

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## Benton Harbor Area Schools

### Public Comment No. 1

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**Name/Org. of Person Submitting:** Jackie Van Horn, Michigan Alliance for Families  
**Date of Submission:** April 13, 2020

Dear Committee -

One of the communities that needs to have a voice at the table is the Special Education Community. Students who have a disability, ranging from autism, to learning disabilities, as well as those who have suffered trauma are part of your school district. Many factors effect a student's ability to learn, and also affect a parent's ability to be involved in their student's education. I am here to help support your Special Education Families, as well as those who suspect their child has a disability. My purpose is to help your families understand the Special Education Process, and how to be the best advocate they can be for their child. Thru grant funding from the Michigan Department of Education - Office of Special Education and as the Parent Training and Information Center for the State of Michigan, my assistance is free.

I am here to help with the process of Parental Engagement. Let me know how I can be of assistance to you. My contact information is below. Thank you for your time.

### CEAC Response – Public Comment No. 1

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Thank you for your feedback to the BHAS draft Operating Plan prepared by the Advisory Committee. The committee welcomes community input for BHAS improvement. Your information will be shared with the Advisory Committee, Michigan Department of Education, Michigan Department of Treasury and the Benton Harbor Area School Board for consideration.

We appreciate your response.

Regards,

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## Benton Harbor Area Schools

### Public Comment No. 2

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**Name/Org. of Person Submitting:** Margo Pierce, Pierce Advocacy  
**Date of Submission:** April 13, 2020

To: Benton Harbor Area Schools Community Engagement Advisory Committee

I am a Benton Harbor resident, and a long-time advocate for students with disabilities in Benton Harbor Area Schools and in the State of Michigan. I have been a special education advocate for over 12 years and would like to provide some comments and observations on the recommendations of your committee.

Regarding your Parent Academy, what is the expected outcome of that? Will the district be taking into account historical negative interactions between families and district personnel?

Regarding suspensions, how exactly is the 26% arrived at? Are those “official” suspension numbers from Power School? What about students who have been suspended and their attended record is noted as “Excused Absence”?

Regarding students with disabilities, Benton Harbor area schools has been historically non-compliant with state and federal regulations regarding the identification, placement, and discipline of these students. What is your plan to address this?

Regarding PBIS, your district has been involved in PBIS programs starting over a decade ago. Those programs require staff buy-in, and administrative support. How will you be changing how you have provided those (or not)?

I look forward to your answers,  
Respectfully submitted,  
Margo Pierce

### CEAC Response – Public Comment No. 2

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Parent Academy – The Parent Academy was identified to support parent and community engagement in the schools and the district at large. The Parent Academy has been a successful feature of the Detroit Schools’ improvement efforts. The review team envisions that the BHAS implementation team will review the full design of Parent Academy agenda and tailor it to BHAS needs.

Out-of-school suspension data was supplied by the BHAS administration. The report covered the time period from the start of the 2019-20 school year through January 17, 2020. It included only recorded out-of-school suspensions, and as noted in your comment the report does not include other out-of-school occurrences, e.g., excused or unexcused absences. The proportion of the district population who have experienced suspensions is based on the number of individual students who have been suspended at some point between the start of school and the report data (January 17, 2020). Students who have been suspended more than once were only counted once (an unduplicated count). The team also reviewed the

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duration of suspensions. In this review we found a handful of students who had been suspended multiple times (six or seven suspensions) for a number of days during the review period (18 – 25 days out of school). We calculated the approximate number of school days missed by these students (approximately 27% of school days).

Special Education Data-The review team attempted to review special education data using information from the district and statewide data bases, however the data contained inconsistencies that could not be resolved. The overall take away from our review is that the processes, implementation and monitoring of the programs and services of BHAS (including Special Education and 504) should be audited and improved, and continuously monitored.

PBIS. The team offered PBIS as an example of a research-based program to address student behavior, suspensions and school climate. We understand that BHAS staff were trained in PBIS, however the high turnover in staff resulted in many untrained staff members and few remaining staff to sustain the program. Whatever the program and strategies selected by the implementation team sustainability strategies must be part of the implementation plan. Ongoing PD and retraining, implementation review and outcome monitoring will be essential to successful programs and results.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**Benton Harbor Area Schools**

**Public Comment No. 3**

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**Name/Org. of Person Submitting:** Kim Stover  
**Date of Submission:** April 9, 2020

Sad, sad, sad! This is a ridiculous plan that rewards BHS for poor choices.  
I can only pray that it does not get approved.  
Kim Stover  
Sent from my iPhone

**CEAC Response – Public Comment No. 3**

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Thank you for your feedback to the BHAS draft Operating Plan prepared by the Advisory Committee. The committee welcomes community input for BHAS improvement. Your information will be shared with the Advisory Committee, Michigan Department of Education, Michigan Department of Treasury and the Benton Harbor Area School Board for consideration.

We appreciate your response.

Regards,