



Dear Deerfield Parent or Guardian:

Over the years, Deerfield Elementary School has earned a reputation as one of the top schools in the state, posting stellar scores on the Academic Performance Index and earning National Blue Ribbon and California Distinguished School honors. Yet Deerfield, along with nearly 87 percent of the Title I schools in Orange County, has also been designated as a school in need of some improvement under a federal accountability system established by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The purpose of this letter is to present the latest information on Deerfield’s “Program Improvement” status, as well as your options as a parent or guardian.

What is Program Improvement?

It gets a little complicated, but No Child Left Behind requires all Title I schools – those that receive special federal funds because they serve a significant number of students living in socioeconomically-disadvantaged households – to make what’s called “Adequate Yearly Progress,” or AYP, by hitting proficiency targets in English and math. These targets have risen every year since 2001, and it’s not enough for the student body as a whole to hit them; all significant subgroups must meet or exceed the same proficiency standards. Additionally, schools are required to test at least 95 percent of their students and significant subgroups.

Our students consistently exceeded state averages, with 86.8 percent scoring proficient or better in English language arts and 86 percent doing the same in math in 2013. Deerfield also met the participation criteria with 100 percent of its students taking the tests for 2012 and 2013. However, one of our significant subgroups was unable to meet its proficiency goals in 2012. Facing rising benchmarks, the same group narrowly missed its federal targets for English in 2013. That means Deerfield did not make AYP for two consecutive years, triggering Program Improvement status. Please note that scores remain frozen at 2013 numbers due to the state’s decision not to complete standardized testing in 2014. A new test was piloted in 2014 and will be fully administered in 2015. Therefore, because no new data is available, Deerfield must remain in program improvement status for another year.

Deerfield Elementary School				
Spring 2013 (No assessment completed in Spring 2014)				
Academic Performance Index score for 2013	Percent proficient or above in English language arts	Percent proficient or above in math	Did the school meet its AYP targets?	Did all subgroups meet their AYP targets?
944 (The federal target is 770)	86.8% (State average is 56.6%, federal target is 89.2%)	86% (State average is 59.5%, federal target is 89.5%)	No	No

We are far from alone with Program Improvement designation. According to the Orange County Department of Education, 270 Title I schools, or about 87 percent, have entered Program Improvement, along with most of the school districts in Orange County. That's because the federal proficiency benchmarks were designed to rise all the way to 100 percent by 2014. Universal proficiency is certainly a noble goal, and as the state has recognized, it's one we are vigorously pursuing. At this time, the state has not determined how the new state assessments will impact API and Program Improvement status.

Deerfield consistently strives for excellence and recently posted a remarkable 944 on the state's most recent Academic Performance Index, which measures achievement on a scale of 200 to 1,000. Yet we've never wavered from our path of continuous improvement. Similarly, the news of our Program Improvement status has only served to motivate our students and staff, who are working diligently on a number of proven initiatives to promote excellence in the classroom while continuing our upward trajectory. These initiatives include:

- Providing high quality, differentiated instruction for all students through the Response to Instruction reading model
- Utilizing new technologies that enable our staff to quickly access useful student performance data
- Advancing the work of our teachers through collaboration and professional development
- Providing intensive, direct reading instruction to Title I students utilizing research-based intervention programs
- Offering Title I students in grades one through six an extended-learning math class
- Offering a Title I summer academy targeting English language arts/reading and math skills
- Implementing accommodations, behavior support contracts and daily check-in/check-out systems to monitor and support individual students
- Supporting the social and emotional development of students through the "Tool Box" program

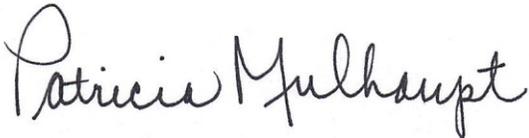
Next steps for Deerfield and you

Again, these are just a few of the strategies Deerfield is utilizing to promote success among our significant subgroups and our school as a whole, but they won't take us far without excellent teachers and strong parental involvement. Fortunately, we already have these ingredients, and if you'd like to get more involved, there are plenty of ways to do so, including community meetings, volunteer opportunities and, of course, PTA membership.

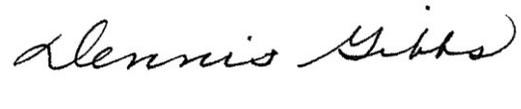
I should also note that while Deerfield is taking significant steps toward shedding the Program Improvement designation, its status does allow parents the option of transferring to a non-Program Improvement school of the district's choosing. Based on capacity and available transportation, students whose parents desire a transfer would attend Canyon View Elementary or Santiago Hills Elementary. For more information on these options, please contact Amy Hee in our district's Education Services department at 949-936-5079. The deadline for completing a Parent Choice Application for the 2015-16 school year is February 27, 2015.

I am so proud of our students, our staff and this incredible community for making Deerfield one of the top schools in California, and we're excited to introduce new technologies and practices that will continue to improve outcomes for students. As always, we will be communicating with you every step of the way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia Mulhaupt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P".

Patricia Mulhaupt
Interim Principal, Deerfield Elementary School

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis Gibbs". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

Dennis Gibbs
Interim Principal, Deerfield Elementary School