

Together, inspiring students to think, learn, achieve and care in a global community.

Shamrock Connection

THIRD QUARTER

2022-2023 Newsletter Volume 12, Issue 4

Berrien Springs Public Schools

Mars Elementary fosters a focus on learning through its teaching methods, relationship building & a supportive learning environment

**By Ryan Pesce
Mars Elementary
Principal**

Mars Elementary is a school that focuses on creating an environment of learning for children from different backgrounds. Mars aims to provide quality education that prepares students for success in their future endeavors. One of the ways that Mars Elementary achieves this goal is by placing a strong emphasis on learning.

Here are some of the ways that Mars Elementary fosters a focus on learning:

INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING

Mars Elementary school understands that each child is unique, and that everyone learns differently. To accommodate this, the school works to individualize learning for each student. Individualized learning plans take into account the child's strengths, weaknesses, learning style, and interests. By providing tailored education, students are more likely to engage with the material and retain what they've learned.

ENGAGING TEACHING METHODS

Mars Elementary also uses a variety of teaching methods to keep students engaged and motivated. Teachers use 1 to 1 technology and interactive whiteboards to make lessons more engaging. Staff use Kagan strategies to group students and provide opportunities for students to talk and interact, not just sit and listen to the teacher. Students are given multiple opportunities



ROCKIN' READERS--Students at Mars Elementary celebrated National Reading Month by using their special literacy rocking chairs. Pictured are Journi Laukus reading "Froggy Goes to Bed," while Annabelle Leneway reads "Glasses for D.W." The two students are cousins.

during instruction to stop and talk about what the learning means to them. These connections help to keep students interested and engaged.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Mars Elementary staff recognize that relationships matter and students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care about them. We use a positive approach to building relationships and helping students find success in their learning. We truly believe that this is a critical component of reaching students and helping them learn to their fullest potential.

SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Mars Elementary also fos-

ters a supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable asking questions and making mistakes. Teachers provide constructive feedback and encourage students to take risks and try new things. This approach helps students build confidence in their abilities and fosters a growth mindset.

The staff at Mars focus on helping students learn. Each member of the team plays a critical role and through the combined efforts of the school family we create an environment where students thrive as they learn. Learning at Mars is fun even when it is difficult. Students are taught to *Think, Learn, Achieve and Care* in a



ROCKIN' READER Brody Williams enjoyed reading "Lunch Lady."

Global Community. That mission is truly what we do every day.

Jeff Yauchstetter hired as Assistant Superintendent for Innovation and Personalized Learning at Berrien Springs Public Schools

Berrien Springs School District is excited to announce the hiring of Mr. Jeff Yauchstetter as the Assistant Superintendent for Innovation and Personalized Learning. As part of his responsibilities, he will lead the efforts toward the continued work of personalized learning and competency-based education. These components are integral to both our instructional model and our portrait of a graduate.

With over two decades of experience in education, Mr. Yauchstetter brings a wealth of educational expertise to his new role. He taught mathematics, computers, and physical education for 10 years in Dowagiac Union and Lakeshore Public Schools. In his recent position at Lakeshore, he has served as the high school principal for the past four years and previously for four years as the assistant principal.

Mr. Yauchstetter's leadership abilities have impacted the students he has worked with. His experience has demonstrated his ability to forge strong relationships while leading initiatives and driving positive change.

As the Assistant Superintendent for Innovation



Berrien Springs Board of Education President Paul Toliver and Superintendent David Eichberg welcomed Jeff Yauchstetter, far right, as the new Assistant Superintendent for Innovation and Personalized Learning.

and Personalized Learning, Mr. Yauchstetter is eager to lead the district's continued journey toward personalized learning for all students.

"I am thrilled to join Berrien Springs Public Schools as the Assistant Superintendent of Innovation and Personalized Learning," he said. "As

someone who is passionate about ensuring that every student has access to high-quality education, I am honored to join a community of educators who share that same vision. Together, we will work to create innovative learning opportunities that meet the diverse needs of our students

and prepare them for success in the 21st century."

Apart from his dedication to education, Mr. Yauchstetter is also a devoted family man who enjoys spending time with his wife and two daughters. Mr. Yauchstetter will officially begin his new role on July 1, 2023.

#shamrockpride #LEARN



"When we're learning a lesson, I feel challenged but supported as the teachers are there to help me every step of the way, and the goal is to know by not knowing first. It's okay to make a mistake any time I learn. I feel that it's fine to not know something while you're learning it, because that is the whole point of learning."

-- Adalyne Wiley
10th grade



"At Berrien Springs High School, I collaborate with others when doing projects. Working with others really helps a lot because we all have different skills so when we are working together we learn more from each other."

-- Dorcas Kilembe
11th grade



Goal of Career, College and Job Fair is to create a pipeline from the school to the workforce

By Devonte Jones

Workforce Coordinator

Discovery Academy would like to thank all of the organizations who took time out of their schedule to attend the Berrien Springs Discovery Academy Career, College, and Job fair. We created a space for students to engage with several organizations in the community while building lifelong relationships. Gleaning from community relationships and partnerships, we aim to create a pipeline from our school to the workforce in our community. To begin this journey, we believe in exposing our students to a wide array of career opportunities such as trade school, military, business, and/or college that would help expand their horizons here in Southwest Michigan. Students are striving to find who they really are while exploring different careers that are available currently in the workforce. This event allowed Berrien Springs students, who may want to work in a represented career field, to have an advantage over students from other districts in the area by giving them a chance to examine jobs on site and ask questions on the spot.

This was the first time the event took place at the new AAC building. This gave our organizations an opportunity to explore and showcase Berrien's new facilities and service our students at the same time. The career and job fair has been delayed for quite some time now due to the pandemic, but it is back to service students and employers simultaneously. We want a sense of a greater cause, with our community and students being the base of this platform. We want to bridge the gap between students and local businesses while serving our local community.

The event hosted twenty-



Student Amaraha Stone received information from Jillian Hughes and Rithesh Ram from the College of Health and Human Services at Andrews University.

four organizations and one hundred plus students, which created an environment predicated on insightful information about their career goals. Here is a list of organizations that made this event possible: Basebowl, Berrien Springs-Oronoko Police Department, Express Employment Professionals, Grand Valley State University, Village of Berrien Springs, Edgewater, Great Lakes Eye Care, Maximum Mold, Michigan Works, Lake Michigan College, National Standard, Army, Honor Credit Union, Marines, Kinexus, OE 324, Modineer, United Federal Credit Union, Special Lite, Senior Professional Golf Association, Southwestern Michigan College, Eagle Technology, Berrien County Youth Fair, and Brentwood.

The job fair was created for students at every grade level at the Discovery Academy and the high school with a focus on Construction Trades,

Business, Work Based Learning, Careers Technology, and Accounting classes. The job fair was intended not only to show available post high school career opportunities for upperclassmen, but also to inform younger students which local businesses, such as restaurants, retailers, etc., may desire part time workers throughout the year or for summer time employment. Everyone who was in attendance for this event benefited in some form, which created a hopeful atmosphere for all. Organizations had a chance to speak with potential future employees face-to-face, which is helpful to students' employability skills at an early age. Also, students were very well prepared on what to expect and how to approach employers to help with career readiness. Several things were accomplished at the event such as reviewing job applications and resumes, interviews, net-

working, etc.

I would like to give a huge thanks to the Nancy O'Rourke, Larry Jackson, and David Tripp classes for attending the job fair. Also, I want to thank Shayla Williams, under the leadership of Bill Bergan, for helping with the set-up of the career fair. The feedback that I received from the organizations was nothing short of praise for how each and every one of our students was inquisitive and very interested. As educators, we are dedicated to serving students in each and every way; "reach one, teach one." That's a short but powerful quote. We want to provide students with an impactful experience that accurately portrays post high school opportunities. It is a chance to expand their horizons beyond what they already know to what could possibly be.



Four Berrien Springs Middle students advanced to Michigan History Day competition at CMU

By Jennifer Perez
BSMS ELA
Interventionist
Teacher

After months of dedicated research, hard work, and success at the regional competition, four students from Berrien Springs Middle School advanced to the Michigan History Day competition, with the hopes of continuing on to the national level and competing in Washington D.C. Piper Perez, Aimée James, Olivia Walker and Trinity Bennett, all 6th grade students, competed at the annual state competition, which is held at Central Michigan University.

Each year, there is a specific theme for the competition with which all research projects align; this year's theme was "Frontiers in History: People, Places and Ideas." Students are encouraged to be creative with their execution, while keeping the theme in mind. The four BSMS students collaboratively chose Bessie Coleman as their focus. Bessie Coleman was the first African-American woman and Native American to hold a pilot's license.

The group chose to make a website and began collecting research information in October. Twice a week, the students met after school with John Hannon who guided them through the processes in researching and creating the website. "The team members really developed their critical thinking, communication, and collaboration skills, while creating a very professionally looking website," Hannon said.

Cloverleaf Spelling Competition

In December, twenty-two Berrien Springs Middle School students signed up to participate in the 2023 Cloverleaf Spelling Competition. All twenty-two students came



Piper Perez, Aimée James, Trinity Bennett and Olivia Walker competed in the state competition at Central Michigan University.



Teacher Sandy Harner with her middle school spellers Kwame Amponsah, Adrien Mun, and James Drake.

together and began practicing before and during school. After weeks of practicing, the elimination process began to determine who would compete in the Cloverleaf Spelling Bee competition. Students competed until the top three spellers had earned their spots. Then for nine weeks, those three students continued to practice the challenging spelling word list provided by the Scripps Spelling Bee.

This list contains more than 5,000 words!

The competition was held in the Mendel Center at Lake Michigan College on February 28th. Students competed along with 14 other schools from Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties. Out of 42 students, 8th grader James Drake ended the competition with a respectable 11th place standing. Adrien Munn, and Kwame Amponsah were the

other two top spellers from Berrien Spring Middle School who competed. All three students received swag bags for their efforts. 8th grade English teacher, Mrs. Sandy Harner, led the students. "I am proud of the diligence and effort these students put forth in studying for this competition, both at school and at home," Mrs. Harner said. "Berrien Spring Middle School is very proud of their hard work!

Making memories that will last a lifetime at *FamJam!*

**By Brittney Mercier
Sylvester Elementary
Resource Room Teacher**

The resource room at Sylvester Elementary School is more than just a classroom, it is a family, known widely as the “*Fam Jam*”. Led by teacher Brittany Mercier, with least restrictive environment aides Samantha Malstrom, Anna Vanderbeck, and Shannon Bauer, students receive academic, social, and behavioral interventions on a daily basis. In the past two years, the *Fam Jam* has taken on another activity, cooking and hosting dinner parties.

Once a month, the staff and students of the *Fam Jam* come together to plan a family dinner. They decide what to cook, who the chefs will be, and deliver invitations to staff in the building. Along with chefs, they also have jobs for



“We work together to make beautiful things,” said student Henry Schoeneich.

“I learned that being kind and respectful can help others,” said student Landon Escudero.

setting the table, cleaning dishes, and doing laundry.

When the day of the family dinner arrives, students will

prepare the meal with the help of staff members and eat with invited guests in either the staff lounge or library. While eating, students work on holding a conversation with adults, listening respectfully, and getting to know more about other staff and *Fam Jam* members.

Throughout the year, these students have made spaghetti, cooked an entire Thanksgiving feast, baked and frosted Christmas cookies, flipped pancakes, and made delicious pizza bagels. Their latest endeavor has been to team up with preschoolers from Sylvester’s Deaf and Hard of Hearing classroom (the *Super-Hear-Os*) to host a formal bow tie/hair bonnet attire tea party. Together, the *Fam Jam* and *Super-Hear-Os* made cookies, fruit kabobs, **(Continued from Page 6)**

How do you measure seasons of learning?

**By Megan Lenz,
Sylvester Elementary
5th Grade Teacher,
School Improvement Chair**

“Five hundred twenty-five thousand, six hundred minutes, Five hundred twenty-five thousand moments so dear. Five hundred twenty-five thousand, six hundred minutes, How do you measure, measure a year?” –Seasons of Love, RENT

Well, if you know the song, you can also fill in the next few lines. I’ve taken the liberty to edit and rewrite them here: “In bus rides? In lunches? In snow days? In cartons of milk? In projects? Report cards? In standards? On tests?” For those of us who are less musically-minded, I’ll stop there. The question remains: How do you measure a student’s learning in a year?

One way we measure growth and learning is through an online program called IXL. Sylvester students use this program almost daily. One piece of IXL is the Di-

agnostic Arena, which gives each student a 3-digit score in math, language arts, and reading. We expect students to grow by 100 points in the IXL Diagnostic Arena, to show a year’s worth of growth. In the 6 months measured, we can see roughly 70 points of growth from each grade level in each subject area. Based on this, we can see our students are growing at the expected rate, which is reason enough to celebrate! They are clearly learning a whole lot!

Another way we can measure learning and growth is through the NWEA test, which is taken 3 times each year. Most grade levels have not completed the 3rd and final NWEA test of the year. However, the growth shown from Fall to Winter is promising, to say the least. As a staff, we are anxiously awaiting our Spring results to see this measurement of learning.

However, all of these are simply numbers. Academics are not the only things that

our students have learned this year. They are not the only indicators of growth and success, as many of us know. Indeed, our students have learned so much more. I’d like to highlight a few of our extra learning opportunities provided:

✪ Mr. Jason Constable leads a team of student leaders through the **Rockership** program, where they learn how to be exemplary students and role models in and out of the classroom.

✪ Ms. Jessica Schoeneich coordinates the **Girls on the Run** program, which inspires and empowers female students to be the best version of themselves.

✪ Ms. Brittany Mercier challenges her students with cooking, serving, cleaning, and conversing during monthly **Family Dinners (FamJam)**.

✪ Mrs. Julie Terry guided a group of students through their first **Sylvester Science Olympiad** program since 2020, where students

designed and tested various experiments. These students also participated in a county-wide competition against peers from other schools.

✪ Ms. Jennifer Schaus directed the **Sylvester Singers** in their first year back following the 2020 shutdown, igniting a love for music in the hearts of our students.

All of the items listed (and MANY others that were not) help enrich our students’ understanding of themselves, each other, and life in general. Beyond their time at Sylvester Elementary, these life lessons are the ones that are the most important ones for students to learn—passion, respect, time management, perseverance, and leadership.

So, I ask again, with the line from *Seasons of Love*: “*How do you measure, measure a year?*”

Of all the seasons of learning, character growth is my favorite one to measure.



Students found showcasing their work rewarding during Exhibition Night

By Media Studies Students and Kendra Smith
BSHS English & Media Yearbook Communications Teacher

Exhibition Night was recently celebrated at Berrien Springs High School and the Arts and Athletic Center. Exhibition Night is an annual event designed to showcase the wide range of student talents in art, drama, photography, music, and more, and academic progress in science, accounting, computers, and business, along with Career Technical Education classes. Students have participated in during their high school career.

Freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors displayed their projects which ranged from building a truck from two different vehicles to two dimensional art projects on the walls to building a playhouse for the elementary schools to ceramics to inventions to health care to poetry and story writing.

Students displayed their research or computer work projects to their peers, teachers, parents, and friends. The public was invited to come and see the projects and talk to the students.

Students shared the following comments based on their experiences during the Exhibition Night:

“During Exhibition, I learned that others are interested in what you learn and how you got to your new knowledge,” said sophomore Leni Marpe.

Students found that talking to a wider audience enhances the value of learning.

“Being able to showcase your work can make you feel more confident and that your hard work is paid off once you can see people looking and liking your work,” said sophomore Samaria Sky Williams.

Students worked on their communication skills as they highlighted projects from two different classes.

“At Exhibition, I gained more social and improvisation



Elijah Villwock took the parts of two trucks and combined them into one. He used the bed of a 1982 Dodge Ram D-150 and a 1993 Cummins D-250 to build himself a truck.

skills since I had to switch up the flow constantly as I realized how I could make my presentations better,” said senior Kelby Peterson.

The participation of the community played a critical role in students overall experience.

“My favorite part of Exhibition was when I presented to a couple that I didn’t know,” said senior ShaLee Schradler-Wetzel said. “They were

extremely engaged and they asked a lot of good questions. It was nice to be able to share all of my work to someone who didn’t know me or understand what I was doing, but still could see I worked hard.”

Berrien Springs High School’s commitment to project-based learning and 21st Century skills was exemplified in the return of Exhibition, which had not taken place since 2019.

VIRTUAL ACADEMY

Virtual Academy offers students flexible, personalized learning with a cutting edge curriculum

By Val Carr
Virtual Academy Director

Berrien Springs Virtual Academy is a dynamic and forward-thinking K-12 educational institution that is transforming the way students

Making memories for a lifetime

(Continued from Page 5)

and sandwiches to have with a complete assortment of cold and warm teas.

The purpose of this beloved monthly ritual is more than just learning about the basics of cooking. It’s about

think, learn, achieve, and care in a global community. With its flexible, personalized, and innovative approach to education, BSVA provides a unique and enriching learning experience that caters to the needs of modern students.

the joy found in these children’s eyes when they accomplish something they didn’t think they could do. It’s about working together as a team, finding confidence, and making memories that will last a lifetime.

1. **Flexibility:** Berrien Springs Virtual Academy offers students the flexibility to learn at their own pace and on their own schedule. This allows students to pursue their passions, interests, and extracurricular activities without compromising their education. Students have the freedom to set their own pace and complete assignments at times that work best for them.

2. **Personalized Learning:** Berrien Springs Virtual Academy takes a personalized approach to learning, tailoring instruction to meet the in-

dividual needs and learning styles of each student. This approach allows students to progress at their own level and achieve academic success. With access to the lab and technological advances, students receive individualized attention from highly qualified teachers who are dedicated to their success.

3. **Cutting-Edge Curriculum:** Berrien Springs Virtual Academy offers a rigorous and engaging curriculum that is aligned with state and national standards. The curriculum (Continued on Page 10)



Paraprofessional Renee Vorrath, far right, congratulates Seal of Employability Gold Medal winners Desmond Clark, Dominic Foster, and Eric Jackson.

Special education students have opportunity to earn Berrien County Seal of Employability

By Kristy Saroni
BSHS Teacher
of the Cognitively
Impaired

Special Education students, enrolled in the county-wide Cognitively Impaired classroom, housed at Berrien Springs High School, have the opportunity to earn a Seal of Employability endorsement at the end of program completion.

Starting in 2015-2016, the SOE curriculum has been used in MICI high school classrooms located in Berrien County including Benton Harbor, Berrien Springs, Lakeshore, Lighthouse Education Center, Niles/Southside and Blossomland Learning Center. Each district offers a Certificate of Completion with the option to earn a Seal of Employability endorsement to students who successfully complete the program. The SOE curriculum may be used with low functioning special education students, who are

not on a diploma track, within the special education settings in their local high schools.

What is a Seal of Employability (SOE)?

A Seal of Employability (SOE) represents an alternative pathway for high school special education students who, even with a Personal Curriculum, supplementary aids and services, modifications and/or accommodations and special education programming, are unable to meet the Michigan requirements for a high school diploma.

The major goal of SOE is for students to achieve the greatest possible degree of independence, while simultaneously obtaining significant employment readiness training. The focus for these students is on functional academics (math, language arts, science, and social studies), independence, daily living, interpersonal, and employability skills. Because competency, independence, and

employability are the goals for SOE, the curriculum is taught in experiences, activities, and real-world opportunities. Work-based learning is a very important component of the program. There is no set time frame for a SOE, however, it is likely that it would take at least four years to demonstrate competency of the over 400 objectives.

A student can demonstrate competency through:

- ♣ Being observed doing an activity that allows him/her to demonstrate the skill or knowledge.
- ♣ Actual work, community experiences, school experiences, and classroom activities.
- ♣ Projects papers, presentations, and simulations.
- ♣ Individual student interviews, questioning, and class discussions.
- ♣ Traditional assessments.

If a student is struggling with a particular competency, there are many opportunities

to build the necessary skills and knowledge over time.

One of the most important rubrics utilized throughout this curriculum is centered around work habits. Work habits are assessed each year. Work habit skills worked on are attendance, attitude, effort, cooperation, self-advocacy, and organization.

Students may receive a Bronze, Silver, or Gold Seal on their Certificate of Completion which will reflect their overall competency on the given objectives.

There are four students completing the SOE program for the 2022-2023 school year here at Berrien Springs High School. These students will have the opportunity to walk across the field with their peers in June! We would love to congratulate Desmond Clark, Gold; Dominic Foster, Gold; Eric Jackson, Gold; and Zachary Tozier, Silver!

Congratulations
Shamrocks!

All seven choirs received a Division I rating

Choir and drama students shine in both song and dance on stage at the Arts & Athletic Center

By Carrie VanDenburgh
High School and Middle
School Choir Director

The Berrien Springs Middle and High School choirs have had a great year of music making. The students have kept the tradition of great choral music going at Berrien Springs Public Schools. They continue to have the desire, discipline, and dedication in rehearsals and performances.

On February 4, we had Middle and High School District Solo and Ensemble at Southwestern Michigan College, and we had 12 students participate. The following is a list of students who participated and their scores:

Received a Division II

Allison Ott (solo)

Received a Division 1

Kaari Hurley (solo)

Jonathan Clough (solo)

Alaina Halliwell and Suzy Markle (duet)

Madi Lee, Jonatha Clough, Aiden Geates, and Sofia Pate (quartet)

Sofia Pate (solo)

Aiden Geates (solo)

Kayla Blevins (solo)

Gabrielle Gittens (solo)

Joanna Nyirenda (solo)



Choir Director Carrie VanDenburgh congratulates Jonathan Clough and Aiden Geates who received a Division 1 rating at State Solo and Ensemble.

Emma Baker (solo)
Joanna Nyirenda, Lahats Herivonjy, Angely Gomez (trio)
State Solo and Ensemble was during our spring break so two students participated. At State Solo and Ensemble,

students also have to sight-read which is added to their overall score as well. The following is a list of students who participated at state and their scores:

Received a Division 1

Jonathan Clough (solo)

Aiden Geates (solo)

The choirs attended choir festival at The Chapel on February 28 and March 1. The scores are a combination of (Continued on Page 9)

OFF-SITE LEARNING

Building personal and professional skills for the job market

WMVA is partnering with the Job Genius Program and Lincoln Learning

By Nicole Erickson
West Michigan
Virtual Academy
Assistant Director

West Michigan Virtual Academy is excited to announce new learning opportunities for our students beginning Fall 2023-2024.

Job Genius Program

WMVA is partnering with the Job Genius Program to offer our seniors an opportunity to complete their English 12B

course organized to assist students in gaining hands-on work experience while learning life skills that will be applied to the workforce. Our students will meet either in person or virtually for twelve weeks of the school year to build their personal and professional skills so they are ready for the job market when graduating.

New career course opportunities

WMVA is also partnering

with Lincoln Learning to offer our students new career and technical educational course opportunities. These courses may serve as an alternative to college for those students that would like to study majors like: Architecture and Construction, Education and Training, Art, A/V Tech & Communications, Information Technology, Business Management and Administration, STEM, Finance and Transportation, Distribution

& Logistics.

Lincoln Learning is working with the Michigan Department of Education to align the classes to the Michigan Merit Curriculum so that some of these classes will serve as a replacement to some of the traditional courses being offered in the school system.

Exciting things are happening at West Michigan Virtual Academy!





Berrien Springs Middle School students presented “*Seussical the Musical*” to the delight of audiences at the end of April.

Choir and drama students shine in both song and dance on stage at the Arts & Athletic Center

(Continued from Page 8)

tion of three performance judges and one sight-reading judge. All seven choirs received Excellent (division 1) ratings. The 7th grade choir was the first choir to perform for our school and received a 110/120. Sixth grade received a 114/120 and eighth grade received a 118/120.

The Women’s Chorus re-

ceived a 109/120, Men’s Ensemble received a 120/120, Concert Choir received a 110/120, and Bel Canto received a 119/120.

The choirs continue to work hard, and we are grateful for their success!

**Middle School
presents
“Seussical”**

On April 23, 24, and 25 at

the Arts and Athletic Center, Berrien Springs Middle School students unlocked the imaginations of Berrien Springs citizens when they brought the Cat in the Hat, Horton the Elephant, Gertrude McFuzz, Mayzie La Bird, the Whos in Whoville, and other Seuss favorites to life with their production of *Seussical JR.* Co-conceived by Lynn Ahrens,

Stephen Flaherty and Eric Idle, *Seussical JR.* combines Dr. Seuss tales (...and tails!) using the plinker-plunker of many musical styles – ranging from Latin to pop, swing to gospel, and R&B to funk – as colorful as the classic books.

Thank you for your support of the arts at Berrien Springs Public Schools!

Thinkfast Interactive Assembly drove “safe driving” message home to students through music, dance, and skits

**By Kendra Smith
BSHS English & Media
Yearbook Communications
Teacher**

The lights were bright and the music was loud as students walked into the Arts and Athletic Center Auditorium for the *Thinkfast Interactive Assembly* which focused on safe driving habits.

“The intention of the *Thinkfast* Assembly was to be

aware of and learn about safe driving,” said freshman Leslie Hamilton III.

The game-show-like format taught students national, state, and local facts about the dangers of driving distracted or impaired, and over the speed limit. After each informational segment, students used interactive clickers to compete and show their learning.

“The assembly was high energy--it felt like a concert,” said freshman Jayden Edwards. “People were dancing, moving, talking and having a good time, but it also made me think.”

To keep it fun, the host and DJ also asked pop culture questions, and added other mini competitions like dance battles and skits.

“The thing I most liked

about the assembly was how it was interactive--they made it fun,” said sophomore Mackenzie Boelcke. “It made it easier to pay attention to... I really appreciate the way there were games, music, lights, and overall a very fun setting. They made it interesting which is very much needed. There were lots of kids, lots of discussions, and lots of learning (in a fun way).”

Shamrock spring sports are off to a great start!

By Joe Stephens
Athletic Director

This spring is looking to be an exciting season for Shamrock athletics. We currently have over 180 student-athletes competing this spring in our diverse offering of MHSAA sanctioned sports (Boys/Girls Track and Field, Girls JV/Varsity Soccer, JV/Varsity Girls Tennis, JV/Varsity Softball, JV/Varsity Baseball and Varsity Golf). These students and their coaches have been putting a lot of work in all winter in our hallways and gyms. They are now excited to be outside and working out in their actual homes on campus.

There is a lot of excitement around our ladies' programs this spring. The girls' soccer team is looking to have their first winning season in school history. The varsity girls' tennis team is off to a great start and showing major improvement from last season as they have beaten and tied two opponents that beat them 8-0 last year. Our softball program will be fielding a JV team for the first time in years. The girls' track team is looking to defend its 6th straight conference title and has goals to make some noise in the re-



Senior Shamrock tennis players are, front row: Danielle Gittens, Olivia Ludwick, and Christine Seo; and back row: Madylin Keigley, Liseti Hola, and Jessy Hajaj.

gional and state meets.

On the boys' side, the golf team is just starting to be able to get on the courses because of the difficult weather conditions. The baseball team is coming off its district championship and has wasted no time getting off to a 4-0 start. The boys' track team is looking to defend the same conference championship streak that the girls are, but they also have to deal with the bullseye that comes with being the defend-

ing state champions.

This spring we are hosting several major events: Please reach out to jstephens@home-oftheshamrocks.org if you are interested in joining our team of workers for any of these days. We need all of the help that we can get to run these events and give our students and those all over the area a special environment for educational athletics.

The major spring events are as follows:

- ♣ Shamrock Track Invitational
5/12
- ♣ Shamrock Baseball/Softball Invitationals
5/13
- ♣ MHSAA Track and Field Regional 5/19
- ♣ MITCA Track and Field Team State Championship Meet
5/26
- ♣ MHSAA Baseball District and Regional Semifinal
5/30, 6/3, 6/7
- ♣ MHSAA Softball Regional
6/10

Virtual Academy offers a cutting edge curriculum, personalized learning

(Continued from Page 6)

riculum includes a wide range of courses, from core subjects to advanced courses to non-traditional electives only accessible through online coursework, along with Career and Technical Education (CTE), Early Middle College, Math and Science Center, and elective options at the middle school, high school, and in the community through the Parent Partnership. Upon graduation, BSVA students receive a Berrien Springs High School diploma and have the option to walk at graduation.

4. **Highly Qualified Teachers:** Berrien Springs Virtual Academy teachers are exper-

rienced, certified professionals who are passionate about teaching virtual learners and committed to student success. They provide expert instruction, support, and feedback to help students achieve their academic goals. Teachers also foster a sense of community in a virtual environment and provide mentorship.

5. **Safe and Supportive Learning Environment:** Berrien Springs Virtual Academy provides a safe and supportive learning environment where students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Students have access to a variety of support services, including academic

counseling and individualized support to ensure their success. Additionally, BSVA emphasizes character education and promotes positive values such as respect, responsibility, integrity, and leadership.

6. **Enriching Extracurricular Activities:** Berrien Springs Virtual Academy recognizes the importance of a well-rounded education, and offers a variety of extracurricular activities that allow students to explore their interests and develop their talents. These activities include BSVA student council, field trips, and social events, which foster a sense of community and camaraderie among students. Berrien

Springs Virtual Academy students can participate in clubs at the middle school and high school.

7. **Career and College Readiness:** Berrien Springs Virtual Academy prepares students for the future by equipping them with the skills, knowledge, and mindset needed for college and career success. The curriculum is designed to meet college and career readiness standards and students receive guidance and support in navigating the college application process, exploring career options, and developing essential skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and communication.

CURRICULUM AND LEARNING

Teachers are constantly learning and training as part of their professional development

By Tracey Jaggi
Curriculum
Coordinator

Learning doesn't just happen for students. For many of us, we already know this from our own experiences in our everyday lives. Whether scrolling through your favorite social media site, watching a YouTube video, talking to a good friend, watching a movie, or reading a book, you are likely learning something new. These interactions often occur when we never set out to learn or just planned on having fun or being entertained. This is also true for teachers. Aristotle said, "Teaching is the highest form of learning." Teachers continue to learn more and more each day. They experience learning, not only for themselves, but also through interactions as students create, problem solve, and discover. Students make mistakes, explore and share, and share and overshare whatever they are thinking and experiencing. And soon, we all learn something new about something or ourselves.

There is also learning that teachers participate in that is planned out by the district or by teachers themselves. Teachers often spend time in meetings when they are not with students, but they are often gaining credit for learning that is required by the state of Michigan and for renewals on teacher certifications. Administrators and counselors are also learning and renewing their state certification requirements along with teachers. The state of Michigan requires districts to provide 15 days of training to new teachers in their first three years of employment. These new teachers are also provided mentors who usually are also teachers. Often the mentors learn from their mentees and, therefore, gain their own learning "hours."

Additionally, every teacher

must participate in a minimum of 5 days of professional learning and have an equivalent of 25 days of learning in 5 years to keep teacher certification. Many teachers and administrators earn hours well above this minimum due to the many opportunities both within our schools and from outside learning providers. About half of a year's requirement is fulfilled during the week before school starts at Berrien Springs Public Schools. The remaining days are spread out between a day in January and half days throughout the year. Recently BSPS teachers have received training and further understanding around implementing new curricular resources, engagement strategies, student behavior expectations, project-based learning, instructional programs and supports, technology, etc. Some teachers attend training at Berrien RESA through learning organizations around specific subjects or pedagogy, while others take college courses and certificate programs, attend conferences, etc. Educators have many opportunities to advance their understanding and learn new strategies around researched practices and exciting, innovative possibilities.

Teachers also spend time working collaboratively within teacher groups and committees. This time also counts as professional development and learning time. Teachers are scheduled for **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)**, where they look at instruction and assessment plans and results to share best practices and support one another. PLC members gain new learning about their own students and learn together about their standards, assessment practices, and ways to enrich and remediate students. Each building also has a **School Improvement**

Team (SIT) that plans for continuous improvement activities. Goals are set, and the SIT oversees monitoring and determines what adjustments or changes need to be made. Another group some teachers participate in and learn from is the **Quality Review Team (QRT)**. Members of QRT help review district curriculum documents and instructional expectations and standards. They make recommendations and suggestions to building principals and teachers to help keep consistency across the district. This team's major component is a deeper understanding of how learning progresses across grades and subjects. Each of these teams adds extreme value to distinct learning and improvement of school effectiveness.

Recently, Sylvester Elementary, our Middle School, and High School were asked to host one of our curriculum partners for the program's own learning. Illustrative Mathematics (IM) needed to learn and revise their own program resources and needed a school to help them out. Our teachers opened up their classrooms to allow math experts in so that the curriculum specialists from IM could gain insight and learn from their time with our teachers and students. As with any learning opportunity, unexpected outcomes surfaced from the event, and all participants left with some new understanding or gained perspective. It was a great shared learning experience that proved mutually beneficial to everyone.

Learning is abundant for students in schools and especially at Berrien Springs. But growing, learning, and improving doesn't just happen to students. It shapes teachers, administrators, and all staff at BSPS who work hard to bring their best to students by being professionals focused on improvement.



"I always feel it's okay to make a mistake when I am doing my class work either by myself or with the help of my classmates or teachers. I have found out that it's okay to make mistakes when you're learning in school and in life because that means you are growing and I will always appreciate learning that."

-- Kayla Sue Machemer
12th grade

#shamrockpride
#LEARN



"What I learned from organizing and participating in the Black History Month Assembly is communication, time management, and organization. I also partly got over my fear of public speaking."

-- Endyia Kirtdoll
12th grade

Berrien Springs Public Schools
One Sylvester Avenue
Post Office Box 130
Berrien Springs, MI 49103

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
MARANA GROUP

ECRWSS
Residential Customers

 **SUPERINTENDENT'S CORNER** 

Flexible learning environments meet the needs of all student learners

**By Dave Eichberg
Superintendent**

The Berrien Springs Public Schools vision statement, “Inspiring students to think, learn, achieve and care in a global community” reflects the value the district and community place on student learning. Learning is the primary focus of our school system. Learning today can occur in a classroom, a laboratory, a stage, an athletic court or field, at home, virtually, or in

the work place. Today student learning is not confined to the four walls of a classroom.

This issue of the *Shamrock Connection* is filled with examples of student learning and the variety of ways students learn. The district will continue to provide a variety of options for learning including flexible learning environments that meet the needs of all student learners and their families. *Go Shamrocks!*



**BERRIEN SPRINGS PUBLIC SCHOOLS**
TOGETHER, INSPIRING STUDENTS TO THINK, LEARN, ACHIEVE AND CARE IN A GLOBAL COMMUNITY.

  

@berrienspringspublicschools @bspsschools @bspsschools

For more information, please visit
homeoftheshamrocks.org

Contact Us
contactus@homeoftheshamrocks.org
(269) 471-2891