

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

Shamrock Connection

THIRD QUARTER HIGHLIGHTS

2021-2022 Newsletter Volume 11, Issue 4

Berrien Springs Public Schools

Superintendent's Corner

Eichberg: District continues its journey toward personalized learning system

**By David Eichberg
Superintendent**

The first question students are often asked at the dinner table each evening is, "What did you do in school today?" I would suggest that the question be revised slightly -- "What did you **LEARN** today?" **LEARNING** is the focus of this newsletter. Learning should be at the heart of every decision and effort schools devote to their work with students. Our district's vision statement, "Inspiring students to think, learn, achieve and care in a global community," has a strong

focus on learning.

In the past several years, district teachers and administrators have read current research around best practices and engaged in training focused on improving student learning. Schools that are improving learning for students are transitioning to a "student-centered" or "personalized learning" system. Education is viewed through the lens of the student learner providing educators with a different perspective regarding the interest and learning needs of today's students. Subject con-

tent and knowledge remain critical for learning. However, student-centered schools create opportunities for real-world experiences and the application of academic content and knowledge. Skill acquisition is emphasized in student-centered learning environments, and students have a voice and choice in their learning. As you will see in this edition of the Shamrock Connection, Berrien Springs Public Schools continues its journey toward becoming a "student-centered" district focusing on personalized learning for all students. We en-



David Eichberg

courage our entire community to embrace learning for all students as we embark on this exciting journey together! *Go Shamrocks!*

Encore classes offer extended learning opportunities vital to the educational process for BSMS students

**By Steve Spenner
Middle School Principal**

It is important that students have opportunities to explore different elective areas at school. The majority of our schedule is devoted to the core-content class, which covers math, English, reading, science, and social studies. We firmly believe that giving students opportunities and exposure to elective courses that offer extended learning opportunities is vital to the educational process. A few of these opportunities at the BSMS include PLTW science, Financial literacy, and Careers.

PLTW Science:

8th Grade-Students take the **PLTW Automation and Robotics** course. Students learn about mechanical systems and their components, and they use the engineering design process to use basic mechanisms to accomplish tasks. After learning to build their
(Continued on Page 2)



Teacher Emma Haygood works with Koben Krueger and Lydia Constable on the Career Exploration course, which helps to define students' areas of interest.

High expectations and goals set for Sprouting Shamrocks!

Integrated daily learning includes math, science social studies, and fine arts education at Mars

By Dee Voss
Mars Elementary
Principal

This year, the Mars Elementary staff has focused their professional development on teaching and targeting essential skills and concepts. Students will be expected to master these standards in their grade level in language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, social emotional learning, physical education, fine arts education, and technology. The rate at which these skills are mastered will vary from student to student, depending upon individual development and learning styles. Although skills and concepts are listed in separate subject areas, they are not taught in isolation. They are integrated throughout the curriculum using various methods and technologies. Many

concepts and skills are reinforced and expanded from one grade level to the next. The Mars team has focused its efforts on developing horizontal and vertical alignment to ensure our students are prepared for the next level of their education.

Teachers have provided your child with the opportunity to show their growth and mastery of standards through daily assignments and formative assessments. Summative assessments are given three times a year (NWEA, AimsWeb, and DRA) to provide our staff with data road maps to identify learning needs. This information has been documented in our Mars Data Dashboard, which allows teachers to use the triangulation of data to support their students' instructional deficiencies and their areas of mas-

tery and success.

Students at Mars have also participated in **Test Talks** with their teacher and other staff members. This allows teachers to talk to their students individually, providing feedback and goal setting for future testing opportunities. Many of our students graph their growth by using data goal setting sheets, individual data folders, and growth charts in the classroom. This helps keep them focused on their mastery of skills and allows them to celebrate their success. Celebrations are a part of our educational practices, as students are celebrated academically at our **ROCKS** assemblies. Most recently, all students that demonstrated growth in their summative testing were awarded Gold Medallion Necklaces in math and reading.



Junseong Kim shows off his Easter egg art project.

Encore classes

(Continued from Page 1)

machines, students learn how to code those machines for specific movements. Eighth grade students are introduced to a variety of careers connected to mechanical engineering, and they research the role of robots in our modern world.



7th Grade-Students take **PLTW Medical Detectives**. Students play the role of a real-life medical detective as they collect and analyze medical data to diagnose disease. They solve medical mysteries through hands-on projects and labs, measure and interpret vital signs, dissect a sheep's brain, investigate disease outbreaks, and explore how a breakdown within the human body can lead to dysfunction.

6th Grade-Students take the **PLTW Design and Modeling** course. Students are introduced to the design process through several design challenges in design and modeling. They continue to learn about the importance and skill of accurate measurements and how to create multidimensional sketches to communicate details with others.

Their final sketches are transferred into a three-dimensional model using computer aided design (CAD) software.

All of these skills are then used to design, sketch, 3D model, and build a therapeutic toy prototype for a child who has cerebral palsy.

Career Exploration-The goal of the **Career Exploration** course is to create learning opportunities that support academic rigor, knowledge and skill development, and career exploration. Career Exploration activities are an integrated collection of assessments, skill sets, and services intended to define students' areas of interest and are aligned with core academic, technical, and employability skills. The standards addressed in this course are from the Michigan Career Development Model created through the Michigan Department of Education's Career Readiness Initiative in December of 2018. These standards include: **Career Clusters/Career Pathways Exploration**, **Career Interest Inventories** and **Career Skills**.

Learning is not limited to academics at Mars Elementary. Students receive instruction on character traits through **True Success** and social and emotional learning lessons. Many classrooms participate in social learning groups during classroom meetings with their teacher and the Restorative Justice/PBIS coordinator. These groups focus on citizenship, feelings, and social skill problem solving. All social emotional learning (SEL) opportunities are provided throughout the day in all areas of our school.

Mars Elementary is dedicated to implementing a standards-based curriculum, requiring all students to master standards composed of concepts and skills critical to their school success, preparing them for graduation, post-secondary education, and employment. While this may seem to be a mighty goal for our students, Mars Elementary continues to set high expectations and goals for our Sprouting Shamrocks to succeed!



Teacher Katie Gould works with Ella Gonzalez on an art project.

Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking and Creativity go hand-in-hand with WIN and STEM activities

Good elementary foundation of technology includes typing, coding, digital citizenship skills, and Google Suite skills

By Megan Roth
Elementary Technology
Specials Teacher

"We are currently preparing students for jobs that don't yet exist...using technologies that haven't been invented...in order to solve problems we don't even know are problems yet."

- Richard Riley, former Secretary of Education

As the Elementary Technology teacher, I take my job seriously in order to help students gain a good foundation in technology. **Some of the skills that I teach to third, fourth, and fifth graders at Sylvester include typing, coding, digital citizenship skills, and Google Suite skills.** Typing goals for all grade levels are set at 15 words per minute (WPM) for third grade, 20 WPM for fourth grade, and 25 WPM for fifth grade. They also need 95% accuracy, which I emphasize more than speed. I use code.org in order for students to work on coding at a pace that is right for them. Common Sense Education offers great grade level specific digital citizenship lessons that I use through Nearpod.

In order to help students be prepared for the future, I also focus on 21st Century skills. These include: **Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, and Creativity.** Each grade level is focusing on different projects that use all of these skills. This year third graders are using Bloxels in order to create their own video game that other students in their class will be able to play. To start, students work through tutorials on their own in order to learn all of the different blocks, heroes, enemies, backgrounds and movements that are used in the games. They then will have the opportunity to use their critical thinking skills

and creativity in order to design their games. Once games are completed, they will communicate with each other about their games. Fourth Graders are just finishing up a unit on binary code. They are able to code and decode messages using the binary code, which computers use to communicate. They will be playing a game using binary code soon and then will move onto coding simple robots.

Fifth graders have a new and exciting unit that they are working on right now. **At the beginning of the year, I was awarded a MACUL (Michigan Association of Computer User in Learning) grant to purchase two 3D printers. To say that the students, and I, are excited is an understatement.** Students are first learning to design three dimensional objects on TinkerCAD. They are working through lessons and projects in order to learn the ins and outs of basic 3D design. Once they have completed the lessons, they will have a meeting with me to discuss their ideas for what they would like to design to actual print. I can not wait to see what they come up with.

This year we are doing WIN time every day at Sylvester. I have the opportunity to do some fun STEM activities with the group that come to me. So far this year they have made monster houses (and monsters with art teacher Patti Boersen), stop motions of decorating a Christmas tree and their own made up story, hockey goals out of straws and pipe cleaners, skaters out of pipe cleaners and mints, and we have had a few cup stacking challenges. One of the things that I love about teaching technology is that it is always changing and there are new things to teach all of the time!



Sylvester Elementary students Preston Connors and Hayley Briggs work on their typing skills.



Like us on Facebook

 Berrien Springs Public Schools

Like us on Twitter

 @Bspsschools

For more information Visit our website at:
www.homeoftheshamrocks.org
 or contact us at (269) 471-2891

Learning how to read is one of the most complex tasks students undertake in school; comprehension is the other critical side of the literacy coin

By Angie Cramer

Director of Curriculum

There is a saying, “*We learn to read, so we can read to learn.*” Reading is one of the most complex tasks students undertake in schools. We have an alphabet consisting of 26 symbols called letters, yet our spoken language consists of about 44 unique sounds called phonemes. Our youngest learners, begin becoming readers by learning how we represent each of the 44 sounds with letters in their phonics lessons throughout the year. Older students learn about syllables, prefixes and suffixes and how they are used to create words. From Young 5s through about 3rd grade, a heavy focus is on supporting learners as they learn HOW to read.

But learning HOW to read is only one side of the coin. Learning to make meaning from what is read is the other side of the literacy coin. Making meaning is crucial for students as they become more independent in reading. When a

student is making meaning, they use picture, graphs, and context (in the writing) clues. Students use background knowledge (their experiences) to help connect to the text. There are a variety of reading strategies that learners learn how to use to help them understand what they are reading.

Learning to read takes a lot of hard work and perseverance. So, to help motivate our students in March, we celebrate **Michigan Reading Month**. During the month of March, we celebrate all things reading. Throughout the district, students participated in a variety of activities during the month. These activities included dress up days, reading the most books challenges, door decorating challenges, and having special readers come into the classrooms, to name just a few. These activities are to motivate and lift up our students to become better readers.

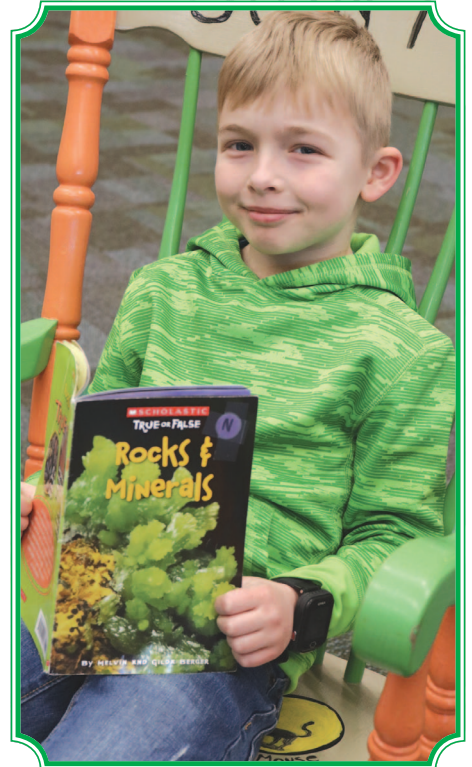
What can you do at home to help your student become a

better reader?

READ, and READ, and then READ some more. Research shows the more students read, the better they become at fluency and comprehension.

Here are just a few simple things you can do at home to encourage your learner to become a better reader.

- ☘ *Talk to your child.* Feed your child a diet of rich language experiences throughout the day.
- ☘ *Read aloud to them and have them read aloud to you.* Have them read to you while you are cooking, in the car or at bedtime. If they have a favorite book, reading it multiple times helps students learn vocabulary, difficult words and fluency.
- ☘ *Show them you are a reader too.* Talk to them about what you find enjoyable about reading.
- ☘ *Create a reading corner or a special spot just for reading.*
- ☘ *Visit the library.*
- ☘ *Encourage activities that require reading—* for example, cooking (reading a recipe), constructing a kite (reading directions), or identifying an interesting bird’s nest or a shell collected at the beach (using a reference book).
- ☘ *Establish one evening a week for reading* (instead of television viewing).



Maksym Karpluk reads “*Rocks and Minerals*” and Daphne Van Bladeren reads “*Dolores and the Big Fire*” during a special Rocking Chair Reading activity as part of teacher Julie Migala’s class at Mars Elementary.



SHAMROCKS, IT'S TIME TO THANK AN EDUCATOR!

SHOW YOUR HEART SHARE YOUR STORY!

Berrien Springs wants to share your stories about how our educators have shown support & dedication to our students! We are looking for stories about all education personnel — anyone who is an important part of a student's educational success. Through these stories, we can show educators that they are **appreciated & supported by our community.**

ABOUT LEARN BY HEART

Area public school leaders are celebrating the hard work and dedication of educators throughout Berrien County through a new initiative called the “Learn by Heart” campaign. The Learn by Heart campaign is designed to increase the awareness of the tireless efforts of Berrien County educators through the art of storytelling.

SHARE YOUR
STORY HERE



At Berrien Springs Public Schools, we **LEARN BY HEART!** ❤️

Superintendent David Eichberg to retire next June

Transition is underway in preparation for new leadership in 2023 at Berrien Springs Public Schools

By Gail Fox
Director

of Communications

Berrien Springs Public Schools is excited to share our progress as we transition to new leadership in 2023! Throughout the transition, the District will continue to provide the public with updates so that everyone knows what to expect during each phase of the plan. If at any time parents or students have questions about what is on the horizon for Berrien Springs Public Schools, please feel free to reach out to the Superintendent's Office at (269) 471-2891.

What Has Occurred So Far?

In 2021, the Board of Education

hired Dr. Tom Bruce as the Assistant Superintendent for Teaching, Learning, and Student Services. The board hired Dr. Bruce to be the assistant superintendent for two years to work under the leadership of Superintendent Dave Eichberg, with the expectation to transition into the role of superintendent when Superintendent Eichberg retires, in June of 2023.

In December, the District created a Leadership Transition Plan outlining a timeline of events, tasks, and activities to occur over the next few years. The Leadership Transition Plan aims to provide continuity in transferring duties from one

leader to another, with the full completion of the transition to occur by June 2023. Objectives of the plan include:

- Continuing to promote the district's mission and vision,
- Analyzing and continuing the work to remain consistent and reach student achievement goals,
- A seamless transition for learning and operations; and,
- Creating continuity, stability, and future growth.

In February, the board proceeded with its plan and confirmed the hiring of Dr. Tom Bruce as the next superintendent of Berrien Springs Public Schools, starting July 1, 2023. The school

board also approved the process and the timeline for hiring the new assistant superintendent to replace Dr. Bruce.

Next Steps:

The District will begin filling the assistant superintendent position in the next two months. Candidate credentials and the application process will be posted on the district website in the near future.

As always, Superintendent Eichberg and Dr. Bruce both look forward to continuing to serve our Shamrock students, families, and community. Be sure to look for future updates relative to the leadership transition plan and progress in this newsletter!

VIRTUAL ACADEMY

Centering learning solely around the LEARNER is the key to students' success at the Virtual Academy

By Valerie Carr
Director

of the Virtual Academy

The life force of the Virtual Academy stems from a passion and commitment to centering the learning solely around the learner. The cornerstone of this work focuses on supporting each individual learner to recognize how unique, rare, and valuable each person is to the learning community. Fundamentally, it is our responsibility to encourage students to discover their authenticity as learners and provide opportunities to further develop its distinctive richness. By having instructional content masters ready to support student learning immediately, whether in the physical building or remotely, responsive teaching not only allows students to master content more quickly and deeply but also for teachers to seek opportunities in student programming proactively to accelerate learning. Responsive teaching requires educators to know each student individually and deeply in order for students to fully develop themselves as people. The ability



Math teacher Jim Richards congratulates two of the Students of the Month at the Virtual Academy: Ethan Marschner and Jada Perkins.

to have the structures in place of a physical building with content area experts ready to support learners is what makes the Berrien Springs Virtual Academy the gold standard of virtual learning.

Students of the Month

At the Berrien Springs Virtual Academy, we value excellence and honor integrity. Congratulations to the following **Students of the Month** who have demonstrated

respect, ownership, compassion, knowledge, and success: **Lydia Britenfeld, Ethan Bortz, Nascha Carlson, Nickolas Colwell, Ethan Marschner, and Jada Perkins. U-ROCK!**



These are the renditions of the finished Arts and Athletic Center provided by the CARMI Design Group.



Construction is wrapping up at Arts & Athletic Center at Berrien Springs High School

**By Ron Bartz
Maintenance
Coordinator**

Construction has wrapped up at the Arts and Athletics Center, with a few exceptions. Crews have finished installing flooring in the locker rooms, band and choir rooms, and the fitness center in the past few weeks. Most of the 120 plus doors throughout the building have been hung, and cabinets in the stagecraft and concession area have been installed. Work in the gym is finished, including scoreboards, divider curtains, and the installation of the volleyball post sleeves. Ceiling tiles

and acoustic panels have been installed throughout the building, and the painters are finishing up their work in a few areas. Electricians are still in the process of running data, video, and voice cables in the auditorium, but that should be completed in the next week. When weather permits, construction fencing will be removed, allowing for final grading, landscaping, seeding, and irrigation.

As part of the project, a backup generator has been installed at the site that will provide power to select areas of the building in a power outage. While not big enough to power

the entire addition, it will provide lighting and heat to select locations. In addition to the generator, the parking lot size was doubled, additional backboards were installed in the gym, and acoustical clouds were added to the lobby. Due to the favorable bids that came in for the project, many items listed as alternates during bidding were able to be done as part of the project. The district's contingency or reserve fund for the project that covers items missed in the drawings, items that need to be changed due to code issues, furnishings, or things added at the district's request during the project, re-

mains healthy. Less than 50% of the \$1.5 million contingency fund has been used to date.

While construction itself is on pace, delivery and installation of auditorium seating, stage rigging, and specialty cabinetry and risers in the band and choir areas have been delayed due to production schedules. They are expected to be installed in mid-May.

With state inspections, testing of all technology and equipment, cleaning and staff training for the Berrien Springs High School Arts and Athletic Center are scheduled for June.

Choir students earn Division I and II ratings at solo/ensemble competitions; all seven choirs earn Division I ratings at Choir Festival in March

By Carrie VanDenburgh
High School & Middle School Choir Director

The Berrien Springs Middle and High School choirs have had a great year of music making after a year of no concerts and competitions. The students have been eager to keep the tradition of great choral music going at Berrien Springs Public Schools. They have had the desire, discipline, and dedication in rehearsals and performances.

On January 29, we had two students participate in the **All State Honors Jazz Choir** at the Michigan Music Conference in Grand Rapids. **Kaari Hurley** and **Emilie Kurtz** were a part of this 16 person group and were selected within the state of Michigan.

On February 12, we had High School District Solo and Ensemble at Southwestern

Michigan College, and we had 14 events participate. Some students decided to go for the experience and get back in the habit of performing. Those students that went for a rating all qualified for state. The following is a list of students who participated and their scores:

Comments Only:

Mia Schuler and Hannah Martin (duet)

Aiden Geates (solo)

Calab Burch (solo)

Emilie Kurtz (solo)

Received a Division II:

Leilani Wade (solo)

Received a Division I:

Mia Schuler (solo)

Andrew Rogien (solo)

Kaari Hurley (solo)

Lauren Geates (solo)

Jonathan Clough (solo)

Lauren Geates

and Aiden Geates (duet)

Aldrich Mongkau and Aileen Mongkau (duet)

Alaina Halliwell and Suzy Markle (duet)

Emilie Kurtz, Jonathan Clough, Aldrich Mongkau, and Sofia Pate (quartet)

State Solo and Ensemble was during our spring break so four events participated. At State Solo and Ensemble students also have to sight-read which is added to their score as well. The following is a list of students who participated at state and their scores: Division II, Lauren Geates and Aiden Geates (duet); and receiving a Division I: Mia Schuler (solo), Lauren Geates (solo), and Jonathan Clough (solo).

All seven choirs earn "Excellent" Division I rating

The choirs attended Choir

Festival at The Chapel on March 1 and 2. The scores are a combination of three performance judges and one sight-reading judge. All seven choirs received Excellent (division 1) ratings. The 7th grade choir was the first choir to perform for our school and received a 110/120, 6th grade received a 114/120, and 8th grade received a 103/120. Women's Chorus received a 109/120, Men's Ensemble received a 117/120, Concert Choir received a 110/120, and Bel Canto received a 120/120.

The choirs will be attending State Choral Festival in May. The choirs continue to work hard, and we are grateful for their success. We look forward to continuing the tradition of excellence in music education at Berrien Springs. Thank you for your support of the arts at Berrien Springs!

Division I rating earned by BSHS Band!

By Kelly Rosselit
Band Director

The Berrien Springs High School Band program has had a successful winter concert season! The band competed in the Michigan School Band and Orchestra Association's (MSBOA) District 6 Concert Band Festival on March 10th at Lake Michigan College's Mendel Center. They performed a variety of pieces for a panel of judges who scored them against a set of standards created by MSBOA. They earned Division I ratings from each adjudicator at this event--the best score possible. In addition, each judge rated them with a letter grade in categories including "tone," "articulation," and "interpretation." The Band earned all A's and A- letter grades from the

judges in these sub-categories.

All of the music Berrien Springs performed at this contest was from diverse composers. The students had to perform a variety of styles of music, including a standard march and a piece off of MSBOA's "list." The students performed "The Sounds of Spring" concert march by Japanese composers Shizuka Sato & Naoya Wada, "Fable" by Erik Morales, and "Wolverine Summer" - an ode to Michigan summer camps by eclectic composer Randall Standridge.

Upcoming events

The Berrien Springs High School Band Program has several upcoming performances this spring. Our jazz and steel drum ensembles each have contests in April, and the marching

band will perform at the Blossomtime and Memorial Day parades. The concert band will perform a spring concert with

the middle school bands on May 18th in the high school gymnasium.

GO SHAMROCKS!

BERRIEN SPRINGS MIDDLE SCHOOL

PRESENTS



May 1, 2, 3 at 7pm
At Mars Community Center



The Berrien Springs Lady Shamrocks were introduced to their home fans at their first game of the season against Hartford.

Several new coaches are welcomed this year

Over 170 Shamrock student-athletes participating in spring sports this season!

By Joe Stephens
Athletic Director

This Spring is looking to be an exciting season for Shamrock athletics. We currently have over 170 student-athletes competing this Spring in our diverse offering of MHSAA sanctioned sports (Boys/Girls Track and Field, Girls JV/Varsity Soccer, Girls Tennis, Softball, Boys JV/Varsity Baseball, and Golf). These students and their coaches have been putting in a lot of work in our hallways and gyms all winter. They are now excited to be outside and working out in their actual homes on campus.

We have new faces leading four of our six programs this Spring. **Brian Shembarger** is coming over from his assistant role in the boys' tennis program to fill as an interim coach for Coach Aly West in the girls' tennis program while she is taking maternity leave. They have great numbers, but the team will feature a lot of new players.

BSHS English teacher **Joe Schmidt** now directs the girls' soccer program. Coach Schmidt has had coaching success locally at LMC and Coloma in girls and boys soccer. He is excited to get the opportunity to coach in the district that he is teaching.

Veteran area coach **John Jewell** now leads our softball program. Coach Jewell has been the head coach at Lake Michigan College and Grace Christian Academy. He has over 300 career coaching victories in Southwest

Michigan at the college and high school varsity levels.

Shamrock alum **Kory Martin** is filling the big shoes of legendary Coach John Donley, who retired after the 2021 season. Coach Martin played under Coach Donley, coached as an assistant in the program, and then left to rebuild Eau Claire's program. He has now returned to build on the high-quality baseball that has always been played at "The Lot."

BSHS Social Studies teacher and coach **Cody Britton** returns with the golf team for another season. They have a great deal of travel on their schedule. Their home course is Pipestone Creek, but there are opportunities to check them out locally at Brookwood, Orchard Hills, and Plym Park.

BSMS physical education teacher and coach **Jon Rodriguez** is the longest-tenured Shamrock varsity coach. He looks to continue his success with the boys' and girls' track programs. They will have a deep group of athletes with around 90 total participants. He has high expectations for the program this season. We are hosting five track meets this season, and many of those meets are loaded with high-level competition.

MHSAA Tournaments

We will get the opportunity to have some home field advantage this Spring at MHSAA tournament time. Softball districts, Soccer Districts, Tennis Regionals, and Track and Field Regionals will be hosted on our campus.



Shamrock midfielder Sofia Pate threw-in the ball to an open teammate after it went out of bounds.

Our student-athletes will get the opportunity to showcase their Shamrock pride in front of Southwest Michigan while playing in our first-class facilities. Our

kids will undoubtedly make some incredible memories. Please be on the lookout for opportunities to volunteer and be a part of these wonderful days.

Program is source of pride and a lifelong learning skill for each student

Cooking course has been an inspirational learning experience for the Special Education “school family”

**By Lorren Wiedemann
DHH Coordinator
& Speech Pathologist**

What makes special education special when it comes to learning and thriving? Some of our special education teachers would love to share with you how they foster a unique learning environment that is tailored to meet the individualized needs of the students at Berrien Springs Public Schools. Historically, special education provides alternative instructional methods to support students with disabilities such as: Speech and Language Impairments, Specific Learning Disabilities, and Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The learning environment in Brittany Mercier and Samantha Malstrom’s resource room encourages students to work as a “school family.” Students come and go throughout the day to work on basic reading skills, to strengthen their fluency and comprehension, to expand their skills in writing, and to work on social skills and work completion. The needs of each student come in a variety of forms and each one of those forms are celebrated and embraced. When students come into the room they not only work hard at achieving their own goals, but they also become invested in their classmates’ success.

This year, special education teacher Brittany Mercier and least restrictive environment aide Samantha Malstrom began cooking as a way to encourage and inspire learning for students. Students are able to put on a chef’s hat and apron to produce a product that they and other students and staff can enjoy. They create a list of ingredients, read and follow directions, practice patience,

and work on simple social skills that will follow them throughout their lives.

One of the first big cooking activities involved making hot dogs for staff members. With the use of an actual waiter’s notepad, orders were taken from staff members for how they wanted their hotdog cooked and what toppings they wanted on it. An indoor smokeless grill was brought in and students learned how to safely grill hotdogs. With each order, students diligently added the correct toppings and delivered them in a polite and timely manner to everyone involved.

As a celebration for completing district testing, students in Mercier and Malstrom’s classroom were treated to making their own pizzas. They rolled out their dough and topped their pizzas with marinara or BBQ sauce and added toppings to their heart’s content. There was ham, chicken, pepperoni, onions, mushrooms, olives, peppers, and extra cheese. Some students worked together to share a pizza and some worked on their own, but the end result was a room full of wonderful smells and even more wonderful smiles.

Another incentive in the resource room includes a student’s goal getter. Each student has a variety of goals to work on throughout the year and as they make progress they get to fill out a chart that shows them how much closer they are to meeting their goal. Once they meet their goal they receive a reward of their choosing. Recently, a student met their goal and asked to create a three-tiered unicorn cake. The inspiration for this cake came from a story the student had read. The cake turned out to be amazing and

had the entire building buzzing with curiosity.

Cooking has provided an extension of learning to the students in the resource room and has created an environment where they truly work together and care about one another. To embrace a particular student’s interest, a community volunteer came to school and taught a few students how to cook liver and onions! To celebrate pi day, students from Mercier and Malstrom’s classroom teamed with students from Ms. Kristine Etter’s classroom to make pumpkin and blueberry pies. The possibilities and the joy have been endless as more ideas from the students are discussed everyday. The act of learning how to cook is beneficial for each student, but the biggest reward is how proud they each are when they share what they’ve made, knowing that they did it and that they are capable of achieving anything they set their minds to.

Pre-Employment Transition Services

As students grow older and continue to develop life skills as mentioned above, our middle school begins discussing and learning about training and employment options after high school. Through a partnership with the Michigan Rehabilitative Services (MRS) and Disability Network, our Deaf/Hard of Hearing middle school students are participating in Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) sessions via Zoom on a weekly basis. Pre-ETS services include introduction to self-advocacy, job exploration counseling, workplace readiness, work-based learning, and post-secondary education counseling.

The Pre-ETS sessions have included learning about self-

advocacy, career exploration based on an interest inventory and learning about the soft skills needed to secure and maintain a job. Students are guided through discussion and practical application activities with a rehabilitation counselor, who has a hearing loss, too. The students are able to discuss and ask questions of an adult that had to navigate post-secondary options and advocating for themselves for hearing accessibility.

Independence is goal of CI program at BSHS

Finally, the acquisition of employability skills and functional academics are further continued as the primary focus of the **Cognitively Impaired Program** at Berrien Springs High School. Individual, small group and whole group instructional approaches are the teaching methods used on a daily basis. The ultimate goal for students completing the CI program is to be able to live independently and obtain successful employment following high school completion.

Students who successfully complete the CI program at the high school will earn a Seal of Employability Endorsement for their efforts. In order to earn this endorsement, students have to meet over 400 objectives in the areas of Math, Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, Life Skills, Employability Skills, and have to successfully complete at least one volunteer job experience. Students have the opportunity to earn a GOLD, SILVER, or BRONZE endorsement based on their individual level of competency in reaching the given objectives. Congratulations to the 2021-2022 BSHS CI Program completers: **Mar-**
(Continued on Page 10)



Studies of flight, brain, and infections are all part of Project Lead the Way units at Sylvester Elementary

By Mica Borden

Third grade teacher

Third grade students switch between Social Studies and Science Project Lead the Way units throughout the school year. During the first semester, students learned about forces and interactions through our Motion & Stability: Science of Flight unit. Students learned about the four forces of flight, balanced and unbalanced forces, and Newton's Laws of Motion. They used their newly gained knowledge to construct and test gliders. In our next PLTW unit, students will learn about the water cycle and what affects the weather in different parts of the country and an introduction to varying climates across the globe.

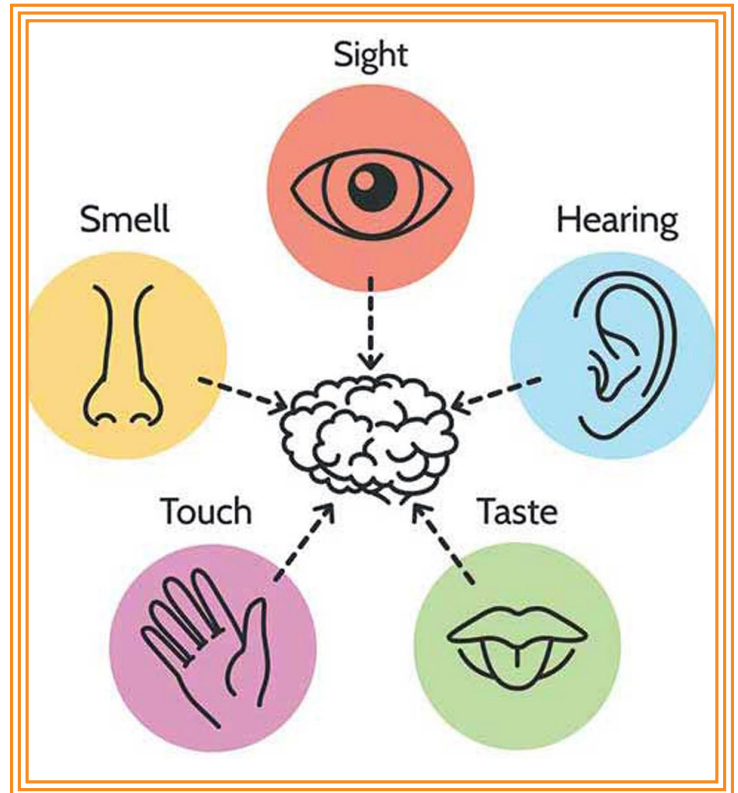
PLTW in Fourth Grade

By Julie Terry

Fourth grade teacher

Fourth graders have just wrapped up the unit on the brain. They learned how the brain receives information from the environment through the

five senses and then responds to this information in various ways. This unit first starts with introducing the students to the basic structure of the body's nervous system. They learn how the brain and spinal cord are connected and how each part of the brain is responsible for processing different information. The students then look at how the body receives the sensory information through the five senses. They do several simulations and activities that test their senses and help illustrate how this information gets into our brains. These include videos, a hearing test, a taste test, reaction time, a smell test, and a touch test. Most of these "tests" required the students to guess what they heard, smelled, tasted, or felt. Their bodies had to take that information to the brain, where the brain processed what it was and then told the body how to respond. After completing the activities, the students worked together to create models to show how this process worked. To wrap



Fourth graders at Sylvester Elementary have learned how the brain receives information through the five senses as part of a Project Lead the Way unit.

up our learning and add a little real-world fun, students watched a real sheep brain dissection by

one of the 4th grade teachers.

PLTW in Fifth Grade

By Ashlee Tilly

Fifth grade teacher

Fifth grade students at Sylvester Elementary experienced the PLTW unit called Infection Detection. During this unit, students learned about disease transmission through a fictional school-like simulation, compared communicable and non-communicable diseases, and investigated how the body protects us from germs to keep us healthy. Students were able to work in pairs, small groups, and as a whole class to design, run, and analyze data from multiple experiments related to preventing the spread of germs. All enjoyed the hands-on experience! Through the PLTW curriculum, fifth graders can also have hands-on experiences in the topics of matter, ecosystems, space, and robotics.

Cooking course has been an inspirational learning experience for Special Education "school family"

(Continued from Page 9)

itza Jimenez (Gold), Jasmine Mitchell (Gold), Eric Smith (Gold), Ethan Craig (Silver), and Jordan Phillips (Silver).

Volunteer work experiences

Prior to COVID-19, students in the CI Classroom were able to obtain volunteer work experiences within the community on a weekly basis. Students were able to participate in volunteer work experiences at Martins' Supermarket in Stevensville, Meijer in Stevensville, Andrew's University (Cafeteria, Janitorial, Crayon Box), Walgreens in Stevensville, and Zick's Specialty Meats in Berrien Springs. Stu-

dents are supervised and supported by classroom staff, who are also certified job coaches. These opportunities have proven to be so valuable to both students and employers. We are anxious to reestablish these amazing partnerships within the community in the near future.

In lieu of volunteer work experiences for the 2021-2022 school year, students received soft skills training from Michigan Rehabilitation Services, via Disability Network. Students attended weekly virtual classes on topics such as Self-Advocacy, Time Management, Communication, Teamwork, Problem

Solving and Professionalism.

The special education department at Berrien Springs is incredibly proud of the work teachers, providers, and students do on a daily basis to create a tailored learning environment. Our students' success would also not be possible without the immense support of their parents and guardians. Special education thrives through a multidisciplinary team approach that focuses on special learning environments like the ones created above so students can love what they're learning and enjoy continued success in their home, school, and community environments.

Program serves as motivation to continue towards high school diploma

Essential Standards program will allow students to recover credits at a faster pace

By Bill Bergan
Director

of Discovery Academy

Discovery Academy is on an exciting new path for online learning. We have taken the Essential Standards required by the State of Michigan and approved by the Berrien Springs Board of Education and accurately aligned them within our current online learning system (Edgenuity). We are also verifying that the course assessments, which our students complete, are aligned directly with the same standards.

In the past, students who

attended alternative education programs often felt discouraged due to being so far behind in terms of course loads and credits. It is Discovery Academy's vision and hopes to have students focus on the Essential Standards they were originally deficient in, within classes, rather than re-doing the entire course. This is also why the switch to targeted Essential Standards remediation is so critical: it will potentially allow students to recover credits at a faster pace and, in the process, relieve some of their reluctance to re-engage with their formal

education.

We are confident that the dedicated effort by Discovery Academy staff to make this switch a reality-- led by proctor and teacher Frank Gonzalez and curriculum coach Tracey Jaggi--will keep students motivated and empowered to achieve their high school diplomas.

We also strongly feel that this emphasis on the Essential Standards will enable our students to understand academic content and the assessments better. Ultimately, we believe that this will translate



into our students achieving higher scores on standardized state tests. We aim to have all of the work associated with this alignment completed and implemented by August 2022.

OFF-SITE PROGRAMMING

Off-Site Programming—Link Learning opens the doors to countless opportunities for students

3D Printing Learning

By Mike Lemieux
Link Learning
Virtual Teacher

The Beginning: A box arrived with the Prusa 3D printer. We opened it up and read the setup and starter directions. When we were done, we were so excited to start some prints. The test prints ran smoothly, so you can imagine the excitement we had to try a cool new print. After many tweaks and challenges, we learned how to create some masterpieces!

The Present: We feel confident now with our skills as teachers to move forward with showing our students how to run the machine and use the software to create the prints. The students are excited to learn the process and seeing them created! "Happy Printing" is our motto!

The Future: We have begun to look at ideas to implement this as a VPAA credit for our students. The staff and administration will be meeting soon to come up with a plan to make this happen. We believe that this will also help with student retention and a student centric approach to teaching

and learning.

**The Land of Link...
Your Adventure Awaits**
By Jackie Gipe
MTSS Coach/Curriculum
Support

At the start of this academic year, we had the opportunity to imagine what competency-based learning could look like at Link Learning. Using the math essential standards outlined by Berrien Springs Public Schools and data from our standardized testing scores, our Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) identified the initial essential standard of focus.

The Challenge: In a sequential learning environment, how do we ensure exposure to the identified math essential standard, regardless of the course the student is taking?

The Approach: Design an engaging, creative activity that aligns with course content and allows a student to demonstrate mastery of the math essential standard.

Through collaboration among PLCs we discovered the value and excitement of not only creating these activities, but embedding them within a gamified world. Welcome to the Land of Link! Where students (adventurers) create an avatar and journey through the land to

master quests, earn Tencys, and level up their skills! Teachers (sages) and mentors (guides) assist adventurers as they navigate quests and demonstrate mastery of the essential standard.

To date, we have 52 adventurers who have navigated through 66 quests. We're looking forward to expanding the scope of our quests and including more adventurers in the 2022-2023 school year!

**Finding the Missing Link...
Link Learning adds
Behavior Coaches
to their online high school**
By Beth Miller
Behavior Coach
at Link Learning
Fuller Center

This is an exciting new Title 1 program we just started this spring at Link Learning to support our students on their educational journey. The coaching program was designed to reach our students who are most at risk of not graduating to add an additional layer of support and help them be successful, not only in school, but also out in the real world!

One of the interesting things we've learned is when students are not successful in our program, it's often due to a lack of motivation. Other times, students

really are motivated to finish school, but they don't have the time management or organizational skills they need to be successful. Other barriers might include having to work to support a family, caring for a parent or child, and financial hardships such as housing insecurity and food insecurity.

Our role as Coaches is to connect and coordinate with students and their families to identify and address the barriers they face using a variety of school and community resources. We then work as a team with each student along with their family, their Mentor, the Center Director, Special Education, and Social Work staff, to create an individualized plan and help those students overcome those barriers!

The Coaches are also creating a comprehensive resource guide for all staff to use when searching for ways to help their students and we are already seeing results from those community connections! We are very excited to see what the future holds!

"COACHING is all about having someone believe in you and encourage you, about getting valuable feedback, about seeing things from new perspectives and setting your sights on new horizons."

-Author Unknown



ECRWSS
Residential Customers

#SHAMROCKPRIDE: LEARNING!

“Learning is important because it helps us all grow and expand. I especially like classes where the teachers are more interactive.”

--**Shiloh Rosengren,**
Ninth grader,
Berrien Springs High School

“I’ve had struggles, setbacks and made mistakes, but Berrien Springs High School has become my second home. It’s the place where I don’t feel judged or left behind; we’re united and fight through struggles together. I’ve learned how to become a better friend, classmate, and student by having the opportunity to do the things I love and learn from past experiences.”

--**Brianna Hernandez,**
Ninth grader,
Berrien Springs High School



“I value learning because I know once I get to college, all of the classes I’m taking and things I’m learning will be helpful depending on what careers you want to go into. I plan to be an English major and teach English so those classes have been especially important to me. But I also enjoy pre-calculus because even though it’s a math class, our teacher always frames it as to how we can use it or how it can be applied in the real world.”

--**Sarah Davey,**
Eleventh grader,
Berrien Springs High School

“Personally, careers and finance are most important to me because I learn about money and how to manage my money and taxes. It really teaches you things that you’ll actually use after you graduate which I love learning about.”

--**Jamal Hailey,**
Twelfth grader,
Berrien Springs High School

“I take a CTE Culinary class which makes learning really fun because you can learn how to make food for yourself, your friends, and family. It’s good because it’s essential skills that you can carry with you through your life.”

--**Allan Chole,**
Eleventh grader,
Berrien Springs High School