



**BERRIEN**  
RESA

# 2023-2026 **MASTER AGREEMENT**

*between the*

**Berrien Regional Education Service Agency  
Board of Education**

*and the*

**Berrien County Paraprofessional  
Personnel Association**

Optimizing student outcomes  
through collaboration and transformation.



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## **AGREEMENT**

THIS AGREEMENT made and entered into this 12<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2023, by and between the BOARD OF EDUCATION of the BERRIEN REGIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE AGENCY, Berrien Springs, hereinafter referred to as the "Board," and the BERRIEN COUNTY PARAPROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL ASSOCIATION hereinafter referred to as the "Association."

WITNESSETH:

### **ARTICLE I — PURPOSE AND INTENT**

**SECTION 1:** The purpose of this Agreement is to establish the full agreement between the parties concerning the salaries, hours, terms and conditions of employment that shall prevail for the duration of this Agreement.

**SECTION 2:** NOW, THEREFORE, the Board and the Association have, in consideration of these mutual promises and stipulations hereinafter specified, agreed to abide by the terms set forth herein for the duration of this Agreement.

### **ARTICLE II — RECOGNITION**

**SECTION 1:** The Board recognizes the Association as the sole and exclusive representative for the purposes of collective bargaining. The bargaining unit shall be composed of all paraprofessionals directly employed by the Board in Special Education, but excluding all administrators, supervisors, directors, substitute employees (except permanent substitutes), independent contractors, and all other employees.

**SECTION 2:** The Board will not recognize or bargain with any other entity or association with respect to the members of the bargaining unit described above during the term of this agreement.

**SECTION 3:** For the purpose of this contract, members of the bargaining unit will be referred to as "employees." Employees joining the Association shall be referred to as "association members."

### **ARTICLE III — MANAGEMENT RIGHTS**

**SECTION 1:** The Association recognizes that the Board has the authority to manage and direct, on behalf of the public, all the operations and activities of the school district to the full extent authorized by the laws and Constitution of the State of Michigan and of the United States provided that such shall be exercised by the Board in conformity with the provisions of this Agreement, including for the purpose of illustration:

- A. To the executive management and administrative control of the school system and its properties and facilities and to determine the duties, responsibilities and assignments of its employees, including such activities as may affect their professional performances;



- B. To hire and evaluate all employees and, subject to the provision of law, to determine their qualifications, and the condition for their continued employment, and to dismiss, demote, or to reduce staff when deemed necessary; and to promote and transfer all such employees;
- C. To establish courses of instruction, including special programs, all as deemed necessary or advisable by the Board;
- D. To decide upon the means and methods of instruction, the selection of textbooks and other teaching materials, and the use of teaching aids of every kind and nature.
- E. When special custodial service is used, the employer may make a reasonable charge therefore.
- F. All paraprofessionals who are required to be "Highly Qualified" by NCLB shall meet those requirements as a condition of continued employment. No paraprofessional shall be transferred into a position for which they do not meet the NCLB "Highly Qualified" requirements.

**SECTION 2:** The exercise of the foregoing powers, rights and authority by the Board, the adoption of policies, rules, regulations and practices in furtherance thereof, and the use of judgment and discretion in connection therewith shall be limited only by the specific and express terms of this agreement and then only to the extent such specific and express terms hereof are in conformance with the Constitution and laws of the State of Michigan, and the Constitution and laws of the United States.

**SECTION 3:** Nothing contained herein shall be considered to deny or restrict the Board of its rights and authority under the Michigan General School Laws or any other national, state, county, district, or local laws or regulations as they pertain to education.

#### **ARTICLE IV — ASSOCIATION RIGHTS**

**SECTION 1:** The Association shall have the right to use school building facilities for meetings, provided (a) such meetings are held at hours other than school day hours; (b) advance permission for such usage has been given by the administration.

- A. The Association shall have the right to use school equipment including regular typewriters, duplication equipment, calculating machines, and some audio-visual equipment at reasonable times when such equipment is not otherwise in use. Some equipment (i.e. 2-way conferencing equipment, PowerPoint equipment, CEO scanning equipment, etc.) which may require specialized training may not be used without appropriate office personnel on hand. The Association shall pay for the reasonable costs of all materials and supplies incident to such use.
- B. Office employees shall not be used for Association purposes during their regular hours of employment. Any work performed by office employees for the Association shall not be reimbursed by the District.

- C. A bulletin board, or portion thereof, in each District owned facility where bargaining unit members are assigned, shall be made available for the exclusive use of the Association.

**SECTION 2:** The Association may transact official Association business on school property outside normal working hours provided that this shall not interfere with or interrupt normal District operations.

**SECTION 3:** The Association shall have the right to negotiate on matters concerning salaries, hours, terms, and conditions of employment as established in, and in accordance with this Agreement. The parties expressly agree that neither party is obligated to bargain on any matter during the term of this Agreement. The parties further agree that a "Communication Committee" will be established consisting of no more than three (3) representatives from the Association and three (3) representatives from the Administration to discuss matters of common concern. The Committee shall meet monthly if there are agenda items submitted by either party. It is not the purpose of the Committee to supplant the grievance procedure. Topics that do not relate to all staff should be discussed with the employee's immediate supervisor.

**SECTION 4:** The local Association shall have the right to affiliate with any State, National, or International Agencies it chooses.

## **ARTICLE V — SCHOOL CALENDAR AND SCHOOL DAY**

**SECTION 1:** The working day shall be 8:15 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. for a minimum of 1342.5 working hours per year between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2026 for all employees.

All personnel will be required to make up days lost as a result of inclement weather, other acts of God, or circumstances beyond the District's control in excess of six (6) unless additional days are permitted by a waiver from MDE or State Law.

**SECTION 2:** All bargaining unit members are entitled to one-half (½) hour paid duty-free lunch break daily as mutually scheduled by the Principal and staff. When staff are working during their lunch break, they will be compensated an additional 30 minutes.

**SECTION 3:** Any alternate or modified work schedules must be pre-approved in writing by the Assistant Superintendent or designate.

## **ARTICLE VI — LEAVES OF ABSENCE**

### **SECTION 1: LEAVES WITH PAY AND FRINGE BENEFITS**

- A. Sick Leave: Ten (10) sick days per school year will be granted to each employee. New employees will be allocated five (5) days at the beginning of the school year and five (5) on the third Monday of January, providing they are in active service at each point. Unused sick days will accumulate to a maximum of 90 and may be used subject



to the following conditions and limitations:

1. Illness or disability of the employee - all available.
2. Serious illness or disability of employee's immediate family (present spouse, father/stepfather, mother/stepmother, father-in-law/mother-in-law, brother/stepbrother/brother-in-law, sister/stepsister/sister-in-law, children/stepchildren, son-in-law/daughter-in-law, grandchildren, grandparents) - maximum of five (5) days per incident.
3. Upon request by the Board, a paraprofessional staff member must submit a certificate from a medical doctor, not related to the staff member, that such staff member is physically or mentally able or unable to perform his/her assigned duties, to return from sick leave, or continue employment. If the Board requires a medical certificate to determine that a basis for sick leave exists, the Board will pay the cost unless it is determined that the employee abused sick leave.
4. Sick leave benefits, if available, may be used to augment benefits under Worker's Compensation so as to maintain the daily salary of the employee.
5. Accumulated sick leave will be canceled when employment with the District is terminated and will not be compensated with pay.
6. Written notice of any planned or prearranged use of sick leave shall be given to the Supervisor as soon as possible after the need becomes known and should, if possible, be arranged to coincide with the scheduled breaks in the school year.
7. Any employee whose disability extends beyond their accumulated sick leave days may, with appropriate notice by the employee, be granted a leave of absence without pay until able to return to work as provided in Section 2, C. Failure of appropriate notice shall automatically cause the employee to be placed on Unpaid Leave under Section 2, C for thirty (30) days with subsequent "termination" as specified in that Section if other arrangements are not made.
8. Falsification of sick leave shall be considered just cause for discipline, demotion, or termination.

B. Funeral Leave: Funeral leave may be used subject to the following conditions and limitations:

1. Maximum of five (5) days per incident for immediate family as defined in Section 1, A, 2 above.
2. Personal/business leave may be used, if available, for the death of friends or relatives not in the immediate family. If the employee has exhausted his/her personal/business leave days, one day, not deductible from other leave, may

be used for the death of friends or relatives not in the immediate family. Not more than two (2) staff members may be absent per building during the student instructional day without administrative approval.

3. One staff member will be granted time to attend the funeral of a student for whom they have direct responsibility. Time is limited to the funeral service only and reasonable travel time.

C. Personal/Business Leave: Personal/business days may be used subject to the following conditions and limitations:

1. Maximum of four (4) personal/business leave days may be granted per year.
2. Unused portions of personal/business days will be accumulated as sick leave at the end of each year.
3. Personal/business leave may be granted on days immediately preceding or following holidays, vacation days, or weekends contiguous to holidays or vacation days if approved by Human Resources or designee. Such written requests, however, must be submitted at least five (5) school days prior to the beginning of the requested leave.
4. Abuse or falsification of personal/business leave shall be considered just cause for discipline, demotion or termination.

D. Legal Leave: Legal leave may be used subject to the following conditions and limitations:

1. An employee, who is summoned or subpoenaed as prescribed by law, shall be entitled to legal leave for those dates indicated.
2. The employee shall provide the Supervisor written proof of the summons or subpoena and, upon return from legal leave, provide the Supervisor with satisfactory evidence as to the amount the employee was paid by the court.
3. The amount of compensation paid by the court (if any) shall be deducted from the employee's daily salary so that the net effect will be no loss of pay.
4. Legal leave is not applicable when the employee is under court order to appear in his/her own defense for a violation of the law and to which he/she pleads or is found guilty. In cases where "plea bargaining" or "out of court settlement" has left innocence or guilt unresolved in court, the Administration shall make a reasonable determination of availability of this leave. In cases where the employee is co-defendant with the District, leave may be granted as reasonable and necessary.

E. Association Leave: Association leave shall be granted to no more than four (4) officers



of the Association. Maximum leave is five (5) days per officer. The Association shall submit a list containing the names of the Association officers no later than the end of the third week of work. Only those officers shall be entitled to leave under this Section.

F. Adoption Leave: Leave for the purpose of adoption may be used subject to the following:

1. An employee who is in the process of adopting a child shall be entitled to adoption leave under this Section.
2. The employee shall provide to the Supervisor a written request at least 30 calendar days in advance of the anticipated beginning of the leave. The request must contain the beginning and ending dates of the leave.
3. The maximum number of days of the leave is 20 work days or the total number of sick leave days accrued at the beginning of the leave, whichever is less. For each day utilized of adoption leave, one accrued sick leave day will be deducted from the employee.
4. An employee may not utilize adoption leave more than once per school year.

## **SECTION 2: LEAVES WITHOUT PAY AND WITHOUT FRINGE BENEFITS**

Fringe benefits shall include: insurance and accumulation of experience on the salary scale, seniority and sick leave.

Insurance benefits may be maintained at the employee's expense, subject to the Board's discretion and the conditions of the carrier.

A. Child Care Leave: Paraprofessionals will be eligible for child care leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act

B. Sabbatical Leave: Upon completion of seven (7) years of continuous service with the Berrien Regional Education Service Agency, an employee may be granted sabbatical leave subject to the following conditions and limitations:

1. Maximum sabbatical leave is one (1) contract year.
2. Written request must be made to the Assistant Superintendent or designate as soon as reasonably possible, but no less than sixty (60) days prior to the start of leave, specifying the desired dates. Insofar as possible, the dates should conform with scheduled breaks in the school year.
3. An employee on leave under this Section shall notify the District in writing of his/her intent to return to work at least thirty (30) days prior to the scheduled expiration of the leave, or July 1, whichever is sooner. Failure to notify the

District in writing by the required time lines, except in emergencies approved by the Administration, shall be deemed a voluntary resignation, and the employee shall lose all rights under this Agreement.

4. Upon return from sabbatical leave, the employee shall be reinstated in his/her same position, or an equivalent one, if available, and if deemed qualified by the Board. If the leave is for fewer than sixty (60) school days, the employee will be reinstated to the same position. If the leave is for sixty (60) school days or more, the employee will be reinstated to the same position if vacant upon the receipt of the employee's notice of intent to return (Section 2, B, 3, of this Article). If the same position is not vacant, the employee will be reinstated to a similar position, as determined by the Administration. A similar position, for the purposes of this Article, shall be defined as a position for which the employee meets the minimum legal certification requirements and Board qualifications, and which is compensated at the same rate as the original position. If neither the same, nor similar, position is available, the employee will be placed on layoff and subject to the layoff and recall provisions of this Agreement.

C. Special Unpaid Leave: Special unpaid leave for reasons other than those specifically provided in this Article may be granted subject to the following conditions and limitations:

1. Leave is solely upon the approval of the Executive Director of Human Resources or designate. A clear reason for the leave request must be given. In no case shall any leave under this Section be granted for purposes of obtaining other employment (including self-employment).
2. Maximum leave is one (1) calendar year, except, by mutual agreement of both parties, the leave may be extended beyond the one (1) calendar year.
3. Written request must be made to the Executive Director of Human Resources or designate as soon as reasonably possible, but no fewer than sixty (60) days prior to the start of leave, except in valid emergencies, specifying the desired dates. Insofar as possible, the dates should conform with the scheduled breaks in the school year.
4. Any day in excess of five (5) days within twelve (12) month period shall break the continuity of employment for experience increase on the salary schedule for the next year.
5. An employee on leave under this Section shall notify the District in writing of his/her intent to return to work at least thirty (30) days prior to the scheduled expiration of the leave, or July 1, whichever occurs sooner. Failure to notify the District in writing by the required time lines, except in emergencies approved by the Administration, shall be deemed a voluntary resignation, and the employee shall lose all rights under this Agreement.



6. Upon return from leave the employee shall be reinstated in his/her same position, or an equivalent one, if available, and if deemed qualified by the Board. If the leave is for less than sixty (60) school days, the employee will be reinstated to the same position. If the leave is for sixty (60) school days or more, the employee will be reinstated to the same position if vacant upon receipt of the employee's notice of intent to return (Section 2, C, 5, of this Article). If the same position is not vacant, the employee will be reinstated to a similar position, as determined by the Administration. A similar position, for purposes of this Article, shall be defined as a position for which the employee meets the minimum legal certification requirements and Board qualifications, and which is compensated at the same rate as the original position. If neither the same, nor similar position is available, the employee will be placed on layoff and subject to the layoff and recall provisions of this Agreement.
7. If special unpaid leave is caused by a serious physical and/or personal disability of the employee himself or herself, the Board shall continue to pay negotiated insurance premiums until the third monthly payment has been made after the beginning date of the unpaid leave, after which, the employee shall have rights to coverage as allowed under COBRA. If the employee is on Long Term Disability (LTD), the Board shall continue to pay health and medical benefits up to nine months.
8. Falsification of documents or failure to abide by a denial of request shall be just cause for discipline up to and including termination.

## **ARTICLE VII - SENIORITY**

### **SECTION 1: PROBATIONARY PERIOD**

- A. New employees hired into the bargaining unit shall be required to undergo a probationary period of one (1) calendar year from the date of hire. Upon satisfactory completion of the probationary period, the employee shall obtain seniority status and his/her name shall be entered upon the seniority list as of the date of commencement of regular employment.
- B. Probationary employees shall be represented by the Association for all purposes under this Agreement during the probationary period, except that the evaluation, discipline, or termination of such probationary employee shall not be subject to the grievance procedure.
- C. Sick leave credit shall accrue during the probationary period.

## **SECTION 2: SENIORITY DEFINED**

- A. Seniority shall be defined as an employee's length of continuous service as a regular employee of this Employer. Seniority shall commence on the date of commencement of regular employment.
  - 1. In the event two (2) or more employees begin work on the same day, these employees shall be placed on the seniority list in alphabetical order of their last names.
  - 2. The seniority of an employee on an authorized leave of absence shall be frozen for a period not to exceed one (1) school year.
  - 3. Part-time regular employees shall accrue seniority on a prorated basis.
  - 4. Seniority in the District shall include the time of service in the trainable mentally impaired program while the program was operated by the Niles and St. Joseph Schools.

## **SECTION 3: SENIORITY LISTS**

- A. The Employer shall prepare and maintain seniority lists as defined in this Article. The initial seniority list(s) shall be prepared within thirty (30) days after the effective date of this Agreement, semi-annually thereafter in October and March, and copies shall be furnished to the Association President. The Association shall notify the Employer of any error within fifteen (15) days from and after receipt thereof.

## **SECTION 4: LOSS OF SENIORITY**

- A. Seniority shall be lost if the employee:
  - 1. Voluntarily quits;
  - 2. Is discharged and the discharge is not reversed through the procedure set forth in the Agreement;
  - 3. Retires;
  - 4. Is laid off for a continuous period of time in excess of twelve (12) months;
  - 5. Fails to return to work upon the expiration of a leave of absence or extension thereof as herein provided or accepts full-time employment elsewhere while on authorized leave of absence; or
  - 6. Otherwise terminates his/her employment relationship with the Employer.



## **ARTICLE VIII — REDUCTION OF STAFF**

### **SECTION 1: LAYOFF PROCEDURE**

- A. For purposes of this Article employees under this Agreement shall be categorized as follows:
  - 1. Instructional: Employees who are assigned for the majority of their work day to a classroom program and/or teacher. This category would include the B.L.C. laundry aide and the pool aide (the pool aide does not require a W.S.I.).
- B. If the Employer determines to reduce the work force, employees shall be laid off according to their seniority. The employer will consider voluntary requests first. Written notice of layoff shall be made to the affected employees at least twenty (20) calendar days prior to the layoff. School year employees not being recalled from summer recess at the time school would normally begin shall also be given written notice at least twenty (20) calendar days prior to the normal start of school.
- C. Bargaining unit members whose positions have been eliminated due to a reduction in work force or who have been affected by a layoff or elimination of position shall have the right to bump into any position in which they have seniority as described in Section 1, A, of this Article and which is held by an employee with less seniority within that category. In no case shall a new employee be employed while there are laid off bargaining unit members who are qualified for a vacancy or newly created position.

### **SECTION 2: RECALL PROCEDURE**

- A. Employees will be recalled in the inverse order of that specified in Section 1. Notice of recall shall be sent to the employee at his/her last known address by certified mail. If an employee fails to report to the Employer within fifteen (15) calendar days from the date of first notice by the Post Office of Notice of Recall, he/she shall be considered as quit.

## **ARTICLE IX — VACANCIES AND TRANSFERS**

### **SECTION 1: VACANCY DEFINED**

A vacancy shall be defined as any position subject to this Agreement, either a newly created position or a vacated position.

- 1. Posting. When a resignation is given to a program supervisor/principal or a new room is put in place – an email will be sent out to the paras in that program announcing which room will be open and paras in the program have 24 hours in which to notify the supervisor/principal of their desire to transfer. Consideration

will be given to the request and if the request is granted, then another email will go out indicating the new room which is open and the same process will occur. Once all program transfers are made, the open position will be posted for 3 working days. Equal consideration will be given to internal applicants from the other programs along with external applicants.

## **SECTION 2: TRANSFERS DEFINED**

The District will have the right of transfer for paraprofessionals within their program and should someone wish to be moved again they can request a move at the end of the school year.

## **ARTICLE X — GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

### **SECTION 1:**

A grievance shall be defined as an alleged misapplication or misinterpretation of this Master Agreement or an action that violates the specific terms of this Agreement.

### **SECTION 2: FIRST STEP (Informal)**

A staff member who believes he/she has a grievance shall first discuss the matter with his/her Supervisor personally or accompanied by the Association representative within ten (10) school days after the occurrence of the event upon which the grievance is based. If a grievant could not have known these facts, such time limit is adjusted accordingly. The Supervisor must be made aware that the discussion involves a potential grievance. It shall be the objective of both parties to resolve the matter in this informal manner.

### **SECTION 3: SECOND STEP (Assistant Superintendent)**

Those grievances which have not been resolved informally in the first step shall be submitted in writing by the Association and/or staff member to the Assistant Superintendent within ten (10) school days after the meeting with the Supervisor in the 1<sup>st</sup> step. A copy of the grievance shall go to the Superintendent. The Assistant Superintendent shall schedule a conference with the grievant and an Association representative within ten (10) school days after receipt of the grievance. Within ten (10) school days after the conference, the Assistant Superintendent shall respond in writing to the grieving party with his/her disposition of the grievance.

### **SECTION 4: THIRD STEP (Mediation)**

If the disposition of the grievance by the Assistant Superintendent for Administration Services is not satisfactory, the grievant shall have ten (10) school days from receipt of the Assistant Superintendent's disposition, to appeal the grievance to mediation by submitting a request to the Michigan Employment Relations Commission (MERC) with a copy to the Assistant Superintendent. A written resolution of the grievance, signed by the parties through the mediation process, shall be honored. If mediation does not produce a resolution the grievant may go to the 4<sup>th</sup> step of the process. The Board shall incur no cost for any expenses incurred by the mediator. By mutual



agreement of both parties, the 3<sup>rd</sup> (mediation) step may be waived and the grievance may go from the 2<sup>nd</sup> step directly to the Board level step.

#### **SECTION 5: FOURTH STEP (Board)**

If the recommended disposition of the grievance through mediation is not satisfactory, the grievant shall have ten (10) school days from the conclusion of the mediation session (or 3<sup>rd</sup> step if mediation is waived by mutual agreement) to appeal the grievance to the Board of Education. Within thirty (30) school days of the receipt of this appeal, the Board of Education shall hold a hearing of the matter and within ten (10) school days thereafter forward their disposition of the grievance in writing to the grievant.

#### **SECTION 6: TIME LIMITS**

Grievances which are not appealed within the time limits specified in the above grievance procedure shall be considered to be withdrawn by the grievant and/or Association. Failure of the employer to respond within the prescribed time limits shall automatically cause the grievance to be appealed to the next step.

**SECTION 7:** The presentation and discussions of grievances provided for in this Article shall take place at times which will not interfere with regular assigned duties.

**SECTION 8:** In the event grievances filed under this Article are not satisfactorily settled during the school year, they shall continue after the end of the school year with the weekdays Monday through Friday being as if they were school days in determining the time limits set forth above.

### **ARTICLE XI — EVALUATION**

**SECTION 1:** Each employee who has been employed for at least three (3) consecutive years shall be evaluated at least once during every three (3) year period by the immediate supervisor. New employees shall be evaluated at least annually during their first two years of employment. The Administration reserves the right to evaluate any employee more frequently. Evaluations will be placed in the employee's personnel file.

**SECTION 2:** Each bargaining unit member shall be notified of the basis upon which he/she will be evaluated. Evaluations may include personal observation by the immediate supervisor, as well as appropriately investigated input to the supervisor from other professionals, administrators, parents, and others who would have had professional interaction with the employee.

All evaluations are on the District evaluation system and the bargaining unit member has access to the evaluation at least 48 hours prior to the evaluation conference.

**SECTION 3:** If the bargaining unit member disagrees with the evaluation, he/she may submit a written response which shall be attached to the evaluation system. If a supervisor believes a bargaining unit member is doing unacceptable work, the reasons therefore shall be set forth as shall an identification of the ways in which the bargaining unit member is to improve, and of the assistance

to be given by the Employer towards that improvement.

Following each formal evaluation, which shall include a conference with the evaluator, the bargaining unit member shall sign a copy of the evaluation report which is available on the system. In no case shall the bargaining unit member's signature be construed to mean that he/she necessarily agrees with the contents of the evaluation.

**SECTION 4:** In the event the Employer uses an evaluation form for the evaluation of a bargaining unit member, different from the one in use as of the date of this contract, the structure and the content of such revised form will be discussed with the Association.

## **ARTICLE XII — PERSONNEL RECORDS**

**SECTION 1:** Each employee shall have the right, upon request, to review the contents of his/her own personnel file, except confidential matters such as placement credentials, employee references supplied to an employer that would reveal the identity of the person making the reference, materials which disclose an employer's staff planning regarding more than one employee, medical reports and records if available from other sources, all other information not required for disclosure in the Bullard-Plawecki Employee Right to Know Act of 1978.

**SECTION 2:** No material originating in the District after original employment, which reflects adversely on the employee's work record, shall be placed in his personnel file unless the employee has been furnished an opportunity to review such material. The employee may submit a written response to such adverse material and the same shall be attached to the file copy in question.

**SECTION 3:** The employee will be informed of the date, time, and place for the personnel file review, which must be performed in the presence of an administrator.

**SECTION 4:** A representative of the Association may, at the employee's request, accompany the employee in this review.

## **ARTICLE XIII — DISCIPLINE**

**SECTION 1:** No non-probationary employee shall be disciplined, which shall include written and/or oral warnings or reprimands, suspension, demotion and discharge, without just cause. Any employee, including probationary, shall be entitled to have present a representative of the Association when he/she is being disciplined, and the reasons for disciplinary action shall be made known to the employee. When a meeting is scheduled for the express purpose of disciplining an employee, the employee shall be informed of his/her right to Association representation.



## **ARTICLE XIV — INSURANCE**

**SECTION 1:** During the term of this agreement, except during any withholding of services, the District will opt for the 80/20 split for health insurance. The District's share of the premium equivalent will be 80% and the employee's share of the premium equivalent will be 20%. All employees hired after July 1, 2016 will be offered single only coverage. Two person and family coverage may be purchased but the employee will be responsible for all plan costs associated with covering their dependents/spouse. (The District will continue to contribute the allocated cost associated with single coverage only)

The District will provide two options for employees to select:

- Option A: Health Insurance – will be Priority Health Self-funded  
\$500/\$1000 deductible in-network, \$1,000/\$2,000 deductible out-of-network  
100% after deductible (in-network)  
\$30 office visit/\$150 ER visit co-pays  
RX Card - \$20 generic, \$50 formulary brand, \$100 non-formulary brand  
(mail order 1 co-pay for a three-month supply)

*The monthly premium equivalent for 2023-2024 will be:*

<i>Hired 7/1/2016 or after:</i>	<i>Single - \$172</i>	<i>Hired before 7/1/2016: Single \$172</i>
	<i>Two Person - \$1036</i>	<i>Two Person - \$345</i>
	<i>Family - \$1727</i>	<i>Family - \$483</i>

- Option B: Health Insurance – will be Priority Health Self-funded  
\$2,500/\$5,000 deductible in-network, \$5,000/\$10,000 deductible out-of-network  
70% coverage after deductible (in-network)  
\$30 office visit/\$150 ER visit co-pays  
RX Card - \$20 generic, \$50 formulary brand, \$100 non-formulary brand  
(mail order 1 co-pay for a three-month supply)

*The monthly premium equivalent for 2023-2024 will be:*

<i>Hired 7/1/2016 or after:</i>	<i>Single - \$149</i>	<i>Hired before 7/1/2016: Single \$149</i>
	<i>Two Person - \$895</i>	<i>Two Person \$298</i>
	<i>Family - \$1491</i>	<i>Family \$417</i>

If an employee certifies they have health coverage elsewhere and waive the District's plan the following option is available:

- Cash in lieu of Health Insurance – will be \$500.00 per month

When both spouses are employed by the Board, they shall be entitled to health insurance coverage in one of their names and the other spouse will be entitled to the Cash in lieu of health insurance option.

The following insurance benefits may be selected by the employee:

- Dental Insurance – 100% on basic services, 75% on all other services with a \$2,500 annual maximum – *the monthly premium will be \$2.50.*
- Vision Insurance – 100% coverage - \$600 maximum per 2-year period – *the monthly premium will be \$1.50.*

All employees who are eligible to receive insurance benefits will have the following:

- Life Insurance - \$50,000 on employee only
- Long Term Disability – 66 2/3% of salary
- Ability to participate in the Section 125 Cafeteria Plan which shall include the medical reimbursement program

It shall be the responsibility of the employee to be properly enrolled with the carrier. New employees shall be entitled to coverage when active service begins under this contract.

**SECTION 2:** The insurance premiums will be pro-rated over 24 pays (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> paydays of the month).

**SECTION 3:** The Plan year for all insurance shall be July 1 through June 30 and any change in premium equivalent will occur on July 1 of each year.

**SECTION 4:** All full-time staff members (32.5 hours per week) shall be entitled to insurance coverage under this Article. Insurance coverage for employees working less than full-time but at least half-time (20 hours per week) shall be pro-rated based upon the normal work day or work year. Employees working less than half-time (less than 20 hours per week) shall not be entitled to any insurance benefits.

**SECTION 5:** The Board shall maintain insurance coverage provided in this Article from July 1 through June 30 for all eligible employees provided the employee has completed his/her contractual work year. Should an employee complete his/her contractual work year and be covered through another employer prior to June 30, it shall be that employee's responsibility to so inform the Board so as to avoid unnecessary and redundant coverage. Any employee who has completed the entire school year and whose employment with the District terminates at the end of the school year, shall continue to receive insurance benefits under this Article through August 31 of the year in which their employment terminates.

**SECTION 6:** The surviving spouse and/or dependent children (as per the IRS definition) of a staff member who dies during the term of employment with the District shall receive Health (or cash in lieu of option), dental and vision benefits which were in place at the time of death for one (1) calendar year.

The surviving spouse and/or dependent children of a staff member who dies during the term of employment with the District shall receive an amount equal to the number of unused sick leave days which were available for the staff member times 100% of their daily rate to a maximum of 90 days.

## **ARTICLE XV — GENERAL**

**SECTION 1:** Year for year credit may, at the discretion of the Board, be given for appropriate experience outside the District as determined by the Board.

**SECTION 2:** Salary schedule adjustment based on experience shall be computed and applied once per year at the beginning of the contractual work year. Experience adjustments shall be computed in no smaller unit than a half step. To qualify for a half step increment, the employee shall have been



continuously employed a minimum of eighty-five (85) working days within the contractual work year (170 working days for full step). Unpaid leave days and days of work as a substitute shall not be counted as days of employment under this Section. Unpaid leaves break the "Continuity of Employment" for step increases on the salary schedule.

### **SECTION 3: TUITION REIMBURSEMENT**

For those paraprofessionals taking classes to become special education teachers the following will apply:

A written request for reimbursement must be made using the following procedures:

- a. All requests must be submitted to the Assistant Superintendent or designate prior to enrollment in the course.
- b. Only undergraduate or graduate classes approved in advance and directly related to obtaining a special education teaching degree will be allowed.
- c. Evidence of a passing grade must be given in order to be eligible for reimbursement.
- d. A maximum of nine (9) undergraduate or graduate credit hours will be eligible for reimbursement during any one 12-month period.
- e. Reimbursement for approved credit will be at 50% of the resident graduate or undergraduate rate per credit hour. This credit hour rate will be determined by computing the average resident graduate rate for the year of Western Michigan University, Michigan State University, Grand Valley State University, and Central Michigan University. At no time will the reimbursement be more than 50% of the tuition cost.

### **SECTION 4: NOTICES**

Any written notice given pursuant to the Agreement shall be addressed and delivered as follows:

- A. Employer: Berrien Regional Education Service Agency  
711 St. Joseph Avenue  
Berrien Springs, MI 49103-1583
- B. Association: Michigan Education Association  
104 West Ferry Street  
P O. Box 229  
Berrien Springs, MI 49103
- C. Employee: As set forth in the records of the Employer or to such other address as a party or an employee shall hereafter furnish in writing. Any communication addressed to an employee at his/her last address on record with the Employer shall constitute legal notice to the employee of the contents of such communication.

### **SECTION 5: DUPLICATION OF AGREEMENT**

The parties shall share equally the cost of furnishing a copy of this Agreement to each employee who

is employed in the bargaining unit during the terms of this Agreement.

## **SECTION 6: VALIDITY OF AGREEMENT**

If, during the life of this Agreement, any of the provisions contained herein are found to be invalid by operation of law by a tribunal of competent jurisdiction or if compliance with or enforcement of any provision should be restrained by such tribunal pending a final determination as to its validity, the remainder of this Agreement shall not be affected thereby. In the event any provision herein contained is so rendered invalid, upon written request by either party hereto, the Board and the Association shall enter into collective bargaining for the purpose of negotiating a mutually satisfactory replacement for such provision.

## **SECTION 7: ENTIRE AGREEMENT**

This Agreement constitutes the sole and entire existing agreement between the parties in respect to rates of pay, wages, hours of employment, or other conditions of employment which shall prevail during the term of this Agreement. It supersedes and cancels all prior practices, whether oral or written, and expresses all obligations of, and restrictions imposed upon, the Board and the Association. This contract is subject to amendment, alteration or additions only by a subsequent written agreement between and executed by the Association and the Board. The waiver of any breach, term or condition of the Agreement by either party shall not constitute a precedent in the further enforcement of its terms and conditions.

## **SECTION 8: WAIVER CLAUSE**

The parties acknowledge that during the negotiations which resulted in this Agreement each had the unlimited right and opportunity to make demands and proposals with respect to any subject or matter not removed by law from the area of collective bargaining, and that the understandings and agreements arrived at by the parties after the exercise of that right and opportunity are set forth in the Agreement. Therefore, the Board and the Association for the life of this Agreement each voluntarily and unqualifiedly waives the right, and each agrees that the other shall not be obligated, to bargain collectively with respect to any subject or matter referred to, or covered in this Agreement, or with respect to any subject or matter not specifically referred to or covered in this Agreement, even though such subject or matter may not have been within the knowledge or contemplation of either or both of the parties at the time that they negotiated or signed this Agreement.

**SECTION 9:** Reference in this Agreement to the term "Board" may also be interpreted to refer to the Superintendent or his/her designee.

## **SECTION 10: SUBSTITUTES**

The Board will not use uncertified paraprofessional personnel as substitutes for teachers who are absent from work for any reason. For purposes of this Section, uncertified paraprofessional personnel will include those bargaining unit members who have neither a valid Michigan Teacher's Certificate



nor a valid Substitute Teaching Permit. Paraprofessionals who hold valid Michigan Teaching Certificates or valid Substitute Teaching Permits and who are on the building substitute list shall be provided the first opportunity to sub for the teacher in their assigned classroom after the Floating teachers have been assigned subject to the procedures outlined in "A" below. Certified paraprofessionals, when employed as substitute teachers, shall be paid at the professional salary schedule base rate.

Procedures for implementing this Section shall be as follows:

- A. At any time during the school year paraprofessionals will be given the opportunity to sign up to substitute teach in their assigned classroom. The request to substitute teach will be given to the Director of Human Resources, who will then verify transcripts and pull the daily substitute permit. The list will then be given to the building principals and the union. Should an employee be transferred, hired or obtain enough credits to sub during the year, they will be added to the list once the Human Resource office has verified the information and a substitute permit has been pulled. When a classroom has more than one certified paraprofessional who expresses an interest in subbing, the eligible paraprofessionals will sub on a rotating basis as the substitute teacher in the room.

**SECTION 11:** The Board shall reimburse employee costs, less insurance coverage, for Rx glasses, hearing aids, or prosthetic devices damaged by student acts while engaging in the performance of his/her duties.

**SECTION 12:** The Employer shall adhere to the Berrien Regional Education Service Agency procedures for serious communicable diseases and be responsible for providing the necessary materials and training for its implementation.

### **SECTION 13: MEDICALLY FRAGILE STUDENTS**

When staff are required to perform health-related services for students who are technology-dependent/medically fragile, the Administration will assure that appropriate training is provided and the employee's ability to perform these procedures is evaluated by a licensed health care provider. Paraprofessionals shall not be required to administer medications without the appropriate training. It is also agreed that parent(s) of these students will be notified that these procedures may be performed by non-medical personnel who have been trained in the service. Direct communication will be provided between the bargaining unit member performing the school health services and the licensed health care provider. Furthermore, it is understood that all employees are covered under the District's liability policy and that the Administration will forward to the Association president a copy of the policy. The Administration also agrees to forward to the Association president a copy of any District liability policy changes which may be made at a future time.

### **SECTION 14: WELLNESS PROGRAMS**

There may be a wellness committee comprised of three (3) administrators and one (1) employee chosen from and by the Association to recommend to the Board wellness program activities for employees. Upon the Board's acceptance of the committee's recommendation, schedule adjustments

of non-instructional time shall be allowed for participation in approved programs.

#### **SECTION 15: ANNUITY PLAN**

The District shall participate in the West Michigan Benefits Consortium Section 403 (b) Tax-Sheltered Annuity Plan. The Board agrees that the annuity vendors used will participate with this Consortium.

**SECTION 16:** Paraprofessionals will have the same list containing essential medical information of students in their classroom as the teachers.

### **ARTICLE XVI — WORKING CONDITIONS**

#### **SECTION 1: SUMMER WORK – MANDATED PROGRAMS/EXTENDED-YEAR SERVICES**

Bargaining unit work required in the summer shall be based upon the following (priority ranked):

- A.
  - i. Current employment in that classroom, program and facility
  - ii. Extended School Year Services – Staff with students from their assigned teacher's caseload are eligible for work based upon seniority. Then staff with students in the program they work in are eligible for work based upon seniority.
- B. Highest program seniority in that facility.
- C. Highest system seniority.
- D. All employees shall be given the opportunity to submit a letter of intent indicating an interest in working. Notice will be given which will specify the time lines for applying. If, after 5 days following the close of the application period openings still exist, the Employer may fill the positions(s) without further restriction.
- E. Summer work shall be deemed work in addition to the regular work year. Employees not hired during the summer shall **not** be eligible for Unemployment Compensation.
- F. Employees electing to work during the summer months are eligible to receive leave benefits which are beyond their control, such as sick leave, legal leave, etc. to a maximum of one (1) day per two-week block of work. Personal business leave may be granted with prior approval by the Executive Director of Human Resources or designate. Up to four (4) days shall be allowed for funeral leave per Article VI, Section 1B.
- G. For mandated programs/extended-year programs, employees shall be given the opportunity to initially choose extended-year employment in blocks of time which equal at least two (2) or more consecutive weeks. By way of example, a person may elect 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, etc., weeks. For the purposes of determining weekly blocks, weeks which contain 3, 4, or 5 work days shall count as a full week. Once an employee has made



his/her initial selection of the block of time they choose to work, they may select thereafter, single week time periods if the single week is either the week during which the 4<sup>th</sup> of July is celebrated and/or is one of the last two (2) weeks of the extended year program. Employees shall be paid only for days actually worked.

## **SECTION 2: SCHOOL CLOSINGS**

It is the employee's responsibility to listen to the radio for school closings.

## **ARTICLE XVII — COMPENSATION**

**SECTION 1:** Yearly Salary (180 work days and 6 paid holidays) shall be paid semi-monthly over 24 pay periods on approximately the 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of each month for all employees covered under this agreement:

<i>Step</i>	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
<i>0-6 years</i>	\$26,202	\$26,988	\$27,798
<i>7 years +</i>	\$30,062	\$30,964	\$31,892

Summer work will be paid at \$23.00 per hour to all paraprofessionals who work above the 180 work days in the extended year programs and summer programs.

### **LONGEVITY:**

To be eligible for longevity the employee must have been continuously employed with Berrien RESA for the specified amount of years. Any break in service will result in loss of longevity pay.

The following amounts will be added to the salary at the beginning of the school year and paid over 24 pays.

10 years	15 years	20 years	25 years	30 years
\$750	\$1000	\$1250	\$1500	\$1750

### **Per Year Additional Stipends:**

Job Coach Certification - \$250.00

Registered Behavior Technician - \$250.00

If both certification's are maintained then both stipends will be paid per year.

Probationary employees are not eligible to obtain certification's.

## **SECTION 2: OVERTIME COMPENSATION**

- A. Hours worked by an individual employee in excess of forty (40) hours per week shall be paid at one and one-half (1.5) times the regular compensation rate for that

employee.

- B. Hours worked on Saturdays, Sundays or holidays shall be paid at one and one-half (1.5) times the regular compensation rate for that employee.
- C. Overtime work must be scheduled and authorized in advance by the Employer.
- D. Days required to be made up at the end of the school year will be paid at the regular rate if failure to make up those days would result in a loss of State Aid.

### **SECTION 3: PAID HOLIDAYS**

Employees shall be entitled to six (6) paid holidays.

Christmas Eve  
Christmas Day  
Day after Christmas  
New Years Eve  
New Years Day  
Day after New Years

Paid holidays shall only be on days when school is not in session.

### **ARTICLE XVIII — DURATION**



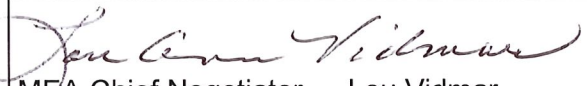
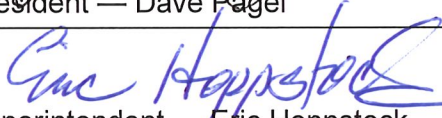

This Agreement shall become effective as of the 1<sup>st</sup> day of July, 2023 and the terms and provisions thereof shall remain in full force and effect through the 30<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2026.

An emergency manager appointed pursuant to the Local Government and School District Fiscal Responsibility Act is allowed to reject, modify or terminate this Agreement in accordance with such Act, 2011 PA 4.

Either party may notify the other of its intention to renegotiate this Agreement in writing prior to April 1, 2026. Both parties agree to promptly begin to negotiate on or before April 15, following such notification.



IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have executed this Agreement in Berrien Springs, Michigan on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2023.

FOR THE ASSOCIATION:	FOR THE BOARD OF EDUCATION:
 President — Kris Gersonde	 President — Dave Pagel
 MEA Chief Negotiator — Lou Vidmar	 Superintendent — Eric Hoppstock
	 Chief Negotiator — Breanna Bell

**LETTER OF UNDERSTANDING**  
**BETWEEN**  
**BERRIEN RESA BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**AND**  
**BERRIEN COUNTY PARAPROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL ASSOCIATION**

The Berrien RESA Board of Education and the Berrien County Paraprofessional Personnel Association (BCPPA) hereby mutually agree to the following language change:

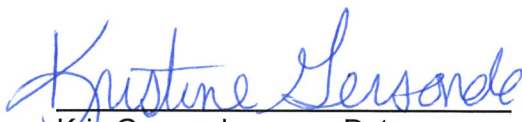
**ARTICLE XV - GENERAL**

**SECTION 2: Salary schedule adjustment based on experience shall be computed and applied twice per year on September 30<sup>th</sup> and January 31<sup>st</sup> and prorated for the remaining contracted working days, made payable on the next regularly scheduled pay date.**

Experience adjustments shall be computed in no smaller unit than a half step. To qualify for a half step increment, the employee shall have been continuously employed a minimum of eighty-five (85) working days within the contractual work year (170 working days for full step). Unpaid leave days and days of work as a substitute shall not be counted as days of employment under this Section. Unpaid leaves break the "Continuity of Employment" for step increases on the salary schedule.

This Letter of Understanding will expire on June 30, 2026.

For the Associations:

  
Kris Gersonde      Date  
President – BCPPA      11/28/23

For the Board:

  
Breanna Bell      11/28/23  
Director of Human Resources      Date