School Annual Education Report (AER) Cover Letter

February 20, 2026

Dear Parents and Community Members:

We are pleased to present you with the Annual Education Report (AER), which provides key information on the 2025-26 educational progress for Mars Elementary School. The AER addresses the complex reporting information required by federal and state laws. The school's report contains information about accountability, student assessment, and teacher quality. If you have any questions about the AER, please contact Jake Skelly, Mars principal, for assistance.

The AER is available for you to review electronically by visiting the following website, https://bit.ly/4jL5Naa, or you may review a copy in the main office at your child's school.

For the 2025-26 school year, schools were identified based on previous years' performance using definitions and labels as required in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). A Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) school is one that had at least one underperforming student group in 2024-25. An Additional Targeted Support (ATS) school is one that had at least one student group performing at the same level as the lowest 5% of all schools in the state in 2021-22. A Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) school is one whose performance was in the lowest 5% of all schools in the state, had a graduation rate at or below 67%, failed to exit CSI status in 2024-25, or failed to exit ATS status in 2021-22. Some schools are not identified with any of these labels. In these cases, no status label is given. Mars Elementary School was identified as a school that has not been given a label.

Mars Elementary has taken on many initiatives over the past several years to help increase student achievement in all core content areas with a strong focus on literacy and math. This year there has been a focus on integrating science and social studies into our curriculum. We continue to have a strong focus on alignment to essential standards, alignment to a guaranteed and viable curriculum and developing scales to inform instruction and assess where students are at with a goal of reaching proficiency on each standard. Teachers meet weekly in professional

learning communities (Teams) to collaborate and work as a team to best serve each of our students. Mars has just adopted Amplify CKLA as our main ELA resource and also uses UFLI as an additional resource especially in tier 2 and 3. Mars uses Bridges to Mathematics as its main mathematical instructional resource that is clearly aligned to the state Standards.

1. PROCESS FOR ASSIGNING PUPILS TO THE SCHOOL

Resident students (along with students accepted through the schools of choice process) may qualify and have a need for special education programs and/or services. The district is continuing to develop their Multi-Tier Systems of Supports (MTSS) model, providing general education options for struggling students and monitoring their progress over time. For those students who are unable to demonstrate progress with significant interventions, students being referred for special education programming/services may begin this process through a request for an evaluation or Child Study Team (CST) meeting. Should a student qualify for special education programs and/or services, a team of individuals will develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to help assist the child progress within the general education setting.

2. THE STATUS OF THE 3-5 YEAR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Mars Elementary is currently implementing the MICIP school improvement plan. Our school improvement team is made up of parents, teachers, support staff, and administration. The team holds meetings throughout the school year to review progress of goals and report back to the entire school staff. We are also continuing literacy training for all staff. Focused training in the areas of reading and writing using literacy footprints are implemented. Positive behavior supports/social and emotional learning continues to be a focus as Mars. Staff also continued professional development and constant focus on our school improvement goal areas which include: 1) Improve reading comprehension skills while reading increasingly complex narrative and information text above grade level; 2) Improve math proficiency; 3)Improve proficiency in informational and narrative writing skills and demonstrate proficiency in the Michigan State Standards. As part of our continuous improvement process, the Mars staff will continue to monitor progress on our school improvement goals by gathering and analyzing student achievement data. As appropriate, we will

add or modify instructional strategies. In addition, we will be engaged in professional development activities to prepare for the expectations of the Michigan State Standards.

3. **A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF EACH SPECIALIZED SCHOOL**

Special Education AER
2025-2026 School Year

Resident students (along with students accepted through the schools of choice process) may qualify and have a need for special education programs and/or services. The district is continuing to develop their Multi-Tier Systems of Supports (MTSS) model, providing general education options for students needing additional support through interventions and monitoring their progress over time. For those students who are unable to demonstrate progress with significant interventions, students being referred for special education programming/services may begin this process through a request for an evaluation or Child Study Team (CST) meeting. Should a student qualify for special education programs and/or services under one of the thirteen eligibility areas in Michigan, a team of individuals will develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to help assist the child progress within the general education setting. Programming and services offered within the district for students are as follows-

A. Resource Room Services for Local Special Education Students

Part of the IEP process includes the determination of appropriate aids, supplementary services, accommodations, and modifications for success in general education. Current special education programs within the district include, but are not limited to, Elementary and Secondary Resource Rooms. Students follow a general education curriculum with the Common Core State Standards. There are two models utilized within Berrien Springs Public Schools, one in which classroom instruction is provided by a general education teacher along with interactive co-teaching from a special education teacher; the second model is for students determined to need more direct instruction for needs outlined within their IEP. Under this model, students may receive programming/services that pull them out of the general education classroom for a set amount of time dictated by their IEP. At the elementary level, approximately fifty-five

students receive Elementary Resource Room programming; seventy-nine secondary students receive Secondary Resource Room programming.

B. Center-Based Special Education Programs

Berrien Springs hosts several center-based programs for Berrien County RESA. These programs are housed in Berrien Springs and operated by Berrien Springs Public Schools. The funding comes through federal, state and Berrien RESA sources. Many of the students in these programs are not residents of Berrien Springs, but are able to take advantage of these center programs through the IEP (Individual Educational Program) process in conjunction with their resident district. Students are placed in the program through an IEP team composed of their local district and Berrien RESA diagnostic and educational staff. Transportation to and from Berrien Springs is provided through the student's resident district. These programs include:

1. **Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH) Classrooms, Teacher Consultant Services, Audiological Services:**

   Students with hearing impairments have been part of Berrien Springs Public Schools for approximately 60 years. Cass County contracts services through Berrien RESA allowing students to be IEP placed from either Cass or Berrien counties. Babies are frequently identified at birth and start receiving intervention services at a very early age with teacher consultants seeing families in their natural home environment. Classroom services are available starting at preschool. These students may also participate in general education classes throughout their school-day depending on the student's individualized education program. Approximately thirteen Berrien and Cass County students receive direct services in the classroom program; one student is a resident of Berrien Springs.

   Many students who are Deaf or hard of hearing function very well in their home districts while receiving direct or indirect assistance from a teacher consultant and/or audiologist for equipment purposes. Approximately 140 children from Berrien County and 25 children from Cass County are patients of the Hearing Center. Approximately 145 children receive equipment services (IFSP, IEP, and 504) in both counties. Currently, 11 students are provided with DHH programming in the center-based program (preschool-5th grade).

Two educational audiologists provide audiological services and equipment management for students with identified hearing loss through our Hearing Center for students in Berrien, Cass, and Saint Joseph counties. They also provide diagnostic information for children with diagnosed, fluctuating, suspected or possible hearing losses. They work with physicians, the Health Department, families, Build up Michigan, Early On, and Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) to diagnose children as soon as possible and get amplification and intervention started. The team of audiologists work with over 500 students each year.

2. **Severe Language Impaired Preschool Program:**
   Students in the SLI preschool room receive instruction from a highly qualified teacher having endorsements in Elementary Education, speech and language impairments, and who is also a licensed speech and language pathologist. A maximum of 15 students ages three to six years of age must meet specific requirements to be placed into this county-based program. During the 2025-2026 school year, three (3) Berrien Springs resident students are enrolled in this classroom with a total of 15 students overall from Berrien county.

3. **Middle School Mildly Cognitively Impaired Classroom:**
   The district operates one county-wide classroom at Berrien Springs Middle School for students functioning with mild cognitive impairments. The program incorporates reading, writing, and vocabulary with social studies and science topics, following the Extended Grade Level Content Expectations from Michigan Department of Education. Currently, nineteen students are being serviced within these county classrooms. This school year, five (5) students considered to be Berrien Springs resident students are IEP placed in these rooms.

4. **High School Mildly Cognitively Impaired Classroom:**
   A county-wide classroom for students functioning with a mild cognitive impairment is also housed within the high school and taught by a teacher of the cognitively impaired. The students work through a series of objectives that are

linked to the Extended Grade Level Content Expectations and daily living skills for transition to post-secondary goals. Students also receive instruction through the use of the Life Centered Curriculum and earn a Seal of Employability and

certificate of completion upon completion of the program. This program also includes pre-vocational and vocational experiences. There are a total of seventeen students enrolled in the classroom presently, with eight students being Berrien Springs residents.

C. Ancillary Services:

Ancillary services are available for students who qualify. These services may include speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, or consultation from service providers such as vision, orientation & mobility, or assistive technology consultants.

Approximately 189 students receive speech and language services from Berrien Springs speech and language pathologists. Thirty-eight students receive OT and/or PT services within Berrien Springs buildings from Berrien RESA OT/PTs.

D. Build Up Michigan:

Build Up Michigan: Berrien Springs provides both evaluations and services for resident students ages three-five through the Build Up Michigan program. Evaluation plans determined for children through Build Up Michigan referrals are considered full and individual evaluations. Any programs/services offered are developed with the IEP planning team and evaluation team to meet the unique needs of each student.

E. Specialized Programs for Students Available Outside of Berrien Springs District:

Some students need programs that are not offered within the district. The IEP process is used to make this determination and to place these students in appropriate programs that offer the specialized instruction necessary to meet their goals and objectives while considering every student's least restrictive environment. Transportation is provided for these students. These programs, and the current number of resident students served in these programs include:

Program Name	Program Type	Operated by/Location	Number of BSPS Residents Placed
Blossomland Learning Center	MOCI & SXI (PS-26)	Berrien RESA	17
Lighthouse Education Center	ASD (K-26)	Berrien RESA (LEC and Satellite Roomsl)	9
Lighthouse Education Center	EI (K-26)	LEC	4
Northside	ECSE (ages 3-5)	Niles Community Schools	2
Southside/Ballard Elementary	EI (K-26)	Niles Community Schools	4
Howard Ellis Elementary	MICI (K-2nd)	Niles Community Schools	0
Stewart Elementary/Hollywood Elementary	MICI (K-5th)	Lakeshore Public Schools	3
Watervliet North	MICI (3rd-5th)	Watervliet Public Schools	0

Juvenile Center, Berrien Springs, Michigan

The juvenile center has programming for students with disabilities that are court placed, for an amount of time determined by a judge, with the goal being eventual re-integration into the resident district's educational system. Any students currently placed at the juvenile center are considered Berrien Springs residents during their placement there and the district is involved in their special education planning and team.

CORE CURRICULUM

Berrien Springs has meticulously aligned its curriculum with the state's model curriculum, ensuring no discernible variances. The adoption of Common Core State Standards, founded on National Standards and endorsed by the Michigan Department of Education, serves as the foundation for our educational framework. These standards are accessible on the MDE website at https://www.michigan.gov/mde/services/academic-standards. At all levels, our curriculum is structured in accordance with these standards. For those seeking detailed insights into our courses, Curriculum Guides for all disciplines can be obtained upon request from the school principal or district curriculum director.

AGGREGATE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RESULTS Accountability Scorecard – Detail Data and Status

You may refer to the District Data Profile for results of MAP, NWEA, and other tests on our website www.homeoftheshamrocks.org.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parents who attended Fall Conferences 2025

Class	Total Students	Present at PT Conferences	Absent for PT Conferences	Percentage Present
GSRP	32	31	1	**97%**
Pro 5's / Kinder	131	121	10	**92%**
1st Grade	101	87	14	**86%**
2nd Grade	100	80	20	**80%**
Total for School	**364**	**319**	**45**	**88%**

Year (# of students)	Fall Conf % of Attendance	Spring Conf % of Attendance
2025-2026 (364)	88%	N/A
2024-2025 (373)	87%	N/A
2023-2024 (355)	85%	N/A
2020-2021 (419)	89%	N/A
2019-2020 (408)	93%	N/A
2018-2019 (405)	97%	N/A

Mars Elementary administration and staff believe that our school and district are both on the right track to providing 21st century programming and academic opportunities that will allow for all of our students to achieve success through various career pathways. As represented in our district profile, Berrien Springs is a district of choice because we are a district with choices. We will continue to ensure that our highly qualified staff emphasizes teaching strategies that implement up-to-date technology as well as research-based curriculum materials. If you require any additional information regarding Mars Elementary, please feel free to contact me at jskelly@homeoftheshamrocks.org.

Sincerely,



Jake Skelly. Principal
Mars Elementary School
Berrien Springs Public Schools