

BERRIEN COUNTY

New RESA hire to head early childhood effort

Tia Miller had been working for LMC

By **RALPH HEIBUTZKI**
HP Correspondent

BERRIEN SPRINGS — The last person needed to complete the Berrien Regional Education Service Agency's new early childhood department will soon be in place.

Tia Miller will serve as an early childhood supervisor for the district's Great Start Readiness

program, which is focused on getting children from 4 to preschool age ready for school, Berrien RESA Superintendent Kevin Ivers said. The program is housed at 13 sites around Berrien County.

"They (the hiring team) interviewed four (applicants). She rose to the top, and was the only one invited back for a second interview," he said.

Miller replaces Sharon Davarn, who's

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retiring June 30. She'll earn an \$82,000 annual salary.

"She'll make sure all those programs are in compliance – not only physically, with room space, and all that kind of stuff – but also to coordinate professional development for preschool teachers throughout the county," Ivers said.

Miller previously served as director of Lake Michigan College's Educational Opportunity Center since July 2013, and as director of family programs at Dunebrook in Michigan City, Ind., from 2010-13.

She holds a bachelor's degree in child development and sociology from Central Michigan University, where she earned a master of educational administration in 2002, a board memo states.

Miller's hiring, which the Berrien RESA Board approved last week, marks the last position filled at the department, which the district created last year to coordinate its early childhood programs and services.

"We went from having one person, when I first got here, and now, a department of four administrators," Ivers said. "But they supervise about 30 people altogether. Of course, they're working supervisors. They're not just sitting at their desks."

In other business, the board allowed Career and Technical Education Director Brian Pyles to serve as a consultant to the Michigan Department of Education on a grant project.

Pyles will help create lesson plans for CTE teachers that will be passed out at five statewide conferences.

"Counties can just take these (lesson plans), and hand them down to the staff who teach these CTE courses," Ivers said.

Pyles will earn \$600 a day over a two-week period, plus reimbursement of his meals and travel costs, a board memo states.

Berrien RESA employees can't work outside the district without board approval – which it granted because Pyles helped on a similar project last year and is a recognized expert on the subject, Ivers said.

When such offers come up, "he has to disclose that he's working for someone else," Ivers said. "He's got a really good reputation."

The board scheduled its annual truth-in-taxation hearing and public hearing on its proposed 2016-17 budget, for 10 a.m. Monday, June 10, at its administrative headquarters, 711 St. Joseph St., Berrien Springs.

The hearing will be part of the board's regular monthly meeting.

The board approved about two dozen policy

updates, including one stipulating that student achievement will be a component of the superintendent's evaluation. The stipulation keeps the district compliant with new language added to the state's school code, Ivers said.

"Next year, 25 percent of the superintendent's evaluation will be based on student growth in the district's achievement scores," Ivers said. "That's a new requirement of a way to bring an evaluation in compliance with the state statute."






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