



A community news publication offered by Berrien RESA

-Serving our area's children through Leadership in Education-

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2010 Partners Saluted

Berrien RESA Recognizes the Contributions of 7 Community Partners

During a special evening reception held at the Administrative Center on Thursday, October 28, 7 outstanding community partners were recognized for their support of education initiatives throughout southwest Michigan.

The partners recognized were Congressman Fred Upton, Andrews University, Berrien County Health Department, Whitcomb Senior Living Community, New Buffalo Public Library, Edward Lowe Foundation, and Sarett Nature Center.

Last summer, Berrien RESA selected the awardees based on the entities' long-standing commitment to fostering relationships that encouraged student development and achievement; Berrien RESA's ultimate goal. To commemorate their status into this elite group, Berrien RESA hosted a reception in their honor. The event featured two masters of ceremonies; Dr. Kevin M. Ivers and former RESA Superintendent, Jeff Siegel.

"I am quickly learning that it takes the cooperation of many organizations to pull off all that we do," explained Dr. Ivers. "Behind the scenes there is a network of businesses, service groups, nonprofit agencies, and talented volunteers coordinating their efforts to deliver a world class education to our students. While always appreciated, these efforts often go unrecognized...until now. Tonight, on behalf of the over 25,000 students, hundreds of teachers, administrators and families we serve, Berrien RESA salutes you as true Partners in Education."

The event also offered an opportunity for community members to learn more about the variety of services and programs Berrien RESA offers through an "audio tour" of RESA's annual report.

"In 1962, the state of Michigan created intermediate school districts or regional education service agencies to serve as the liaison between local school districts and the Michigan Department of Education, and to help deliver special education to children needing such services," said Jeff Siegel. "Over the years, as more demands have been made of local

districts and as resources have become limited, schools have had to rely more on their RESAs for support. This situation prompted organizations like Berrien RESA to become creative in how they delivered education services. Thanks to the willingness of our community, Berrien RESA was able to establish some dynamic and pretty powerful opportunities for students and teachers."

Mr. Siegel went on to address the impact of such partnerships by inviting guests to browse the annual report.

"In 1962, I bet no one would have imagined that through our Career & Technical Education programs, 980 students would be able to earn 4,039.5 college credits in one year while still in high school. I don't think anyone

would have believed that through early childhood programs we would have been able to jump start the reading skills of 2,207 youngsters in just one year. And, I probably don't think anyone would have realized that children with the most severe cognitive or emotional impairments would be eligible to complete and even graduate from high school programs."

The event included a brief acceptance speech made by each of the Partnership awardees. The evening ended with a call to action.

"It is important to remember however, our jobs as partners in education is never done," said Dr. Ivers. "There will always be a new challenge to meet, new students to provide services to and new methods of delivering those services. And, there will always be more organizations in which to partner with to share such opportunities. Therefore, tonight, I encourage you to think about your own partners. Who do you work with that can reach across business lines into the education world and provide a benefit to school-aged children? Please, share your experiences with them. I know that the more partners we are able to establish the better our communities will be... and most of all, the better our children will be. They are counting on all of us to make it happen."



From left: Dr. Kevin Ivers, Dr. Niels-Erik Andreasen (Andrews University), Julie Grynwich (New Buffalo Public Library), Congressman Fred Upton, Charles Nelson (Sarett Nature Center), John Nelson (Berrien County Health Department), Dave Krock (Whitcomb Senior Living Community), Paul Bergan (accepting award on behalf of the Edward Lowe Foundation) and Jeff Siegel.

Dear Community Members,

What an honor and privilege it was to host the 2010 Partnership Awards this fall. As an organization, we do not recognize the contributions of our partners enough. Without their help, it would be difficult to offer the number of services we provide and at the level of quality in which those services are delivered. While Berrien RESA only recognized 7 community groups this year, there are hundreds of others deserving of our accolades.

It is Berrien RESA's goal to recognize our partners annually. Look for the 2011 Partnership Awards in October where 7 more partnerships will be recognized.

Sincerely,

Kevin M. Ivers, Ph.D.

Berrien RESA's Even Start Alternative High School for Parenting Teens

Berrien RESA, Benton Harbor Area Schools and Tri-County Head Start partner to offer Berrien RESA's Even Start Alternative High School for Parenting Teens located in Benton Harbor. Mothers and their children attend the center-based programs 5 days per week throughout the school year. Teen parents attend high school and parenting classes, and participate in structured parent/child time. Children birth to three years old are enrolled in Early Head Start and are provided with high quality early education in the on-site early education center. Medical and dental care are monitored as well as family stability. Numerous county agencies serving families with young children supply supportive and complementary services for participating families.

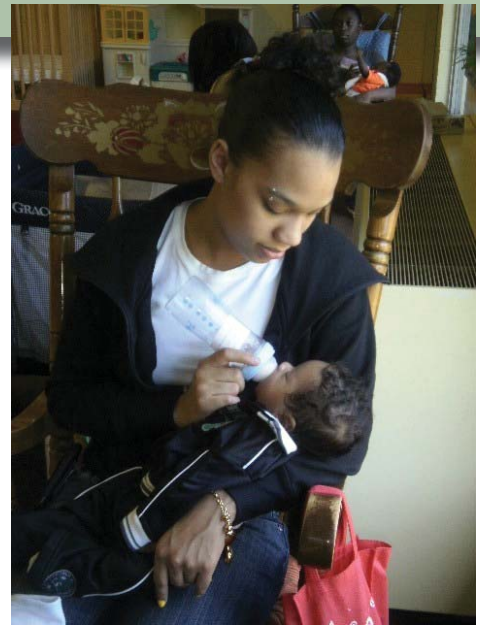
Twenty-two teen moms and their twenty-three children are participating in this year's program. They range in age from 14 to 19. Most of the moms have grown-up living in poverty and many have had irregular school attendance. Some have been in foster care most of their lives and some struggle with homelessness. Few live with their biological parents.

Two high school teachers and two instructional assistants provide individualized high school instruction. Odysseyware Online and Jamestown Reading Navigator web-based programs supplement one-on-one teacher instruction. Graduating students receive their diploma from Benton Harbor High School. Nine moms graduated last June.

A program manager, six teachers and four foster grandparents staff the three Early Head Start classrooms. This fall, the children range in age from 6 weeks to 26 months old. Six passenger and four passenger strollers are used daily for neighborhood strolls. A fenced infant toddler playground gives children a safe outdoor space to explore and enjoy.

Success stories abound!

Many Even Start graduates are the first in their family to graduate from high school. The Lake Michigan College Talent Search program assists Even Start students in seeing college as an option. Several past students have graduated from Lake Michigan College and have gone on to careers at Lakeland Hospital. Kanisha H. stopped by recently to report that her children were doing wonderfully in first and second grade and that through her job at Lakeland Hospital she not only has benefits but is being trained as an ultrasound technician. Shari C. stopped by with her two young children to let us know that she and their dad are buying a house and that right now she is a stay at home mom. Ashley C. is graduating from LMC this spring and going on to Western Michigan University to become a teacher, her oldest is in Kindergarten and "loves school."



Crystal with Caden at Even Start.

Farewell Senator Jelinek

Although the weather was blistery and the roads were icy, Senator Ron Jelinek was warmly welcomed by 50 members of the education community and his family on Monday, December 12 at his Farewell Reception co-sponsored by Berrien RESA. Marking the end of his legislative career, Senator Jelinek was saluted for his support of the education community by the Berrien/Cass School Boards Association, Berrien RESA, Lewis Cass Intermediate School District, Van Buren Intermediate School District, Congressman Fred Upton, Senator-Elect John Proos and River Valley Schools. Collectively, the evening's presenters shared stories of Sen. Jelinek's classroom experiences, his devotion to his students and the dedication of his leadership while in Lansing.

At the end of the evening, Senator Jelinek shared his thoughts about retiring with the audience. He said, "I've worked my whole life in one thing or another, farming, teaching or legislating, so I'm looking forward to a little 'free choice time.'"

As for the future of the State of Michigan, Jelinek said, "Our problems are not solved. The next two years are going to be very difficult, budget-wise, but I look forward to seeing what they come up with, and I look forward to what the next governor is going to do. I want him to be successful, for the good of all of us. We'll see where it goes."

The evening commenced with a standing ovation for the Senator and many well-wishes for a happy and healthy retirement.



Top: Sen. Jelinek accepts a resolution presented by Cathy Bair, Berrien/Cass School Board President and Berrien RESA Board of Education Vice-President.
Bottom: Sen. Jelinek addresses the audience at his farewell reception.

New Tech High Schools

Submitted by Brian Pyles, Regional Director of Berrien County Career & Technical Education

The New Tech High School learning system helps students gain the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life, college, and the careers of tomorrow. Currently, there are 62 schools nationwide utilizing the New Tech High School learning system. The entire instructional system is focused around project-based learning. Students collaborate on projects that require critical thinking and communication. By making learning relevant to them in this way, student engagement reaches new levels. This higher level of engagement is associated with better educational outcomes.

The smart use of technology supports this innovative approach to instruction and culture. All classrooms have a one-to-one computing ratio. With access to web-enabled computers and the latest in collaborative learning technology, every student becomes a self-directed learner who no longer needs to rely primarily on teachers or textbooks for knowledge and guidance.

The New Tech High school model also supports a culture that promotes trust, respect, and responsibility. At the New Tech schools, students and teachers alike have exceptional ownership of the learning experience and their school environment. Working on projects and in teams, students are accountable to their peers and acquire a level of responsibility similar to what they would experience in a professional work environment.

Currently, Niles Community Schools is investigating this model for a cohort group of incoming ninth grade students. Recently, Becky Meier, Director of Instructional Services, and I had the opportunity to visit a New Tech High School with a group of Niles staff and community members. We are working closely with district administration as they investigate this new instructional process.

START Training

Submitted by Jack Houser, Supervisor of Autism and Off-Site Programs

Since 2007, Berrien Regional Education Service Agency has been participating with the Statewide Autism Resources and Training Project (START) in a grant designed to promote “best practice” programming and services for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This grant originated with the Michigan Department of Education. The funds are provided to the START Project and then distributed to geographic areas called Regional Collaborative Networks (RCN's). Berrien RESA is a member of the Southern Michigan Autism Resources and Training (SMART) regional network collaborative. SMART is composed of five counties; Berrien, Kalamazoo, Lewis Cass, St. Joseph and Van Buren.

For the past three years, the grant funds have been used to underwrite our training of educators of students with ASD. We have focused on the areas of: overview and foundation of programming for students with ASD, educational strategies, behavioral strategies, peer-to-peer programs, and teaming and coaching. Last year our training efforts resulted in the provision of 16 full-day sessions with 330 attendees, 28 half-day sessions with 826 attendees, and 17 peer-to-peer training events with 1,431 students attending and 365 students becoming peer-to-peer participants. After participants receive the required amount training, they become eligible to become “coaches” to assist teams of educators and parents. Berrien County currently has 55 coaches working to support students with ASD.

This year the START grant must be used for the following purposes: transition, evidence-based practices, professional development with impact, and coaching to improve implementation fidelity.

Berrien RESA will participate in two components of the grant this year. One component will be to develop and implement a video modeling program. Video modeling involves recording a child engaged in appropriate behavior or social interaction and then using the video with the child to help the child understand the essential elements of that appropriate behavior. This then assists the child in achieving similar behavior in the future. The second component will be to work with a student on transition from school to adult living in one of the following areas: post-secondary education, employment, leisure activities, or home living skills. We will submit a report to the START Project regarding the experience. This report will be included with reports from 62 other counties and returned to the participating counties to serve as a resource for future transition planning.

BLC and Their Canine Friends

For the past two years, the Best Friends 4-H Therapy Dogs (and their handlers) have been interacting with Blossomland Learning Center students. Through the therapy, students spend 45 minutes to an hour learning the proper way to:

- Approach a dog
- Hold a leash
- Pet a dog (gently)
- Walk a dog or enjoy being pushed in their wheelchair while holding the dog's leash.

Students are also able to take the dog (along with the handler) through basic agility stations (jumps, tunnels, chutes, weave poles, and pause box). This offers a unique and exciting opportunity for BLC students to learn/practice directions in space (such as forward, backward, right, left and around), concepts of pathways (such as curved, straight and zig zag), relationships to objects/others (such as front, behind, between, over, under, through, inside, and out) and to move at various speeds (fast and slow).

Linda Shannon-Chaillet is the Coordinator of the Best Friends 4-H Club.



Best Friends 4-H Club coordinator Linda Shannon-Chaillet walks her dog with DeJuan Richardson and Sue Hollis.

“Through this kind of therapy, students receive physical and mental stimulation in a fun manner,” said Shannon-Chaillet. “We actually use the canine as a therapy tool.” She further explained that the therapy does not have to end after the sessions provided through BLC.

“Any qualified child is welcome to join us over the summer. We offer a special one-on-one opportunity where a child (ages 5-26) learns everything they need to know about canines. By participating in this summer 4-H activity, the child is eligible to participate in the Berrien County Youth Fair as a Canine Exhibitor with a Disability.”

Since the program began (1988), 5 BLC students have participated in the exhibit at the fair. If you would like to learn more information about the Best Friends 4-H Club, please visit www.bf4hclub.com.

What is the Berrien RESA Title III Language Acquisition Consortium?

The Berrien RESA Title III Language Acquisition Consortium consists of ten Berrien County school districts. The consortium generates Title III Language Acquisition federal funds which are used to support Nicole Lind, Berrien RESA's Language Acquisition Consultant.

The latest district to join the Consortium is Benton Harbor Area Schools. By becoming a member of the county consortium, Benton Harbor's students, staff and parents now receive services from Nicole Lind. Recently, Nicole assessed forty-two students using the state English Language Assessment to determine English fluency.

Other districts participating in the consortium are: Buchanan, Coloma, Countryside Charter, Lakeshore, New Buffalo, Niles, River School, River Valley and St. Joseph. Berrien Springs, Eau Claire and Watervliet have enough English language learners (ELL) to access the federal Title III funds without being in a consortium. Each of these districts fund and support their own language acquisition programs.

Berrien County maintains four Title III Language Acquisition programs and serves over seven hundred English language learners.

The Title III Limited English Proficiency Grant provides funding for a variety of materials and services related to English Language Learners (ELLs). This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Assistance with determinations for Special Education and collaboration with staff
- Compliance for Title III funding
- English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA)
- Partnerships with area businesses to provide translation, interpretation, mentoring, and other support services
- Professional development offerings
- Special programs for parents and students
- Support of districts and buildings with their English Language Learners (ELLs) programs and materials
- Support for annual assessments
- Support for Office of Civil Rights and No Child Left Behind compliance

Who Uses illuminate™ ?

Anyone who processes, writes, amends or administers an Individual Education Program either at Berrien RESA or through a local school district will now be using the illuminate system. The system provides a process-driven planning tool to write and guide staff through a student's special education plan.

The illuminate system replaces Passport, a system developed and administered by Berrien RESA for over 25 years.

"Berrien RESA had been utilizing a special education registry developed internally in 1985 by the Data Center called Passport," explained Will Townsley, Director of the Data Center. "There were many modifications made to Passport over the years including numerous state reporting enhancements as well as the addition of a web-based Medicaid billing system. The old registry served us well for many years and helped establish Medicaid revenue at maximal levels, but most recently was showing the need for major enhancements. The current trend in most organizations is to utilize commercial software when available and not reinvent the wheel. An extensive search process was conducted jointly with several area ISDs and illuminate was selected to replace the Berrien RESA passport system."

Who is on the illuminate user support team?

Berrien RESA staff and local district special education staff are able to seek assistance online by visiting the Special Education section of the Berrien RESA website. Once there, an illuminate user can research resources and tips found on the "illuminate insight" bulletin and can request specific assistance by submitting an email to one of the Berrien RESA's illuminate support staff team members. The team includes Special Education Secretaries Heidi Cuthbert, Ashley Rodri-

quez and Jenna Wood. Each of these ladies has had significant training and have been using illuminate since the summer.

"I have really enjoyed learning about the illuminate program and watching the local districts embrace the system," said Heidi Cuthbert. "Local districts know that they can call me or the other members of the support team (Jenna and Ashley) and get personal assistance. While we may not have an answer right away (we are still learning how to use illuminate ourselves), we do the best we can to find a resolution in a timely manner. Also, the illuminate insight newsletters helps local districts too. Many of the frequently asked questions can be found in the bulletins and allow illuminate users to be proactive in researching solutions to their concerns."

"The Special Education secretarial staff deserves our highest compliments!" said Special Education Director Stephanie Mack. "They are the face of our organization during this time of transition and have provided consistent, courteous and timely support to everyone with a question about illuminate. I am sure their customer service has been appreciated by all users who have needed their help while navigating the illuminate system. Thank you Heidi, Ashley and Jenna for the special attention and care you have given to all of our constituents."

Should an influx of questions be received regarding a particular issue or concern within the system, the Berrien RESA special education staff will issue an illuminate insight bulletin discussing the problem. The bulletins are published as often as needed.

Oh, the Drama!

Submitted by Berrien RESA Arts Education Consultant, Liz Andrews

Every two years, our high school theatre students get to spend the entire day doing what they love – everything about theatre. On November 3, 2010 students from several districts came to Lake Michigan College and experienced first-hand what the theatre has to offer. Students were able to choose from many different drama workshops throughout the morning, enjoy lunch with each other and watched a performance by LMC theatre students in the afternoon.

Several students signed-up for one of the favorite classes, Creating Special Effects. Presenters, Marty and Wendy Golob are area theatre professionals and taught an exciting session where students learned how to create snow, launch a confetti explosion, and fill the stage with fog. Kids in this class also learned ways to make fake blood and dry ice.

Many of the participating students want to pursue a career in theatre. Those interested in musical theatre enjoyed the dance classes taught by choreographer, Emily Hosinski. Advanced dancers learned smooth moves from the movie Footloose, and even students with “two left feet” got a chance to learn some new dance steps.



Presenters Marty and Wendy Golob demonstrate how to make fog.

Other classes offered during Drama Day were acting, character development, music, lighting, and stage combat.

Drama Day began at the request of our high school drama teachers. They were looking for a way to share their expertise and promote theatre programs in school. Since 2004, Drama Day has given over 800 high school students a chance to explore the many aspects of theatre, come together to learn new techniques and skills and celebrate the drama!

What is the Parent Advisory Committee?

Submitted by Shari Lidgard, Supervisor of Ancillary Services and Compliance

The Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) is comprised of a group of parents who have children in special education programs or who receive services from the Berrien Regional Education Service Agency.

Parent Advisory Committee's are unique to Michigan. Each local district designates two parents to represent them on this committee. After approval by their local school board and the Berrien RESA School Board, they serve as members of the PAC committee for a term of two years.

PAC members serve as liaisons between parents, their local school districts, and Berrien RESA; working collaboratively in the best interest of all students with impairments. Their primary function is to review the Berrien RESA Special Education Plan. This plan is a written document describing how special education services will be implemented in our county to meet the needs of students.

The committee meets monthly and spends time learning about and discussing issues related to special education, programming, services, etc. Their role is advisory; if any parent has a question about their child's education, contacting their district's PAC representative is an option, as these members are a great source for information.

This committee also donates their time toward various projects and events. One of the annual events created and sponsored by PAC is the “Excellence in Education” awards reception for the purpose of

honoring those persons who have played a vital role in educating and supporting students with impairments. This year's event will be held March 8, 2011. At this reception, several individuals will be recognized based upon nominations submitted from various people in the community. Then, one of those individuals will be presented with the “Excellence in Education Award”.

Another event organized by the PAC committee is the “disABILITIES Awareness Fair.” The purpose of this event is to share information and resources with family and community members of Berrien county. This event was held last year at Coloma Elementary School, and future plans include a similar event in the fall of 2011.

Additionally, the PAC group offers a newsletter for parents of children with disabilities called “Parents Advocating Communication.” This newsletter is published and distributed two times a year; once in the fall and then again in the spring. To obtain the most recent copy of the parent newsletter, please visit www.berrienresa.org.

The group's most recent project involves a review and update of the “Parent Resources” section found on the Berrien RESA website. This is a very important role as many parents who have questions or concerns about special education go to the Berrien RESA website as their first “stop” for information.

Data Coach's Dialogue Hosted at RESA

On November 15 and 16, Dr. Bruce Wellman presented an interactive seminar that explored and applied a three-phase collaborative learning cycle designed to guide professional development. Attendees included Berrien County teachers and administrators.

Dr. Wellman is co-author of Data-Driven Dialogue. His seminar guided attendees through a professional inquiry process that provided:

- Practical tools for discovering assumptions
- Promoting data-focused inquiry
- Developing shared understanding of both problems and possible solutions

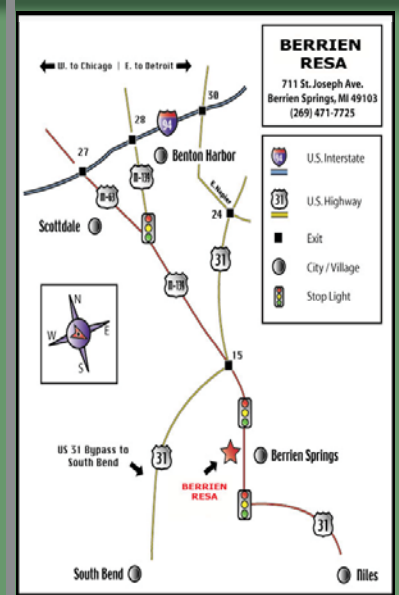
These understandings become the foundation for effective planning processes including:

- Using data to focus a group's attention and energy
- Applying the Collaborative Learning Cycle
- Extending a repertoire of facilitative tools

Dr. Bruce Wellman has captivated thousands of teachers and administrators with designs for creating learning-focused classrooms and schools. His workshops provide effective strategies, practical resources, and innovative ideas for thoughtful educators grappling with critical professional issues.

Berrien RESA Launches its 7th Newsletter: Transition Ahead

In an effort to help special education staff and parents become more aware of the guidelines and procedural steps relative to student transition, Berrien RESA is now offering a new newsletter called "Transition Ahead." The newsletter will be offered to the Berrien RESA community every other month and will feature a special article written by a transition community partner. If you or someone you know would like to receive Transition Ahead, please visit the Special Education page of the Berrien RESA website (www.berrienresa.org).



Berrien Regional Education Service Agency is "Reaching OUT" to you! Berrien RESA is always looking for ways to share educational resources with students, teachers and administrators.

Do you have a suggestion or comment or have an educational question that you wish to have addressed in "Reaching OUT?"

Please send your suggestions and comments to Dr. Kevin M. Ivers, Berrien RESA superintendent at kevin.ivers@berrienresa.org

Community members can subscribe/unsubscribe to "Reaching OUT" by contacting Karen Heath, Supervisor for Communications at karen.heath@berrienresa.org

Reaching Out is a publication of Berrien RESA. It is printed three times a year to promote Berrien RESA's mission. Berrien RESA complies with all federal and state laws and regulations prohibiting discrimination, and with all requirements and regulations of the United States Department of Education and the Michigan State Department of Education.

Are you a Fan?



Beginning last October, Berrien RESA launched its Facebook page. This social media tool will help Berrien RESA further advertise services and programs to the community. A calendar of events to be highlighted has already been established, however, if there is a Berrien RESA event you wish to have included on Facebook, please be sure to fill out a Communication Service Request Form (found on the employee section of www.berrienresa.org under Communication Resources for Staff).

If you have a Facebook account, you are encouraged to become a Berrien RESA fan!



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