and the recommendations submitted to the Commissioner shall be publicly available upon submission.

Meeting focus areas and discussion questions are described below.

Meeting #1: What does the evidence tell us about the key issues and challenges facing the Dever?

Data will be presented regarding the school and its performance.

Questions for discussion:

- What do the data tell us about where the school is now? What do we know about changes to the data over the past three years?
- What do the data tell us about the school's core assets and strengths?
- What do the data tell us about the school's core challenge areas?
- How is Dever using data now to inform instruction? How does the school select the most relevant data to use? What are the Dever's greatest strengths in using data? Greatest challenges?
- What data tools, skills would the school need to push the school to the next level?
- What does the LSG recommend to the Commissioner about how the school can better use data tools, skills, and resources to improve instruction?

Meeting #2: How can Dever support all students to learn at the highest levels?

Information will be presented regarding the school's existing structures and supports that facilitate all students' learning.

Questions for discussion:

- What do LSG members believe to be the most significant academic challenges at the school?
- What strategies has the school already tried to overcome these academic challenges? What worked? What didn't work?
- What specific supports has the school tried to facilitate English Language Learners' (ELLs') learning? What about the school's dual language program? Are these programs and supports working? How do you know?
- What specific supports has the school tried to facilitate the learning of students with special needs? Are they working? How do you know?
- What strategies can the school try to improve science?
- Is the school currently challenging all students to work to their highest potential? If not, what specific actions can be taken to increase the level of rigor in Dever's instruction?
- What does the LSG recommend to the Commissioner about how the school can support all students to learn at the highest levels?

Meeting #3: How can the Dever maximize the engagement and support of family and community members for students' learning?

Information will be presented regarding existing family (family members of students at the school) and community (other community members or organizations unrelated to students at the school) engagement efforts at the school.

Questions for discussion:

- While engagement varies by individual, how would you rate the overall level of family member engagement at the school (low/medium/high)? What evidence supports this rating?
- While engagement varies by individual, how would you rate the overall level of community engagement at the school (low/medium/high)? What evidence supports this rating?
- What structures are in place to encourage family member and community engagement at the school? (e.g. regular, frequent schedule of calls to students' families; annual community open house, etc.) Are they working? How do you know?
Note: Please identify school-wide efforts, not unique efforts by individual teachers or staff members.
- How do school leaders and/or the school's partners bolster the school's structures to encourage family member and community engagement? What has worked? What else could school leadership and/or partners do to facilitate engagement?
- How can family and community members' talents be incorporated into the strategy to improve the school's academic performance?
- How can family and community members be part of the strategy to help improve Dever students' attendance?
- What does the LSG recommend to the Commissioner about how the school can maximize family and community members' support to maximize students' learning?

Meeting #4: How can the Dever maximize the assets and talents of partners to improve students' learning?

Information will be presented regarding existing partnerships with the school.

Questions for discussion:

- What partners currently work at the school? In what academic and non-academic areas do they provide support?
- What areas do you believe need partner support? How can partners be utilized to help improve Dever students' attendance?
- What structures are in place to align partner efforts with school goals?
- What structures are in place to coordinate efforts between partners?

- If you had to pick just three of the school's current partner initiatives to continue, which would you select? Why? Is there evidence to show how these partners are being effective in the school?
- Does the school have an unaddressed (or under-addressed) challenge area that you believe could benefit by a partner's support? Which one, and why?
- What does the LSG recommend to the Commissioner about how the school can maximize the assets and talents of partners to improve students' learning?

Note: A portion of this meeting will be used to finalize the recommendations made across all meetings.