

Berrien Springs Virtual Academy Parent Partnership

Student and Parent Handbook



Berrien Springs Public Schools

2022-2023

Welcome to your Partnership

What's in a name?

Berrien Springs School District has an outstanding track record of creating phenomenal, unprecedented programs reaching students of all ages and abilities for its own community and beyond. Why are we called a "Parent Partnership?" Because BSPS believes that every student is unique, and that education can be adapted to fill the unique needs of students and their families. **BSPS is not just a school of choice, it is a district of choices.** We realize that students are best served with a variety of choices, and support your decision to choose the type of schooling that suits your student and family best. We partner with you by providing outstanding elective educational opportunities at no cost to you, right where you are.

Students in our program come to us with a variety of learning styles and needs. It is our commitment to provide rich extra-curricular experiences that augment the learning that takes place in your home or school environment. We are committed to creating courses that are innovative and personal to your student's unique skills in real-world settings in order to foster career and college readiness.

Our community is blessed with a great deal of cultural diversity, talented artists, natural resources, scenic beauty, and is rich in educational opportunities for those who seek to learn and grow. Our program is proud to partner with organizations and individuals to bring our talented local experts, students and families together across the tri-county region. For the list of current courses and specific details, see our website: www.BerrienSpringsPartnership.com.

Vision and Mission

Vision Statement

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

Mission Statement

To work together, BSPS strives to involve all stakeholders in the educational process:

Staff, students, community and families collaborate for maximum student progress.

Inspiring a passion for learning is a primary focus:

Students and staff are passionate, enthusiastic learners.

Teachers act as facilitators, assisting students in their pursuit of learning.

Building thinking skills is essential:

Students pose and answer questions, solve problems, and use reasoning skills.

Students think and work both independently and in groups.

Learning is a lifelong experience for students and staff:

Effective, engaged learning takes place when students and staff make real world connections.

Students acquire the skills and knowledge in a variety of flexible, multi-sensory learning opportunities tailored to individual needs.

Achievement is demonstrated through knowledge, talents, skills and abilities:

BSPS holds high expectations for all students to produce their best work.

Caring is more than a motto:

Staff and students work together in a nurturing, safe environment, respecting our highly diverse population.

Students and staff develop caring connections by helping to meet local and worldwide needs.

We live in a global community and we are preparing students for a global future:

Students learn with each other to understand, respect and communicate with various cultures.

Students prepare to live and work anywhere in the world, with an understanding of and interest in global issues.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Paul Toliver, President	Pat DeLong, Secretary	Kim Keigley, Treasurer
Dr. Lee Davidson, Trustee	Peg Bormann, Vice President	Sarah O'Dell, Trustee
	Eric Stoub, Trustee	

District Administration

Deputy Superintendent: Dr. Tom Bruce

Central Office Support: Jamie Spenne

School/Staff Contact Information

Partnership Mailbox: located at Central/STEM Office on Berrien Springs School Campus, corner of Sylvester and Shawnee

Physical Address for Partnership: 285 Sylvester Ave., P.O. Box 130, Berrien Springs
Address for Virtual Academy Partnership: 501 Middle School Dr., P.O. Box 130

Link to Map: <https://www.berrienspringspartnership.com/contact-us.html> , scroll to the bottom

<i>Partnership Director:</i>	Sharon Haynes shaynes@shamrocks.us	269-470-0352
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<i>Field Trip Coordinator, Power School, Mentor Teacher:</i>	Becky Halcombe rhalcombe@shamrocks.us	269-277-4699
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<i>Project Based Learning Coordinator, BookShark Manager, Mentor Teacher:</i>	Amy Scott ascott@shamrocks.us	
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<i>Virtual Class Coordinator, Technical Assistant</i>	Tina Kohler hspvirtuals@shamrocks.us	269-369-5257
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Registration, music courses*

Tanya Haselhuhn
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*Assistant - Documents,
community courses*

Rachel Halcombe
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Teachers of Record:

Becky Halcombe, Tom Hurst, Mandy Jankoviak, Mark Ring
Peres Sambu, Luis Sanchez, Sara Smothers,
Lisa VanPlew-Cid

Partnership Website: <https://www.berriensspringpartnership.com>
Browse the tabs for Registration, Class List, Dual Enrollment and other information

The list of Partnership Mentor Teachers can be found on our website.

General Information

Registration Requirements:

All students must register each and every semester during the open registration window. Creation of an account is not the same thing as registration and does not qualify a student to take any classes. Students must receive an emailed schedule confirmation each semester showing classes selected in order to be considered as registered. First time registrants need to provide a birth certificate or other acceptable documentation of birthdate and the special services form found on the website.

General Partnership Requirements:

Mentor Teacher Requirement:

All students must maintain weekly communication regarding partnership classes with his or her assigned mentor teacher. Replies are time stamped and must be on time within the timeframe specified by the program and mentor teacher.

Attendance Requirement:

All students must demonstrate at least 80% attendance in each class on the schedule. Attendance is verified several times through mentor teacher questions, expert teacher contacts and documentation submitted to the partnership.

Virtual courses must be at least 80% completed within the semester. All virtual courses are tracked for progress with feedback from the Virtual Learning Coordinator. Virtual courses may require additional approval in the form of an ink signature from the parent in which case you will be notified.

If a student does not demonstrate adequate attendance or effort in any type of class and does not drop the class during the drop period, the student will receive a 'NC' (no credit) or failing grade as recorded in Powerschool and the student will not be allowed to take the class or perhaps virtual classes again. The family may be responsible for payment for courses taken and dropped without adequate notice.

Dual enrollment classes must be completed with a passing grade. Students who fail or withdraw from a class after the drop date will be responsible for all costs associated with the class.

Absences:

All prearranged, authorized, weather and illness-related absences (treated or not by a doctor) will be excused absences. Excused absences must be verified by a phone call, email notification, or note from a parent or legal guardian to the community teacher prior to the class' scheduled time. If the absence is likely to be an extended one, the parent is requested to notify the Director as well. All other absences will be considered unexcused.

Project Completion:

All students must complete a project for each community course at the end of each semester. All courses are PBL (project-based learning) courses and must result in a final presented project. This is in addition to regular class attendance and the project cannot be a part of the actual class content. Additional instructions and examples are given each semester to enrolled families regarding the project requirement.

The weekly mentor questions are required by the State for all partnerships. Our weekly questions are designed to help the student work through the PBL process, ending the semester with a successful project. Details and examples regarding the project requirements, weekly questions, and grading rubric will be provided to parents at the start of each semester.

Student Responsibilities and Behavior Expectations:

In addition to the Requirements listed above, Partnership students agree to the following:

- Students are responsible for learning core subjects outside of the Partnership courses. The parent acknowledges that Partnership offerings are solely non-essential courses.
- Students, parents and those that may accompany students to any event or class will abide by the Berrien Springs Virtual Academy Code of Conduct, including appropriate behavior free from foul, abusive or threatening language or physical harm to another person.
- Students and parents will be responsible for accessing, editing and knowing the student's schedule and notifying Partnership staff and Community Experts of any necessary changes. Refer to the Attendance Policy above.

- Students may not be counted in another partnership or virtual public school unless it is a program offered by BSPS District, such as the Virtual Academy.
- Students will be evaluated by each partnership location's expert teacher commenting on overall readiness, attentiveness and behavior, resulting in an overall score.

[Link to Code of Conduct](#)

[Link to Student Education Technology Acceptable Use Agreement](#)

In order to continue in the Partnership, a student must abide by the attendance policy, receive positive evaluation scores by the community teacher/location, pass the classes taken, reply on-time consistently to the mentor teacher and submit a successful project, as determined by the mentor teacher's score according to the rubric given to parents in advance.

If one or more of the program requirements are not met, the Director may place the student on probation, meaning that the student's compliance will be even more closely monitored, and continued infractions will result in permanent dismissal. If the student (or parent) demonstrates willful neglect of program requirements or multiple instances in the same semester, the student may be permanently dismissed immediately, without a probationary period.

Based on the factors mentioned above, and Board Policy #5411, continued student participation in the Partnership is up to the discretion of the Director.

Communication:

The primary mode of communication between staff, parents and students is through our website and email. Students and parents must visit and be familiar with the partnership website in order to find details about their courses.

Our website provides the following:

- Registration account access and instructions on how to edit the student's schedule
- Class syllabi and descriptions including teacher contact information and starting/ending dates
- Dual enrollment explanation and college process details
- Staff contact form
- Standardized testing information
- Mentor teacher pictures and bios
- Homeschool resources and social networking opportunities

Students and parents must check their email consistently to stay informed about important announcements and opportunities. Mentor teachers use email to stay in weekly contact with students. Lack of or infrequent reading of email is not an excuse for not being informed of important partnership announcements and decisions regarding student status in the program.

Complaints: regarding Partnership community experts, locations, staff or the Director:

Link to [Formal Complaint Policy](#)

Grades:

Every student's schedule is posted in Powerschool, the school's student database. Courses are offered on a pass/fail basis. A 'fail' or 'no credit' is posted if the student did not demonstrate good attendance or effort as reported by the mentor teacher and community expert teacher. Official credit is not given by the program for non-public students, only for on-campus high school students and Virtual Academy students in grades 6-12. The number of partnership electives granting credit may be limited by each building's Guidance office. Actual dual enrollment grades are posted in Powerschool.

For a policy summary and links regarding homeschooling in Michigan: [State of MI Homeschool Regulations](#)

Course selection, approval, number of hours required: [Class Selection Policy](#)

List of Partnership Courses: [BSPS Course Catalog](#)

Weather or Emergency School Closings/Class Closings:

Partnership classes are located all across the tri-county area. With the exception of our Field Trip course, other locations do not necessarily follow BSPS closings or the calendar. If BSPS is closed for any reason, any scheduled field trip will be cancelled. For any other course, contact your community expert teacher or location for their weather cancellation policy. It is always good practice to remain safe at home and stay off the roads if they are deemed unsafe for travel.

BSPS Academic Calendar: [BSPS Academic Calendar](#)

Partnership Parent/Student Calendar:

Other District Opportunities

Work Permits:

Once the student has secured a job, the parent must come to Berrien Springs High School's main office, ask for a work permit, fill out the student section, have the employer fill out their part and then return it to the school. The parent then needs to fill out the parent section.

Standardized Testing:

Non-public students in Michigan, and therefore home school Partnership students, are not required to participate in state mandated or any other form of standardized testing. Testing is entirely optional at any point in a student's journey and up to the parent to respond to the given opportunities as posted on our website and communicated through correspondence.

BSPS *may* provide opportunities for Partnership students to participate in the following standardized tests during regular public school testing dates (subject to change at any time).

<i>PSAT 8,9,10th and SAT 11th:</i>	<i>Spring of each year</i>
<i>PSAT/NMSQT 11th:</i>	<i>Fall of each year</i>
<i>NWEA K-7:</i>	<i>Offered fall and spring of each year</i>

For more information, contact Partnership Testing Coordinator: Amy Scott,
ascott@homeoftheshamrocks.org.