



October 29, 2024

Honorable Mayor Mitchell  
133 William Street  
New Bedford, MA 02740

Dear Mayor Mitchell,

I am writing to you in your capacity as Chair of the New Bedford School Committee (NBSC) to announce my decision to remove the John Avery Parker Elementary School (Parker) from chronically underperforming status, pending the approval of exit assurances.

My decision to exit the Parker from state receivership recognizes the significant improvements that the school has made across all of the key areas of concern highlighted in its original 2014 turnaround plan. That plan identified six central challenges that had prevented the school from improving student performance during the period preceding receivership: low instructional rigor, limited capacity to make rapid course corrections, inefficient scheduling, lack of data use to improve instruction, ineffective behavior supports, and limited capacity to engage families as partners in their children's learning. Through the perseverance and commitment of the Parker's students, families, staff, leaders and partners, the school has strengthened its practices in all of these areas, as measured by the school's proficient ratings in the Department's progress monitoring system. These systemic improvements have produced the desired gains in student performance. Since School & Main Institute (SMI) was appointed as the receiver in 2018, the Parker has consistently achieved percentile rankings at or above the 15th percentile in the state accountability system.

I am grateful for SMI's skillful leadership that has prepared the Parker to return to local control after ten years of state receivership. SMI has fostered a cohesive learning community at the Parker in which students, families, staff, teachers and school leaders have all thrived. Throughout the challenges of the pandemic and its aftermath, SMI has guided the Parker community with a clear vision of excellence and equity and deepened the sense of belonging felt by students, family and staff.

SMI will continue serving as Parker's receiver and the school's turnaround plan will remain in effect until exit assurances, if any, are approved. SMI will collaborate closely with New Bedford Public Schools Superintendent Andrew O'Leary to provide Parker's administrative team with additional supports focused on reintegrating school and district systems.

I look forward to working with both SMI and Superintendent O’Leary to ensure a smooth transition for Parker students, families, staff, teachers, leaders, and partners as their school returns to local governance.

Sincerely,

Russell D. Johnston  
Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

Cc: Andrew O’Leary, Superintendent, New Bedford Public Schools  
Chantel Devaughn, Executive Director, School & Main Institute  
Lauren Woo, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education