



February 8, 2024

Dear Parents and Community Members:

We are pleased to present you with the Annual Education Report (AER), which provides key information on the 2023-24 educational progress for Mars Elementary School. 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 Josh Feldpausch for assistance.

The AER is available for you to review electronically by visiting the following website, [Berrien Springs Public Schools State & Federal Reports](#) or you may review a copy in the main office at your child's school.

For the 2023-24 school year, schools were identified based on previous years' performance using definitions and labels as required in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). A Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) school is one that had at least one underperforming student subgroup in 2022-23. An Additional Targeted Support (ATS) school is one that had a student subgroup performing at the same level as the lowest 5% of all schools in the state in 2022-23. A Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) school is one whose performance was in the lowest 5% of all schools in the state or had a graduation rate at or below 67% in 2022-23. Some schools are not identified with any of these labels. In these cases, no label is given.

Our school was identified as a school that has not been given a label.

Mars Elementary has taken on many initiatives over the past several years to help increase student achievement in all core content areas with a strong focus on literacy. This year teachers have placed an emphasis on alignment to essential standards, alignment to a guaranteed and viable curriculum and developed scales to address these standards. Teachers meet in professional learning communities to disaggregate data and provide students with necessary intervention to meet their needs. A shift in literacy has taken place and Mars has adopted Literacy Footprints

for reading. In order to improve math achievement, Mars staff continues to implement the rigorous program (Bridges to Mathematics) that is clearly aligned to the state Common Core Standards.

1. Process for assigning pupils to the school
2. The status of the 3-5 year school improvement plan
3. A brief description of each specialized school
4. 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.
5. The aggregate student achievement results for any local competency tests or nationally normed achievement tests
6. Identify the number and percent of students represented by parents at parent-teacher conferences
7. For high schools, only also report on the following:
  - a. The number and percent of postsecondary enrollments (Dual Enrollment)
  - b. The number of college equivalent courses offered (AP/IB)
  - c. The number and percentage of students enrolled college equivalent courses (AP/IB)
  - d. The number and percentage of students receiving a score leading to college credit

## **1. PROCESS FOR ASSIGNING PUPILS TO THE SCHOOL**

Resident students (along with students accepted through the schools of choice process) may qualify and 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 Program (IEP) to help assist the child progress within the general education setting.

## **2. THE STATUS OF THE 3-5 YEAR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

Mars Elementary is currently implementing the MICIP school improvement plan. Our school improvement team is made up of parents, teachers, support staff, and administration. The team holds meetings throughout the school year to review progress of goals and report back to the entire school staff. We are also continuing

literacy training for all staff. Focused training in the areas of reading and writing using literacy footprints are implemented. Positive behavior supports/social and emotional learning continues to be a focus as Mars. Staff also continued professional development and constant focus on our school improvement goal areas which include: 1) Improve reading comprehension skills while reading increasingly complex narrative and information text above grade level; 2) Improve math proficiency; 3) Improve proficiency in informational and narrative writing skills and demonstrate proficiency in the Michigan State Standards.

The AdvancED accreditation process is firmly embedded at Mars Elementary. This process provides a solid framework for increasing student achievement. Our formal peer review was scheduled during the 2015-16 school year. This is a required component of the five-year accreditation term granted to the school. As part of our continuous improvement process, the Mars staff will continue to monitor progress on our school improvement goals by gathering and analyzing student achievement data. As appropriate, we will add or modify instructional strategies. In addition, we will be engaged in professional development activities to prepare for the expectations of the Michigan State Standards.

### **3. A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF EACH SPECIALIZED SCHOOL**

#### **Special Education AER** **2023-2024 School Year**

Resident students (along with students accepted through the schools of choice process) may qualify and 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 students needing additional support through interventions 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 under one of the thirteen eligibility areas in Michigan, a team of individuals will develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to help assist the child progress within the general education setting. Programming and services offered within the district for students are as follows-

#### **A. Resource Room Services for Local Special Education Students**

Part of the IEP process includes the determination of appropriate aids, supplementary services, accommodations, and modifications for success in general education. Current special education programs within the district include, but are not limited to, Elementary and Secondary Resource Rooms. Students follow a general education curriculum with the Common Core State Standards. There are two models utilized within Berrien Springs Public Schools, one in which classroom instruction is

provided by a general education teacher along with interactive co-teaching from a special education teacher; the second model is for students determined to need more direct instruction for needs outlined within their IEP. Under this model, students may receive programming/services that pull them out of the general education classroom for a set amount of time dictated by their IEP. Should a student at our Discovery Academy or Virtual Academy programs have a need for Resource Room programming or services outlined in their IEP, such programs and services can and will be provided. Specialized instruction at the Discovery Academy and Virtual Academy programs can be provided in-person at either our middle or high school buildings. At the elementary level approximately sixty-one students receive Elementary Resource Room programming; fifty-seven secondary students receive Secondary Resource Room programming.

## **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 Program) process in conjunction with their resident districts. Transportation to and from Berrien Springs is provided through the local resident district. These programs include:

### **1. Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH) Classrooms, Teacher Consultant Services, Audiological Services:**

Students with hearing impairments have been part of Berrien Springs Public Schools for approximately 50 years. Cass County contracts services through Berrien RESA allowing students to enroll from both Cass and Berrien counties. Babies are frequently identified at birth and start receiving intervention services at a very early age with teacher consultants seeing families in their homes. Classroom services are available for pre-school through high school aged students. These students may also participate in general education classes. Approximately 18 Berrien and Cass County students receive direct services in the classroom program, three students are residents of Berrien Springs.

Many students who are Deaf or hard of hearing function very well in their home district classrooms while receiving indirect assistance from a teacher consultant and/or audiologist for equipment purposes. Approximately 70 children receive equipment services (IFSP, IEP, and 504), including ten (10) students from Berrien Springs.

Two educational audiologists provide audiological services and equipment management for students with identified hearing loss through our Hearing Center for students in Berrien, Cass, and Saint Joseph counties. 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, Early On, and Early Hearing

Detection and Intervention (EHDI) to diagnose children as soon as possible and get amplification and intervention started. The team of audiologists work with over 500 students each year.

**2. Severe Language Impaired Preschool Program:**

Students in the SLI preschool room receive instruction from a highly qualified teacher having endorsements in Elementary Education, speech and language impairments, and who is also a licensed speech and language pathologist. A maximum of 15 students ages three to six years of age 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 2023-24 school year, two (2) Berrien Springs resident students are enrolled in this classroom with a total of 15 students overall from Berrien county. Students are placed in the program through an Individual Educational Planning Committee composed of their local district and Berrien RESA diagnostic and educational staff.

**3. Middle School Mildly Cognitively Impaired Classrooms:**

The district operates two county-wide classrooms at Berrien Springs Middle School for students functioning with mild cognitive impairments. The program incorporates reading, writing, and vocabulary with social studies and science topics, following the Extended Grade Level Content Expectations from Michigan Department of Education. Currently, 16 students are being serviced within these county classrooms. This school year, three (3) students considered to be Berrien Springs resident students are 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.

**4. High School Mildly Cognitively Impaired Classroom:**

A county-wide classroom for students functioning with a mild cognitive impairment is also 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 and earn a Seal of Employability upon completion of the program. This program also includes 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 do participate in the high school graduation ceremony. Students also have the option of participating in CTE programs within the county. There are a total of 17 students enrolled in the classroom presently, with 8 students being considered Berrien Springs residents. Students are placed in the program through an Individual Educational Planning Committee composed of local district and Berrien RESA diagnostic and educational staff.

**C. Ancillary Services:**

Ancillary services are available for students who qualify. These services may include speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, or consultation from service providers such as vision, orientation & mobility, or assistive technology consultants.

Approximately 181 students receive speech and language services from Berrien Springs speech and language pathologists. Fifty-seven students receive OT and/or PT services from Berrien RESA OT/PTs.

**D. Build Up Michigan:**

Build Up Michigan: Berrien Springs provides both evaluations and services for resident students ages three-five through the Build Up Michigan program. Evaluation plans determined for children through Build Up Michigan referrals are considered full and individual evaluations. Any programs/services offered are developed with the IEP planning team and evaluation team to meet the unique needs of each student.

**E. Specialized Programs for Students Available Outside of Berrien Springs District:**

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

**1. 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 cognitively 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. Twelve (12) Berrien Springs resident students are attending this program during the 2023-24 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.

**2. Lighthouse Education Center, Berrien Regional Education Service Agency, St. Joseph, Michigan (including satellite locations)**

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. During the 2023-24 school year, six (6) Berrien Springs Public School District resident(s) attend these programs at Lighthouse and in their satellite classrooms throughout the county. These satellite classrooms include locations at Saint Joseph High School, The Center for Growth and Independence, and Howard Ellis Elementary.

**3. Niles Community Schools, Niles, Michigan  
(EI, MICI, ECSE Programs)**

Niles Community Schools operates countywide 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 resident district. Classroom programs serve students ages 6 through 26 in buildings such as Ballard Elementary and Southside. In the 2023-24 school year there are seven (7) students from Berrien Springs that attend these programs. 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. Programs are located at both Niles High School and Southside, some students may pursue a diploma, but most will follow a curriculum designed to promote independent living with a Seal of Employability. Classrooms are available to serve ages 16 through 25. There are presently no Berrien Springs students enrolled in the 16-25 pre-vocational program in Niles. Students are placed in the program through an Individual Educational Planning Committee composed of local district and Berrien RESA diagnostic and educational staff.

Niles Community Schools also has an elementary program for cognitive impairments (K-2). There were no resident students placed in the classroom for students at Ballard Elementary in Niles in the 2023-24 school year.

During the 2023-24 school year, six (6) students from Berrien Springs attend Early Childhood Special Education 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. This half day preschool program serves students ages 3-6 and includes ancillary services such as speech/language, occupation, and physical therapy.

**4. Mild Cognitively Impaired Classrooms, Lakeshore Public Schools,  
Stevensville, Michigan**

Lakeshore Public Schools provide county-based programs for students with cognitive impairments in grades K-12. Students are placed in these programs through an Individual Educational Planning Committee composed of local district and Berrien RESA diagnostic and educational staff. In the 2023-24

school year, three (3) Berrien Springs resident students were placed in a K-2 or 3-5 classroom for students with mild cognitive impairments, housed in Lakeshore, at either Stewart or Hollywood Elementary.

**5. Elementary Mild Cognitively Impaired Classroom, Watervliet Public Schools, Watervliet, MI**

Watervliet Public Schools provide a county-based program for students with cognitive impairments in grades 3-5. Students are placed in these programs through an Individual Educational Planning Committee composed of local district and Berrien RESA diagnostic and educational staff. There are currently no Berrien Springs resident students IEP placed into this classroom in the 2023-24 school year.

**6. Juvenile Center, Berrien Springs, Michigan**

The juvenile center has programming for students with disabilities that are court placed, for an amount of time determined by a judge, with the goal being eventual re-integration into the resident district's educational system. Any students currently placed at the juvenile center are considered Berrien Springs residents during their placement there and the district is involved in their special education planning.

**4. 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 State Standards and adopted by the Michigan Department of Education, are available on the MDE website, <http://www.michigan.gov/mde> 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 published on the school website and teacher web pages.

**5. THE AGGREGATE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RESULTS FOR ANY LOCAL COMPETENCY TESTS OR NATIONALLY NORMED ACHIEVEMENT TESTS**

**Accountability Scorecard – Detail Data and Status**

You may refer to the District Data Profile for results of DRA, MAP, NWEA, and other tests on our website [www.homeoftheshamrocks.org](http://www.homeoftheshamrocks.org).

**6. IDENTIFY THE NUMBER AND PERCENT OF STUDENTS REPRESENTED BY PARENTS AT PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Mars Elementary

Year (# of students)	Fall Conf % of Attendance	Spring Conf % of Attendance
2023-2024 (355)	85%	N/A
2020-2021 (419)	89%	N/A
2019-2020 (408)	93%	N/A
2018-2019 (405)	97%	N/A

2023-2024 Totals

Totals	# Present	Out Of	Percentage
Pro Fives	17	20	85%
Kindergarten	79	91	87%
1st Grade	100	122	82%
2nd Grade	104	122	85%
Building Total	300	355	85%

Mars Elementary administration and staff 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 Mars Elementary, please feel free to contact me at [jfeldpausch@homeoftheshamrocks.org](mailto:jfeldpausch@homeoftheshamrocks.org).

Sincerely,

Josh Feldpausch

Principal  
 Mars Elementary School  
 Berrien Springs Public Schools