



NEWS RELEASE

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Special education population declines for 7th straight year

Early Intervention services cited for helping students succeed

Berrien Springs-For the seventh consecutive year, the number of students being served through special education in Berrien County has declined. The decline is partially attributed to local district services and a variety of Berrien Regional Education Service Agency (Berrien RESA) sponsored early childhood intervention programs aimed at providing learning services to children before they enter the kindergarten classroom.

In 2004, Berrien County's special education student population peaked at 4,491 students, according to the 2004 December 1 Count (a state-wide pupil count used to determine the number of special education students in each school district). This year's count, now referred to as the Third Wednesday in November (3WIN) count, indicates that there are 3,385 students receiving special education services, a 24.6 percent decline from 2004.

"This year's 3WIN data identified 57 fewer students needing special education support this year from last year," said Dr. Kevin M. Ivers, Berrien RESA Superintendent. "Over the last 7 years of reviewing this data along with efforts to increase early childhood services, this information is proof positive that children are best served when their learning deficits are caught early (before kindergarten)!"

Numerous programs are offered by Berrien RESA designed to help parents as well as their children identify and cope with their challenges. They include (but are not limited to):

- Parents as Teachers - Networking meetings for parents of young children, meetings for daycare providers, playgroups and personalized home visits.
- Early On[®] Michigan - The system of early intervention services for infants and toddlers, birth to three years of age with disabilities or delays, and their families.
- Project Find – A continuous public awareness and referral campaign designed to locate, identify, and refer as early as possible all children, youth, and young adults with disabilities who may be eligible for special educational services.

County percentages are declining as well. In 2004, 15.99 percent of the overall student population received special education services. Today, 12.87 percent of students in the county are receiving special education services.

For more information regarding Berrien RESA's special education and early childhood services, please visit www.berrienresa.org.

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