

A New Vision for Closed Schools: Dr. Bernard W.H. Jennings Offers an Innovative Solution for Miami-Dade

Dr Bernard Wh Jennings Unveils Innovative Plan to Increase School Funding Without Raising Taxes

MIAMI-DADE , FL, UNITED STATES, July 20, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Throughout Miami-Dade County School Board [District 1](#), one message continues to resonate from parents, teachers, school employees, and taxpayers alike.

"Our teachers and other employees ie. Janitors, paraprofessionals, custodians, security and staff deserve higher pay."

"Our support employees can't afford to live where they work."



Dr Bernard Wh Jennings, District #1 Candidate

"We're losing outstanding educators because the cost of living has become too high."

At the same time, Miami-Dade County Public Schools faces another significant challenge. Declining student enrollment has forced difficult conversations about consolidating schools and closing underutilized campuses.

Most people view these as two separate problems.

Dr. Bernard W.H. Jennings believes they may be part of one solution.

As Chairman of the Board of Trustees of [Florida Memorial University](#), Dr. Jennings has built a reputation for looking beyond traditional approaches to governance. His experience in higher education, public service, mediation, business, and community leadership has shaped a

philosophy that effective leadership requires more than balancing budgets—it requires seeing opportunities where others see obstacles.

Rather than asking, "What should be done with a closed school?" Dr. Jennings asks a different question:

"How can that school continue serving the community?"

That question has become one of the cornerstone ideas of his campaign for the Miami-Dade County School Board.

If elected to represent District 1, Dr. Jennings intends to work collaboratively with his fellow School Board Members, Superintendent, district staff, community stakeholders, and the United Teachers of Dade (UTD) to explore whether selected closed or permanently underused school buildings can be transformed into affordable workforce housing for Miami-Dade County Public Schools employees.

EXPERIENCE • LEADERSHIP • DEDICATION

Dr. Bernard
WH JENNINGS

★ ★ ★

CANDIDATE FOR
**MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
SCHOOL BOARD
DISTRICT #1**

STRONG SCHOOLS.
BRIGHTER FUTURES.
STRONGER COMMUNITY.

STUDENT SUCCESS ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SAFE & SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS

A PROVEN LEADER.
A CLEAR VISION.
A COMMITMENT
TO OUR CHILDREN.

My Commitment.
**OUR CHILDREN.
OUR FUTURE.**

INVESTING IN
**TODAY
FOR A BETTER
TOMORROW**

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Dr Bernard Wh Jennings, Candidate District 1 Miami-Dade School Board

Dr. Jennings is quick to emphasize one important point. We need to respect teachers and others by focusing on increasing their salaries.

“

Our teachers and other professionals deserve higher salaries. Our support employees can't afford to live where they work. We're losing great educators because the cost of living is too high”

*Dr Bernard Wh Jennings,
Candidate for District #1
Miami-Dade Schools*

The proposal would never require teachers or school employees to live in these redeveloped facilities.

Instead, the concept would simply provide an additional affordable housing option for teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians, security officers, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, administrative staff, and other dedicated district employees.

Participation would be completely voluntary. It will be open to the public so all citizens can have the opportunity to afford a place to live.

Dr. Jennings has also pledged to work closely with the

United Teachers of Dade and other employee organizations to ensure educators and school employees have a meaningful voice in shaping any workforce housing initiative before recommendations are brought before the School Board.

For many employees, living closer to the schools where they work could reduce commuting expenses, improve quality of life, strengthen employee retention, and make Miami-Dade County Public Schools an even more attractive employer.

What makes the proposal particularly noteworthy is that it attempts to address two major challenges simultaneously.

First, it seeks to expand affordable housing opportunities for educators and school employees.

Second, it explores the possibility of generating long-term revenue from district-owned properties that might otherwise remain vacant, deteriorate, or require ongoing maintenance expenditures.

Across the nation, adaptive reuse of former school buildings has demonstrated that these properties can successfully become apartments, workforce housing, mixed-income communities, senior housing, and other productive community assets. Communities in New York, Massachusetts, Michigan, Utah, Illinois, South Carolina, Wisconsin, and other states have repurposed former schools rather than allowing them to become neighborhood liabilities.

While each redevelopment project has followed its own financing model and community objectives, they all share one common principle: preserving public assets through innovative redevelopment.

Miami-Dade County itself has already embraced creative approaches to workforce housing. Southside Preparatory Academy in Brickell combines a public K-8 school with workforce housing for district employees through a public-private partnership, demonstrating that local leaders already recognize the value of helping educators live closer to where they teach.

Dr. Jennings believes that success raises another important question.

If workforce housing can successfully coexist with an operating school, why shouldn't Miami-Dade also examine whether certain permanently closed school campuses can become part of the long-term solution?

He acknowledges that such projects would require careful planning.



Dr Jennings Mentors 5000 Role Models of Excellence Children

Every property would require detailed financial analysis.

Every neighborhood would deserve meaningful public participation.

Every redevelopment would need to comply with local zoning regulations, building codes, state law, and School Board policies.

Not every closed campus would be an appropriate candidate.

However, Dr. Jennings believes that if even a limited number of properties prove feasible, the long-term benefits could be substantial.

Rental revenue could initially support redevelopment costs, property management, and ongoing maintenance. Once financing obligations are satisfied, excess revenues could potentially strengthen district finances and help support priorities such as employee recruitment, retention, educational [innovation](#), and other initiatives approved by the School Board.

Just as importantly, neighborhoods would avoid the negative effects often associated with abandoned public buildings.

Instead of becoming vacant eyesores, former schools could once again become active community assets that continue serving a public purpose.

Dr. Jennings' vision extends beyond workforce housing.

He has also proposed exploring international educational partnerships that could position Miami-Dade County Public Schools to participate in collaborative global learning initiatives. Drawing on his leadership at Florida Memorial University, where the university has expanded international online education partnerships in Africa, he believes school districts should continuously pursue innovative educational collaborations that broaden opportunities for students while attracting new resources.

Throughout the campaign, Dr. Jennings has consistently argued that the role of a School Board Member extends beyond responding to today's challenges.

School Board Members must anticipate tomorrow's opportunities.

They must protect taxpayer investments.

They must seek innovative ways to strengthen public education.

They must create opportunities not only for students, but also for the teachers and employees

who make educational success possible.

While much of the public discussion surrounding the election has focused on identifying problems, Dr. Jennings has sought to contribute specific proposals for public discussion. He emphasizes that every idea should be evaluated on its merits, supported by reliable data, shaped through community engagement, and implemented only if it is financially, legally, and operationally sound.

His philosophy of leadership is straightforward.

Leadership is not about claiming to have every answer.

It is about asking better questions.

How can teacher compensation be strengthened?

How can school employees better afford to live in Miami-Dade County?

How can public assets continue serving the community long after their original purpose has ended?

How can new revenue opportunities be explored without increasing the burden on taxpayers?

Dr. Jennings believes those conversations should begin with innovation.

He argues that classrooms which once educated generations of children should not become symbols of decline simply because enrollment patterns have changed.

With thoughtful planning, collaboration, and responsible stewardship, those same buildings can once again strengthen neighborhoods, support educators, preserve taxpayer investments, and contribute to a stronger financial future for Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

Whether or not every aspect of the proposal ultimately proves feasible, Dr. Jennings has already distinguished himself by bringing forward an idea designed to solve multiple challenges simultaneously—an example of the kind of forward-thinking leadership he says he hopes to bring to the Miami-Dade County School Board from his very first day in office.

Dr Bernard Wh Jennings

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