

# Boston Public Schools

## Office of the Superintendent



April 7, 2014

Commissioner Mitchell Chester  
Massachusetts Department of Elementary  
and Secondary Education  
75 Pleasant Street  
Malden, MA 02148

Dear Commissioner Chester,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the preliminary turnaround plan for the Dever Elementary School. Boston Public Schools recognizes that the Dever did not make the necessary academic gains during its three-year turnaround period. The district takes collective responsibility for this, as it is our responsibility to ensure that every student, in every school, receives a quality education to help realize his or her fullest potential.

During the Level 5 process, I have had the opportunity to engage with families, staff, and students from the school. One clear theme that I have experienced is a strong sense of school pride in the Dever. In particular, the Dever draws tremendous pride from its dual-language program, which educates more than two-thirds of the student body. Beyond the practical and economic benefits of being bilingual in today's global society, research on bilingualism demonstrates a positive impact on children's cognitive development.

For these reasons, I was disappointed in the recommendation to discontinue the dual-language program at the Dever. I am not challenging the decision, as I recognize the pressure that the Commonwealth and Blueprint face in rapidly turning around the school. However, BPS believes that dual-language is a pedagogical approach that the Commonwealth should embrace more fully, particularly given the increasing number of English Language Learners across the state and the global competitiveness that speaking a second language affords our youth. Boston will continue to build upon the strong foundation that we have laid with our dual-language programs in our strategic pursuit to expand dual-language opportunities for Boston students. Boston Public Schools will work with Blueprint to support the success of all students at the Dever as we do with all our students, regardless of school governance structure or oversight. We look forward to codifying the relationship, including roles and responsibilities, between the Commonwealth, the receiver, and Boston Public Schools through a memorandum of agreement in the coming weeks. Most importantly, we believe it is critical to establish clear criteria and a timeframe for exiting Level 5 status as quickly as possible to ensure a smooth and speedy transition of the Dever Elementary School back to the Boston Public Schools.

I applaud the Dever local stakeholder group (LSG) for its thorough review of the preliminary turnaround plan and its substantive feedback with respect to the dual-language program, the interventions proposed in the plan, and the needs of students with disabilities. I respectfully request that you and Blueprint review their feedback in earnest and work collaboratively with the LSG and school to address their concerns.

Sincerely,

**Signed by John P. McDonough**

John P. McDonough  
Interim Superintendent