



BERRIEN SPRINGS VIRTUAL ACADEMY



December 12, 2020

Dear Parents and Community Members:

We are pleased to present you with the Annual Education Report (AER) which provides key information on the 2019-20 educational progress for the Berrien Springs Virtual 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 Rachel Stout, Director for assistance.

The AER is available for you to review electronically by visiting the following web site <https://bit.ly/2Wr0UJL> or you may review a copy in the main office at your child's school.

For the 2019-20 year, no new Priority or Focus schools were named; some Priority or Focus schools did exit their status because they met the exit criteria. New Reward schools were identified using school rankings and Beating the Odds information. A Focus school is one that has a large achievement gap between the highest and lowest achieving 30% of schools. A Priority school is one whose achievement and growth is in the lowest 5% of all schools in the state. A Reward school is one that has achieved one or more of the following distinctions: top 5% of schools on the Top-to-Bottom School Rankings, top 5% of schools making the greatest gains in achievement (improvement metric), or "Beating the Odds" by outperforming the school's predicted ranking and/or similar schools. Some schools are not identified with any of these labels. In these cases no label is given.

Our school was not identified as a "focus", "priority", or "reward" school.

The Berrien Springs Virtual Academy serves families who are interested in a homeschool feel coupled with the rigor, support, and accountability provided by a traditional school. The school provides highly qualified teachers on campus and online. The challenges in this setting are communication, goal setting, and support services. The Virtual Academy is in the process of addressing these challenges in the following ways:

In the area of communication, the school sends out mass communication via school messenger, digital newsletters, and print letters home. In addition, teachers communicate with students through phone, email, online meetings, and face to face workshops.

To assist students in setting goals, the Virtual Academy meets with individual students and/or families to view/review goals. This guidance includes progression towards graduation as well as college and career goal setting.

The Virtual Academy, in concert with Berrien Springs Public Schools provides various support services. Services provided at the Virtual Academy include writers workshops, SAT Prep classes, mentoring, weekly synchronous meetings in each content class. Through other buildings, the school provides special education services, counseling services, and extensions such as dual enrollment and career courses.

State law requires that we also report additional information.

1. The Virtual Academy accepts both district residents and schools of choice students. Course placement is determined in three ways: parent input, NWEA MAP test results, and transcripts from previous schools.
2. The Virtual Academy is a K-12th grade seat time waiver program. Students have the option of working from home with a weekly mentoring session.
3. K - 5th grade students work from home using Lincoln Learning Curriculum. Students work with parents at home. The parents serve as the primary coach and receive feedback from our certified elementary teacher. Assessments are proctored through an online meeting format.
6th - 12th grade students use <http://edgenuity.com>. Students are permitted to work from home or on campus. Parents serve as motivational coaches but may rely on teachers to provide academic support.

Students have access to all curriculum 24/7.

4. The Virtual Academy is focused on growth. Due to the COVID pandemic, we were not able to participate in Spring testing. Therefore, we do not have current growth data for last year.
5. Over the last two years, 70% of families have attended parent teacher conferences.
6. 9th - 12th grade students of the Virtual Academy:
 - a. 90% of 11th and 12th grade students participate in dual enrollment classes through Lake Michigan College, Southwestern Michigan College, and Andrews University OR Career and Technical Education offered through the county.
 - b. Presently, the Virtual Academy does host AP courses through Michigan Virtual. Students access AP testing through neighboring schools.
 - c. In the last two years, 95% of students who attempt college courses earn college credit.

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:

• Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH) Classrooms, Teacher Consultant Services, Audiological Services:

Berrien Springs Public Schools provides center based programming for students under the eligibility of Deaf/Hard of Hearing. 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 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 50 Berrien and Cass County students are served in this program, five (5) students being residents of the Berrien Springs Public Schools. Many students with DHH eligibility function very well in their home district classrooms while

receiving assistance from teacher consultants. Approximately 70 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. The audiologists work with over 500 students each year.

● **Speech-Language Impaired Pre-school:**

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 18 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 2019-20 school year three (3) 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 2019-20, 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. Six (5) students from Berrien Springs were in the High School MICI classroom in 2019-20. 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. Thirteen (13) Berrien Springs Public School District resident students attended this program during the 2019-20 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 2019-20 school year, five (5) 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.

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 26. 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 2019-20 school year, two (2) 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 2019-20 school year, four (4) 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.

Additionally, Niles School District and Lakeshore Public Schools provide county-based programs for students with cognitive and emotional impairments. 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 2019-20 school year one (1) Berrien Springs resident student was placed in a classroom for students with emotional impairments at Niles (Ballard School), three (3) students with cognitive impairments were placed at Niles (Howard School), and two (2) students with cognitive impairments were placed at Lakeshore (Stewart Elementary School).