



# **Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

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Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.  
Commissioner

September 19, 2014

John McDonough  
Interim Superintendent  
Boston Public Schools  
26 Court Street  
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Superintendent McDonough:

I am writing to notify you that after careful analysis of Henry Grew Elementary School's performance, I have determined that the school will be identified as Level 4. While identification as a Level 4 school signals that rapid and ambitious improvement is necessary, it also provides the school and district with increased opportunities to make changes that will advance student achievement.

I expect you and your district team to reflect on the school's progress and intensify your support for the school, work with school leaders to assess current needs, and determine what specific changes and enhancements must be made to dramatically improve outcomes for students. This would include helping to eliminate any obstacles impeding rapid improvements.

In accordance with state law, the school will have three full school years to demonstrate dramatic and sustainable turnaround, beginning at the start of school year 2015-2016. However, I urge you to quickly identify and implement practices to advance student achievement in the current school year. ESE will provide assistance and progress monitoring in the coming year, in order to set the school on a successful path for turnaround and to ensure that improvement begins right away.

As you know, Level 4 schools may exit Level 4 status by fulfilling three key criteria: schools must meet measureable annual goals for student achievement for three years for students overall and for subgroups; must demonstrate progress in implementing conditions for school effectiveness; and, evidence must be in place that sufficient district systems of support exist to sustain gains. Schools eligible for exit of Level 4 status are held to a high standard, and decisions are made through a thorough review of all information relative to student achievement and the extent to which the school is on a solid trajectory of progress. Henry Grew Elementary will be eligible for consideration to exit Level 4 status when 2018 accountability data is available.

As a result of entering Level 4 status, the following next steps are required:

1. The district is required to write a Turnaround Plan for the school. The ODST liaison assigned to your district will be in contact with you soon to establish timelines and to provide assistance and support of the school and district's data analysis and planning work.
2. Within 30 days of designation as a Level 4 school, state law requires that the district and school convene a Local Stakeholder Group (LSG) to provide recommendations for the development of the school's Turnaround Plan.
3. In accordance with legislative timelines outlined in M.G.L. Chapter 69, Section 1J, the Superintendent must submit the Turnaround Plan for review by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Additionally, Henry Grew Elementary School will be eligible to apply for competitive federal School Redesign Grant (SRG) funds. The upcoming SRG competition will be held in spring 2015.

Progress on the implementation of the Turnaround Plan will be reviewed regularly to ensure the school is reaching the designated benchmarks and on-track to reaching its student performance outcomes.

I acknowledge the hard work of your team, the school leader, teachers, and students at Henry Grew Elementary School. I know this will be a challenging undertaking and the stakes are high. I am confident that the appropriate strategic effort during this school year and throughout the remainder of the turnaround period will result in dramatic improvements for students at the school.

My best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mitch Chester". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mitch" and last name "Chester" clearly distinguishable.

Mitchell Chester, Ed.D.  
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

Cc: Alan Ingram, Deputy Commissioner, ESE  
Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner, ESE