



BERRIEN SPRINGS PUBLIC SCHOOLS: DISCOVERY ACADEMY



January 30, 2017

Dear Parents and Community Members:

We are pleased to present you with the Annual Education Report (AER) which provides key information on the 2016-17 educational progress for the Berrien Springs Discovery Academy. The AER addresses the complex reporting information required by federal and state laws. The school's report contains information about student assessment, accountability, and teacher quality. If you have any questions about the AER, please contact Bill Bergan for assistance.

The AER is available for you to review electronically by visiting the following web site: <https://goo.gl/KdngMx>, or you may review a copy at the Discovery Academy office.

Increasing the graduation rate and participation rate for the Michigan Merit Exam are intensive goals for the staff at the Discovery Academy. Incentives for attendance and exam participation, along with more flexible options for meeting the graduation requirements, including evening classes and online instruction done from home, are options for students enrolled at the Discovery Academy. The Discovery Academy has a graduation rate of approximately 80%, a rate that is one of the highest for an Alternative Education Program throughout the state of Michigan.

PROCESS FOR ASSIGNING PUPILS TO THE SCHOOL

When assigning pupils to the Discovery Academy each individual is interviewed by staff and evaluate transcripts. If it is determined that the Discovery Academy is the most appropriate educational setting then classes are assigned according to credits needed.

Special Education Services for Berrien Springs Public Schools

A. Resource Room Services for Local Special Education Students:

Resident students (along with students accepted through the schools of choice process) may qualify, and also have a need for special education programs and/or services. The district is continuing to develop their Multi-Tier Systems of Supports (MTSS) model, providing general education options for struggling students and monitoring their progress over time. For those students who are unable to demonstrate progress with significant interventions, students being referred for special education programming/services may begin this process through a request for an evaluation or Child Study Team (CST) meeting. Should a student qualify for special education programs and/or services, a team of individuals will develop an Individualized Education Plan) to help assist the child progress within the general education setting.

Current special education programs include Elementary and Secondary Resource Rooms. Students follow a general education curriculum with the Common Core State Standards. In most Berrien Springs Public Schools, classroom instruction is provided by a general education teacher along with interactive co-teaching from a special education teacher. Students determined to need more direct instruction for needs outlined in their IEP may receive programming/services that pulls a student out of the general education classroom. Should a student at our Discovery Academy or Virtual programs have a need for Secondary Resource Room programming or services, such programs and services will be provided if a student meets the requirements for special education. Instruction at the Discovery Academy and Virtual programs will be done primarily through an online platform. Part of the IEP process includes the determination of appropriate aids, supplementary services, accommodations, and modifications for success in general education. Ancillary services are available for students who qualify. These services may include speech-language therapy, occupational therapy and physical therapy.

B. Center-Based Special Education Programs

Berrien Springs hosts several center-based programs for Berrien County RESA. These programs are housed in Berrien Springs and operated by Berrien Springs Public Schools. The funding comes through federal, state and Berrien RESA sources. Many of the students in these programs are not residents of Berrien Springs, but are able to take advantage of these center programs through the IEP (Individual Educational Plan) process. Transportation to and from Berrien Springs is provided through the local district. These programs include:

• Hearing Impaired Classrooms, Teacher Consultant Services, Audiological Services:

Students with hearing impairments have been part of Berrien Springs Public Schools for almost 50 years. Cass County contracts services through Berrien Springs, so students come from both Cass and Berrien counties. Babies are frequently identified at birth and start receiving intervention services at a very early age with teachers seeing families in their homes. Classroom services are available for pre-school through high school. These students may also participate part time in general education classes. Approximately 35 Berrien and Cass County students are served in this program, ten (10) students being residents of the Berrien Springs Public Schools.

Many students with a hearing impairment function very well in their home district

classrooms while receiving assistance from teacher consultants. Approximately 50 children receive teacher consultant services, including four (4) students from Berrien Springs.

Two audiologists provide audiological services and equipment management for students with identified hearing losses. They also provide diagnostic information for children with diagnosed, fluctuating, suspected or possible hearing losses. They work with physicians, the Health Department, families, *Build up Michigan* and *Early Hearing Detection and Intervention* to diagnose children as soon as possible and get amplification and intervention started.

- **Speech-Language Impaired Preschool:**

Students in the SLI preschool room receive instruction from a highly qualified teacher having an endorsement in Early Childhood Education and is also a licensed speech and language pathologist. A maximum of 15 students ages 3-6 must meet specific requirements to be considered for this county-based program. To qualify, students must demonstrate severe or moderate-to-severe delays in at least two areas of speech and language. During the 2014-15 school year two (2) Berrien Springs resident students were enrolled in this classroom. Students are placed in the program through an Individual Educational Planning Committee composed of local district and Berrien RESA diagnostic and educational staff.

- **Middle School Mildly Cognitively Impaired Classrooms:**

The district operates two county-wide classrooms at the Berrien Springs Middle School for students functioning with mild cognitive impairments. Teachers are certified in the area of Cognitively Impaired. The program is run on a thematic basis, incorporating reading, writing, vocabulary with social studies and science topics, following the Extended Grade Level Content Expectations from Michigan Department of Education. Up to 36 students (from throughout the county) can be provided special education programming in these MICI rooms. In 2016-17, four (4) students considered to be Berrien Springs resident students were IEP placed in these rooms. Students are placed in the program through an Individual Educational Planning Committee composed of local district and Berrien RESA diagnostic and educational staff.

- **High School Mildly Cognitively Impaired Classroom:**

A county-wide classroom for students functioning with a mild cognitive impairment is housed within the high school and taught by a teacher of the cognitively impaired. The students work through a series of objectives that are linked to the Extended Grade Level Content Expectations and daily living skills for transition to post-secondary goals. Students also receive instruction through the use of the Life Centered Curriculum. This program includes some pre-vocational and vocational experiences. Since the focus is not on the Michigan Merit Curriculum required for a high school diploma in Michigan, the students receive a certificate of completion. They participate in the high school graduation ceremony. Five (5) students from Berrien Springs were in the High School MICI classroom in 2016-17. Students are placed in the program through an Individual Educational Planning Committee composed of local district and Berrien RESA diagnostic and educational staff.

C. Specialized Programs for Students Available Outside of Berrien Springs:

Some students need programs that are not offered within the district. The IEP process is used to make this determination and to place these students in programs

that offer the services necessary to meet their goals and objectives. Transportation is provided for these students. These programs include:

BLOSSOMLAND LEARNING CENTER, BERRIEN REGIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE AGENCY, BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN

The purpose of Blossomland Learning Center is to provide services to students who have been diagnosed as moderately to severely mentally impaired up through age 26 who reside within the Berrien Regional Education Service Agency. The school assists students in preparing for entry into their respective communities. Eighteen (18) Berrien Springs Public School District resident students attended this program during the 2016-17 school year. Students are placed in the program through an Individual Educational Planning Committee composed of local district and Berrien RESA diagnostic and educational staff.

LIGHTHOUSE EDUCATION CENTER, BERRIEN REGIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE AGENCY, ST. JOSEPH, MICHIGAN & JUVENILE CENTER, BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN.

The Lighthouse Education Center program is operated as a therapeutic and educational program for students diagnosed as having an Emotional Impairment or Autism Spectrum Disorder up to age 26 and residing within the Berrien Regional Education Service Agency. These students may exhibit severe emotional difficulties or be students with significant challenges presented by autism spectrum disorder and require a specialized educational setting. The juvenile center has programming for students with disabilities that are court placed for an amount of time determined by a judge. During the 2016-17 school year, twelve (12) Berrien Springs Public School District resident(s) attended these programs, with the goal being eventual re-integration into the resident district's educational system if deemed to be the least restrictive environment. Students are placed in the program through an Individual Educational Planning Committee composed of local district and Berrien RESA diagnostic and educational staff.

HEARING IMPAIRED PROGRAM. BERRIEN SPRINGS PUBLIC SCHOOLS, BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN

The Berrien County Hearing Impaired Program provides educational services for hearing impaired students from Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties. During the 2016-17 school year, 10 (ten) students from Berrien Springs Public School District attended the program, which includes children from pre- school age through 26 years. This program is operated by the Berrien Springs Public Schools and is funded by the Berrien Regional Education Service Agency. In addition to classroom and teacher consultant services, the program also serves as a diagnostic center and employs an audiologist for the purpose of assessing severity and type of hearing loss. Some students, when determined educationally appropriate by an Individualized Educational Planning Committee, are educated in their resident district with the support of a teacher consultant provided by the Hearing Impaired Program.

SOUTHSIDE PROGRAM. NILES COMMUNITY SCHOOLS. NILES, MI

Niles operates center- based programs for low incidence special education students needing a full time placement.

The program for the Emotionally Impaired includes students with severe emotional or behavioral problems. These students receive a very strict, highly structured

program designed to change inappropriate behavior patterns and allow learning to take place. Expectations for performance are high with the goal being the student's successful readmission to their former school. Classroom programs serve students ages 6 through 25. Students are placed in the program through an Individual Educational Planning Committee composed of local district and Berrien RESA diagnostic and educational staff.

Students in the Pre-Vocational program or Cognitively Impaired programs have below average ability levels, making success in their local high schools extremely difficult. Often their low ability is compounded by a weak self-concept and inadequate social skills. Once at Southside a few may pursue a diploma, but most will follow a curriculum designed to promote independent living. Classrooms are available to serve ages 16 through 25. During the 2016-17 school year, six (6) students from the Berrien Springs Public School District attended this program. Students are placed in the program through an Individual Educational Planning Committee composed of local district and Berrien RESA diagnostic and educational staff.

Other Programs

Preschool Special Education Classrooms: In addition, four students from Berrien Springs attended Early Childhood Developmental Delay Classroom in Niles at Northside School. This half day preschool program serves students from ages 3-6. Build Up Michigan and Project Find: Berrien RESA operates programs to provide information and services to families. Build Up Michigan focuses on children from birth to two years of age. During the 2016-17 school year, 4 (four) students from Berrien Springs attended programs at Northside in Niles, Michigan. Students are placed in the program through an Individual Educational Planning Committee composed of local district and Berrien RESA diagnostic and educational staff.

Elementary classroom for students with Cognitive Impairments: Stewart Elementary in Stevensville, Michigan. A classroom designed to meet the needs for students functioning with a cognitive impairment. Students from Berrien Springs are IEP placed in the classroom with the intent of having the student transition to a Berrien Springs classroom for students with cognitive impairments at the start of their 6th grade school year. During the 2016-17 school year, 1 (one) Berrien Springs resident student was enrolled in this classroom. Students are placed in the program through an Individual Educational Planning Committee composed of local district and Berrien RESA diagnostic and educational staff.

IDENTIFY HOW TO ACCESS A COPY OF THE CORE CURRICULUM, A DESCRIPTION OF ITS IMPLEMENTATION AND AN EXPLANATION OF THE VARIANCES FROM THE STATE'S MODEL.

Berrien Springs has completely aligned their curriculum with the state's model curriculum, with no known variances. Common Core State Standards have been implemented, built on National Standards and adopted by the Michigan Department of Education, are available on the MDE website, www.michigan.gov and are used as the basis for the curriculum at all levels. Curriculum Guides for elementary students are available in the school offices and are distributed to parents each fall. Middle and High School curriculum is available to parents and students in syllabi and curriculum guides published on the school website and teacher webpages.

**THE AGGREGATE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RESULTS FOR ANY LOCAL
COMPENTENCY TESTS OR NATIONALLY NORMED ACHIEVEMENT TESTS**

Refer to the District Data Profile for results of NWEA and other tests.

Staff at the Discovery Academy believe that our school and district are both on the right track to providing 21st century programming and academic opportunities that will allow for all of our students to achieve success through various career pathways. As represented in our district profile, Berrien Springs is a district of choice because we are a district with choices. We will continue to ensure that our highly qualified staff emphasizes teaching strategies that implement up-to-date technology as well as research based curriculum materials. If you require any additional information regarding the Discovery Academy please feel free to contact me at wbergan@homeoftheshamrocks.org.

Sincerely,

William Bergan
Director
Berrien Springs Discovery Academy