

Level 5 Schools 2015-2016 Quarter 1 Report: Paul A. Dever Elementary School

School Information		Student Enrollment and Demographics ^a	
Location	Boston, Massachusetts	Total SY 2015–16 Enrollment	529
Current Status	Level 5	Percentage SWDs	14%
Receiver Name	Blueprint Schools Network	Percentage ELLs	47%
Year Designated Level 5	2013	Percentage Black	27%
Year Designated Level 4	2010	Percentage Latino/Hispanic	59%
Grade Span	PK–5	Percentage Asian	8%
Number of Full-Time Staff in SY 2015–16	76	Percentage White	4%
		Percentage Multirace	2%
Priority Areas			
<p>Priority Area 1: Rapidly accelerate all students’ language development in English and provide families with the opportunity for content-rich Spanish language development for their students.</p> <p>Priority Area 2: Improve instructional quality and maximize time for core instruction.</p> <p>Priority Area 3: Use data to drive instruction.</p> <p>Priority Area 4: Establish a culture of high expectations and college and career readiness.</p> <p>Priority Area 5: Hire and cultivate high-performing and high-potential staff.</p>			

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

Content provided by Blueprint Schools Network

Executive Summary

Entering the second year of receivership by Blueprint Schools Network (Blueprint), the Paul A. Dever Elementary School (Dever) continues its efforts to transform school culture and accelerate student achievement. Highlights of the work in this quarter include building capacity through increased staffing in key positions. Dever hired Laura Miceli, an experienced Boston Public Schools (BPS) leader, as principal and expanded the leadership team from two to five positions, to include the principal, three assistant principals (academics, operations and instruction, and school culture), and the therapeutic learning community coordinator. The responsibilities of the assistant principal of school culture are currently being filled on an interim basis by the therapeutic learning community coordinator while Blueprint continues to actively recruit, screen, and interview candidates to fill the role on a permanent basis.

Dever also added a new full-time position of Community Field Coordinator (CFC) to work directly with the assistant principal of school culture to strengthen family engagement. The district’s budget allocation was expanded for a 1.0 FTE position coordinator of special education services, which was previously a .6 FTE. Dever strengthened schoolwide English as a second language (ESL) and English language development (ELD) supports by hiring a fifth dedicated ESL teacher, expanding resources such as Imagine Learning, and supporting teachers as they integrate ELD strategies into core instruction. In addition, two full-time coaches, in newly

created roles, will support teachers by modeling, developing, and disseminating exemplary practices across the school.

Dever held 14 days of summer staff training, with two additional days for new staff. The school opened for students on September 1, 2015, one week before the majority of BPS, by using the Level 5 autonomy to adjust the school calendar. Dever also purchased more than 500 Google Chromebooks to achieve a one-to-one student-to-laptop ratio. This new technology will be used to implement the Imagine Learning software program, which provides individualized ELD instruction. A full-time media and technology teacher will manage the rollout of this new technology and support teachers and students will accessing it. With the new school leader and the additional staffing and supports highlighted above, Dever is positioned to make significant gains for students in 2015–16.

Updates on Priority Areas

Priority Area 1: Rapidly accelerate all students' language development in English and provide families with the opportunity for content-rich Spanish language development for their students.

- **Highlight:** Dever hired a fifth dedicated ESL teacher for 2015–16. This additional capacity will strengthen supports for all students enrolled in ESL services and provide coaching to the ESL teacher team. The ESL lead teacher has been offered a leadership stipend to perform these additional duties. The ESL lead teacher, the assistant principal of academics, and the two coaches have been strategically placed in one office to facilitate ongoing communication and collaboration.
- **Highlight:** Dever aligned its English language arts (ELA) core lessons with the thematic focus of the English as a second language (ESL) curriculum, Reach, so that students receive a unified language development curriculum. During the summer, a teacher from each grade level created a year-long ELA curriculum map outlining each unit and connecting the scope and sequence of standards with the themes, texts, and guiding essential questions from the Reach curriculum. This coherence will help to build students' background knowledge through exposure to consistent themes and vocabulary across both ELA core and ESL lessons.
- **Highlight:** After conducting a trial in 2014–15, Dever began implementation of the Imagine Learning software to provide individualized instruction in ELD for all students. Imagine Learning is an online program that builds students' language and literacy skills through differentiated, interactive activities. Dever has purchased and installed more than 500 Google Chromebooks so that every student has access to the Imagine Learning program. Teachers received initial training on this program on September 4, 2015, and all students will participate in this program for 30 minutes each day beginning the week of September 8, 2015. The Chromebooks will also be used to build students' skills in using technology in their learning. This ongoing work will be facilitated by the newly hired media and technology teacher.
- **Challenge:** Dever has faced a challenge in recruiting and hiring a qualified Spanish teacher for one of the two Spanish teacher positions at the school. As of the first day of school on September 1, 2015, this position remained vacant. Blueprint is working to increase exposure of the job posting and is continuing to screen applicants. The substitute

teacher, who is a native Spanish speaker is supported by the assistant principal of academics in the interim and planning in collaboration with the other Spanish teacher.

Priority Area 2: Improve instructional quality and maximize time for core instruction.

- **Highlight:** During the summer, teacher leaders developed curriculum alignment maps for ELA, mathematics, and writing at each grade level. Teachers planned units aligned with ANet’s schedule of assessed standards using templates based on Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe’s Understanding by Design instructional planning process. This unit-planning protocol calls for teachers to plan with the end goals in mind, determining what students need to understand and be able to do to meet and exceed the standards. As described in priority area 1, ELA units integrate themes, texts, and essential questions from the ESL curriculum to create a coherent and consistent English language learning experience for students.
- **Highlight:** Dever redesigned its master schedule to facilitate consistent, uninterrupted instructional blocks and effectively leverage student supports. In particular, Dever students receive at least 160 minutes of ELA and ELD instruction, 100 minutes of mathematics instruction, and 50 minutes of writing instruction each day. Dever’s master schedule also enables a consistent delivery of student support services. Fifty minutes of daily “need-based groups” allow literacy interventionists, ESL, and special education teachers to “push in” to classrooms and provide differentiated support according to student needs. In addition to their tutorial lessons, Math Fellows provide push-in, small-group support during mathematics blocks across Grades 3–5.
- **Highlight:** Dever leveraged its Level 5 autonomy to revise the yearlong school calendar for 2015–16. The new calendar includes an earlier start date for students (September 1, 2015, one week before the majority of BPS), five days of staff professional development throughout the school year, and three instructional days for students during the district’s traditional February recess.
- **Challenge:** An ongoing challenge related to priority area 2 is to ensure a streamlined and coherent delivery of student support services. Dever is focusing on improving communication among ESL, special education, and classroom teachers. This is being done by implementing push-in supports, a shared office space, and biweekly data meetings, as will be described in priority area 3.

Priority Area 3: Use data to drive instruction.

- **Highlight:** Dever’s master schedule for 2015–16 incorporates a 50-minute block that will be used to facilitate biweekly grade-level data meetings. During that time, students will be on a rotating schedule that will include either an extra special or need-based groups in their classroom. One data meeting per month will be dedicated to analyzing students’ social-emotional and behavioral data, and the other data meeting per month will be dedicated to analyzing students’ academic data.
- **Highlight:** Dever is currently administering standards-based baseline assessments for 2015–16 and will use the resulting formative and summative data to drive instructional improvement efforts.

- **Highlight:** Dever is implementing Kickboard schoolwide. Kickboard is a platform for collecting, tracking, and reporting student academic and behavioral data on a real-time basis. This system will be used to build consistency around data tracking, as all adults working with students will have access to the system.
- **Challenge:** Dever teachers have access to many sources of student data, and an ongoing challenge is ensuring that data use is streamlined and purposeful. Dever selected one common assessment (MAP) for Grades K–5 in ELA and mathematics to have a consistent source of data and format for analyzing the data, for all grade levels in both ELA and mathematics. Implementing Kickboard will build consistency in organizing and tracking data.

Priority Area 4: Establish a culture of high expectations and college and career readiness.

- **Highlight:** Dever has added a new position, the Community Field Coordinator (CFC). The CFC will strengthen family engagement and community partnerships aimed at improving students readiness to learn. The CFC began conducting outreach to build relationships with family and community partners. Dever hosted an open house for families on August 31, 2015, and more than 70 families participated. A slide presentation distributed to parents explained the changes at Dever for this year and introduced staff. The CFC participated in this event to introduce herself and her role to families. The CFC and principal met with the president of the parent council to plan consistent monthly meeting dates and a draft schedule of events for the year. For community outreach, she is currently reaching out to local businesses and organizations such as Santander, Bank of America, Star Market, DoubleTree, Boston Globe, and Corcoran Jennison to establish community connections and share sponsorship opportunities.
- **Highlight:** Dever aligned its student behavior expectations to five core values: Self-Control, Citizenship, Grit, Respect, and Positive Attitude. These core values draw from the Dever School Creed developed last year. Teachers are using a “merit” and “reminder” system to track and monitor positive and negative behaviors, with consistent rewards and consequences across grade levels. During summer professional development, teachers outlined clear expectations for what demonstration of these core values looks like in each common area of the school, including hallways, bathrooms, the cafeteria, and the library. Posters listing these expectations are displayed throughout the school, and teachers are expected to teach these expectations to their students during the first few weeks of school. Teachers are developing a list of read-alouds connected to the core values to use during morning meetings and literacy blocks.
- **Highlight:** Dever promoted two of its 2014–15 teachers to full-time coaching positions for the 2015–16 school year: One coach will support Grades K–2 teachers and the other coach will support Grades 3–5 teachers. These coaches are lead teachers who will model, develop, and disseminate exemplary practices across the school. The coaches will facilitate ongoing observation and feedback cycles, create and present professional development, facilitate professional learning community meetings, and support teachers to plan and deliver data-driven lessons and interventions aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Dever’s coaches have begun conducting classroom walk-throughs with a focus on collecting baseline data on classroom culture and learning environments. To

prepare them for their new role, the coaches received training during the summer on facilitative leadership. In addition, they receive ongoing support from the assistant principal of academics.

- **Challenge:** Dever is working to calibrate student behavioral expectations to decrease variation across staff members. Dever's academic coaches have facilitated professional development on identifying examples and nonexamples of the Dever core values and determining specific instances for giving "merits" and "reminders." Building a common language and a consistent implementation of the schoolwide behavior system will be an ongoing priority for the Dever's turnaround efforts.

Priority Area 5: Hire and cultivate high-performing and high-potential staff.

- **Highlight:** Dever is committed to promoting teacher leadership and growth opportunities in an effort to retain high-performing and high-potential staff. Eight staff members moved up through a growth pipeline, taking on new and more expansive roles at Dever. Two teachers were selected through a competitive process to be coaches in 2015–16, as described in priority area 4. Additionally, two Math Fellows were hired as paraprofessionals, two paraprofessionals were hired as teachers, and one paraprofessional was hired as the CFC.
- **Highlight:** Dever conducted two days of summer professional development for new staff and 12 days for all staff. The focus of summer professional development was starting Year 2 with consistency and purposefulness. The topics included: teacher evaluation, classroom learning environments, curriculum, classroom culture and procedures, data analysis, standards-based planning, and technology integration.
- **Highlight:** Dever retained 91 percent of teachers who were offered a SY 2015–16 position and able to continue working in BPS (i.e., due to licensure or personal life factors). Of the 45 teachers in the 2014–15 school year, 29 teachers were asked back and accepted, four did not return due to personal life factors (i.e., relocation or health), one did not return due to licensure, three accepted positions in other Boston-area schools, four were not renewed due to performance, and four positions were eliminated. To fill the vacancies, Blueprint and Dever conducted a comprehensive hiring process, which included an initial resume screen, a phone interview by Blueprint's director of human capital and/or recruiting manager, and an in-person interview with Blueprint's network director and/or regional coordinator, Dever's principal, members of the leadership team, and teacher representatives when possible. Each teacher candidate was required to give a teaching demonstration.
- **Challenge:** Like many schools with extended hours and an urgent need for rapid improvement, Blueprint and school leadership continue to need to invest additional resources for staff culture and support. This additional investment has included tokens of appreciation, such as focus groups and team meetings designed to elicit teachers' feedback on school progress and special breakfast gatherings. This year, Dever's additional administrative and coaching support and built-in professional development days are intended to provide teachers with the support that they need to sustain their efforts.