



January 31, 2024

Dear Parents and Community Members:

We are pleased to present you with the Annual Education Report (AER), which provides key information on the 2022-23 educational progress for 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 William Bergan for assistance.

The AER is available for you to review electronically by visiting the following website https://www.mischooldata.org/annual-education-report-1?Common_Locations=1-S,5749,936,67, 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 2021-22. 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 2021-22. Some schools are not identified with any of these labels. In these cases, no label is given.

Our school has not been given one of these labels.

We are committed to enhancing students' educational journeys at Discovery Academy, and are happy to share our progress and initiatives. Boosting graduation and Michigan Merit Exam participation rates is a top priority for our dedicated staff. To support our students, we offer attendance and exam participation incentives, as well as more flexible options such as evening classes and online instruction from home. I'm delighted to report that Discovery Academy boasts an impressive graduation rate of approximately 80%, ranking among the highest for Alternative Education Programs in Michigan. In recent years, we've focused on aligning our curriculum and assessments with the district's essential standards, contributing to ongoing improvements in student achievement. Additionally, our commitment to student success includes a robust employment readiness program.



State law requires that we also report additional information.

1. PROCESS FOR ASSIGNING PUPILS TO THE SCHOOL

In the process of enrolling students at Discovery Academy, each individual undergoes a comprehensive interview conducted by our staff, and their transcripts are meticulously evaluated. If, following this assessment, it is concluded that the Discovery Academy represents the most fitting educational environment, classes are subsequently assigned based on the specific credits required. It is important to note that the Discovery Academy caters to students spanning grades 9 through 12.

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

The annual revision of the school improvement plan is facilitated through the District MICIP. Our comprehensive approach to monitoring student growth and achievement involves utilizing NWEA benchmarking during the fall and spring, aligning with state testing requirements. Emphasizing the significance of course completion and graduation rates, we meticulously track and analyze these metrics. Notably, our current school plan incorporates an evaluation framework to assess students' success in meeting district essential standards, with a particular focus on enhancing support for students enrolled in math courses.

3. A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF EACH SPECIALIZED SCHOOL

Beyond the conventional grade 9-12 program offered at Discovery Academy, our school district is dedicated to providing diverse educational alternatives and opportunities tailored to meet the unique needs of students. Specifically designed for students with disabilities, specialized schools play a vital role in expanding the continuum of educational services available within our district. For detailed information regarding specialized schools within Berrien Springs Public Schools or Berrien County, we encourage you to reach out to the Special Education office at 269-471-1059.

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:



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.

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.



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.

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:

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.

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.



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.



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.

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.

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 meticulously aligned its curriculum with the state's model curriculum, ensuring no discernible variances. The adoption of Common Core State Standards, founded on National Standards and endorsed by the Michigan Department of Education, serves as the foundation for our educational framework. These standards are accessible on the MDE website at <https://www.michigan.gov/mde/services/octe/educators/michigan-merit-curriculum>. At all levels, our curriculum is structured in accordance with these standards. For those seeking detailed insights into our courses, Curriculum Guides for all disciplines can be obtained upon request from the Discovery Academy Director.



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

In addition to mandated state testing, students at Berrien Springs Discovery Academy undergo the NWEA benchmark test in both mathematics and reading. The outcomes of this local assessment for the previous two years are provided below. Comprehensive state testing information can be accessed in the AER report, which is available through the MiSchoolData website linked above.

NWEA Testing Results by Mean RIT Score

Grade/Subject	2021-2022		2022-2023	
	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
9th Grade Math	209.9 20th %ile	215.7 25th %ile	***	***
9th Grade Reading	206.3 25th %ile	213.9 34th %ile	***	***
10th Grade Math	213.3 22nd %ile	217.3 24th %ile	221.0 34th %ile	222.4 32nd %ile
10th Grade Reading	208.7 24th %ile	207.4 18th %ile	220.2 46th %ile	215.5 32nd %ile
11th Grade Math	210.6 16th %ile	226.6 37th %ile	218.1 26th %ile	231.7 44th %ile
11th Grade Reading	206.8 19th %ile	***	212.6 26th %ile	219.1 37th %ile
12th Grade Math	***	***	226.5 38th %ile	***
12th Grade Reading	***	***	216.6 36th %ile	***

*** indicates less than 10 students tested with statistically invalid values.

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

Discovery Academy students and parents are contacted weekly by mentor teacher to give real time progress reports and set set short term goals

7. POST-SECONDARY ENROLLMENTS

Berrien Springs Public Schools afford students the prospect of participating in post-secondary or dual enrollment courses at nearby colleges and universities. Notably,



in the academic year 2022-23, approximately 4% of our students availed themselves of these opportunities, a slight decrease from the 10% enrollment observed in the preceding school year, 2021-22. It is noteworthy that in both years, students continued to enroll in courses post-graduation, with 13% enrolling in the 2021-22 academic year, and approximately 11% in the subsequent year. Currently, our educational offerings do not include college-equivalent courses such as AP or IB.

The staff at the Discovery Academy believe that our school and district are both on the right track to provide 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 of choices. Students and families who choose to become part of the Discovery Academy family can be assured that our highly qualified staff effectively utilize teaching strategies that are research and evidence based. Additionally while leveraging available technology and innovative programming, we continue to strive to improve in providing opportunities for student success.

If you seek further information about Discovery Academy, please do not hesitate to contact me at wbergan@homeoftheshamrocks.org or with the school directly at 269-471-2593.

Sincerely,

William Bergan
Director, Berrien Springs Discovery Academy