

Dr. Lawrence Feldman, Board Member

**SUBJECT: THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA,
JOIN IN RECOGNIZING MR. RAUL CALZADILLA & MR. THOMAS
ENNIS ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR RETIREMENT AFTER
YEARS OF EXEMPLARY SERVICE TO MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

**LINK TO STRATEGIC
BLUEPRINT: HIGHLY EFFECTIVE LEADERS, TEACHERS, AND STAFF**

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) is fortunate to count amongst its workforce the most talented and transformational educational leaders in the nation. Many of these leaders serve capably as principals at school campuses throughout the county and work arduously to ensure educational opportunities and access are afforded to their students and school communities. Two such leaders have honorably served their school communities within District 9 and have succeeded in successfully cultivating school cultures that support high expectations and a nurturing environment for all students. In fact, they have helped to solidify the stellar reputations of their respective schools, both of which offer successful magnet programs generating substantial interest each year.

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Mr. Raul Calzadilla retires this year after 34 years of service to M-DCPS. 15 of his years were spent in service to Air Base K-8 Center. Mr. Calzadilla completed his teaching degree at Florida International University (FIU) with a B.A. in Elementary Education, followed later by a Masters in Elementary Education from Nova Southeastern University and a Graduate Certificate in Educational Leadership from FIU.

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During his tenure, Mr. Calzadilla saw the school expand to a K-8 Center, introduced a Cambridge program of study, and doubled attendance enrollment. Since his arrival at Air Base K-8, the school has garnered significant achievements. In 1996 the school was recognized as a National Magnet School of Merit, offering an international program with a focus on language immersion. Since then, Air Base has been designated as a Magnet Schools of America (MSA) School of Excellence (2009-2019), Five Star Award recipient (2007-2019) and MSA National Certified Demonstration School. He also supported student and faculty interest in environmental topics and school-wide initiatives, earning a U.S. Green Ribbon Award in 2017 and Gold and Silver Fairchild Challenge Awards each year from 2012-2019.

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His reputation as a fair and enthusiastic leader is well known throughout the South Dade community, and Air Base K-8 Center reflects the culture he has cultivated through his transformational leadership. Mr. Calzadilla's accolades include his designation as the 2012 District Finalist Principal of the Year for Miami-Dade County Public Schools; District Runner-up Magnet Schools of America District III Principal of the Year; 2018 Magnet Schools of America Principal of the Year National Finalist and 2019 Miami-Dade County Council PTSA K-8 Principal of the Year.

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Known for his genuine charisma and humble nature, Mr. Calzadilla has earned the admiration and respect of the school community he serves, including that of the surrounding military base. He is strongly credited with having nurtured a caring culture and inclusive environment that welcomes learners from all walks of life, including those military families and students who face distinct challenges. Alongside the PTSA, Mr. Calzadilla enlisted the support of community partners who served to augment opportunities for its students and enhance programming at the school.

When asked about the legacy he leaves after finishing his service at the school, Mr. Calzadilla responded:

“The school belongs to the community, that is why all the members - teachers, students, parents, and volunteers - understand that by being united, we build a powerful force. Children get to achieve their goals because there is a united voice behind them. We are a team, and everyone contributes to improving.”

He certainly led by this guiding principle that the schoolhouse did, in fact, belong to the community and that it was everyone’s responsibility to unite and act on behalf of the students they served. His leadership empowered all who served the Air Base K-8 community to advocate for their school, and his influence on generations of students, faculty and staff will be felt for years to come.

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Mr. Thomas Ennis has been a part of the M-DCPS system both as a teacher and administrator during his educational career. Mr. Ennis graduated from Western Kentucky University with a B.S. in Education, followed by a Master of Science in Sports Management and Educational Leadership Certification from Nova Southeastern University. Mr. Ennis has served as principal at Miami Killian High School, Miami Springs High School, and Cutler Ridge Middle School. He has served as the principal of Coral Reef Senior High since 2015. The school, with more than 3,400 students, is known as Miami’s “Mega-Magnet” and offers 6 distinct programs of study.

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Upon beginning his tenure at Coral Reef, Mr. Ennis committed himself to upholding the academic rigor and standards the school was known for and to continuing to cultivate the culture of excellence and diversity that each of the academic programs strived for. In an era of increasing accountability, he skillfully utilized data to drive student achievement, but also embraced the inherent enthusiasm and love of learning of the talented students he served. Under his leadership, Coral Reef became a Magnet Schools of America Demonstration School.

Amongst his top priorities was supporting his faculty and staff as they nurtured independent learners and active community members in a global society. He worked tirelessly to get to know the faculty and staff by maintaining an open-door policy and visiting classrooms. He also dedicated efforts to campus restoration and beautification, leading community volunteers in efforts to enhance the look of the school and impressive main courtyard.

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Mr. Ennis is described by his staff as “made to be a principal” and always willing to “give 100%”, but his devotion to students was what made him special. On any given day, Mr. Ennis could be seen walking around campus, talking to students and listening to their thoughts and concerns. He supported their passions by attending academy functions, performances, and sports events as ‘Cuda Nation’s biggest fan. Students appreciated his generosity and support in their individual pursuits and magnet endeavors as they embarked on state and national competitions. He always put students first. Upon his assignment to Coral Reef, Mr. Ennis was asked to share his thoughts about Coral Reef Senior High and he shared:

“I believe it is good fortune to be a student in the best environment that Miami-Dade County Public Schools has to offer. Each staff member is prepared to aid each and every student in attaining their personal goals and highest level of success. I tell students: study diligently, involve yourself in extra-curricular activities, and serve your community. Make this year one of the best and most memorable — a time to cherish always.”

Mr. Ennis did, in fact, make the years he served the Coral Reef Senior High School community memorable and his legacy will be remembered by all those he touched.

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These two outstanding educators are to be commended for their commitment and dedication to excellence on behalf of the students and families of Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. LAWRENCE S. FELDMAN:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, join in recognizing Principals Raul Calzadilla and Thomas Ennis on the occasion of their retirement after years of exemplary service to Miami-Dade County Public Schools.