



August 28, 2023

Dear BSPS Parents and Guardians,

I am writing to you today to welcome the upcoming school year. Over the past 24 months, I have been transitioning into the role of Superintendent, and I can tell you that I am excited to be here in Berrien Springs.

Throughout this leadership transition period, I have been deeply focused on maintaining consistency, sustainability, and growth. I want to assure you that our dedication to our three key strategies—Attendance, Achievement, and Engagement—remains steadfast for this year. I firmly believe that focus and intentionality are the driving forces behind reaching our goals. We have a data dashboard connected to each building whereby we can get daily reports on student attendance, achievement and engagement. We know that if students are not in school, we cannot teach them. In addition, once they are here it is up to us to offer meaningful instruction and engaging environments for learning. You can help us achieve our goals by ensuring our students attend school daily.

In the past 18 months, we have been reorganizing BSPS to better align with the needs of our on-campus buildings and our 26 learning centers across the state. In this last summer alone, BSPS has graduated 948 students here on campus and across the state. Our rapid growth has prompted us to create new positions and fill existing positions. With the support of the Board of Education, we have added many high-quality individuals to our organization. We are excited to bring these individuals to enhance our team's capabilities and help drive our organization's success.

Our district continues to transition to better support student learning and success. We have welcomed Mr. Jeff Yauchstetter as the Assistant Superintendent of Innovation and Personalized Learning. We have also hired Mr. Josh Feldpausch as the Principal of Mars Elementary. Mr. Micah Lambert is the new Sylvester Elementary Principal. Mrs. Linda Wash and Mrs. Andi Lemon are the new Assistant Principals at the Middle and High School, respectively.

This year, we will unveil a new BSPS App, allowing students and parents to access pertinent information. We will also launch a shamrock podcast - yet to be named. This will be a great way for our community to learn more about the learning initiatives occurring in our district. Finally, Right at School is still registering new students in grades K-8. Remember, this is a free pilot program to extend the learning day that offers before and after school programming while giving parents flexible pick-up and drop-off times. It is important to note that we continue to enhance our services to improve student achievement here on campus.

Our non-traditional learning center programs are expanding, and families are seeking alternative graduation routes in light of the pandemic. The Shamrock Way offers a nurturing environment with various pathways to academic success. Drawing upon our extensive 12+ years of knowledge and experience in this field, we provide wrap around services to meet student's needs, and the enduring success of these programs remains strong. At the end of the summer, our non-traditional programs graduated 843 students statewide.

With the growth of our district, we have invested financial and people resources to renovate, remodel, and build new spaces for our students and staff in order to provide a world-class educational experience. We will be wrapping up numerous construction projects in August and throughout the school year. Our connection to our community is paramount. We appreciate your patience as we complete these projects. We believe the finished products will bring great pride to our community.

In education, I want to share that I stand by two principles:

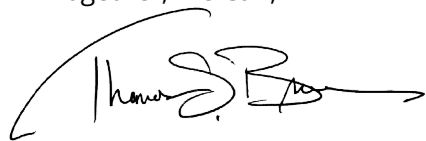
1. **We are a Learning Organization**, continuously learning and improving our practices to do better. Our focus is nurturing humans, and we must embody flexibility, adaptability, and the capacity to embrace change. Your insights and recommendations via surveys or family engagement nights are important to us.
2. **We Must Collaborate**. Collaboration is paramount—learning is social, and therefore teaching must be too. Our strength lies in our collective efforts as we learn, reflect, and set goals together.

I invite you to join me on this learning journey as I am committed to continuous growth and reflection. Together, we can achieve great things.

In closing, I look forward to an outstanding year connecting our BSPS team of high-performing professionals with your family. We stand on the brink of extraordinary achievements, and are excited about the possibilities. With you as our partner, we will continue to be leaders in educational practices here in Berrien County and across the state.

Welcome to the new school year!

Together, We Can,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas Bruce", with a large, sweeping flourish above it that extends to the left and then curves back towards the right.

Dr. Thomas Bruce, Superintendent