

Boston's school system is tapping an education nonprofit to run the Dearborn STEM Academy in hopes of sparking a rapid turnaround.

By **James Vaznis** GLOBE STAFF DECEMBER 10, 2014

The Boston school system, in a final attempt to ward off a state takeover of one of its schools, is tapping a Boston education nonprofit to run the Dearborn STEM Academy in hopes of sparking a rapid turnaround, school officials announced Wednesday. BPE, formerly known as the Boston Plan for Excellence, will have three years to get the job done at the Dearborn, which serves about 300 students in grades 6-10.

Interim Superintendent John McDonough noted the organization has partnered with the school system on a variety of initiatives over the past three decades and runs a teacher preparation program, which embeds candidates in schools, that has received national attention.

"This is an incredible opportunity for Roxbury," McDonough said. "This is an incredible opportunity for a population of students underserved over time." BPE was one of two finalists. The other was Massachusetts Preparatory Network, a school turnaround organization.

In a statement, Mitchell Chester, the state commissioner for elementary and secondary education, expressed optimism about the proposal, noting that he had been concerned about the Dearborn for several years. Chester publicly warned the school system in September that he was contemplating receivership if the school system failed to appoint an outside operator.

"I am pleased to see that Boston has taken an accelerated approach to the school's turnaround and chosen an operator for the Dearborn," Chester said. The school system has bet a lot of money on a turnaround at the Dearborn. It is moving forward with plans to raze its more than century-old building in Roxbury and replace it with a \$71 million facility with cutting-edge science and engineering labs.

Richard Stutman, president of the teachers union, said he supported the proposal as a better alternative to receivership. "We look forward to building a school that can thrive," Stutman said.