



**Community Report on Ben Sheppard Elementary School**  
***A Traditional Parent's Perspective on School Policies and Environment***

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## A Traditional Parent's Perspective on School Policies and Environment

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### Summary and Overall Rating

Ben Sheppard Elementary is a Title I public magnet school in Hialeah, serving grades PreK through 5. It shows strong academic results, especially in math and reading, and offers comprehensive programs including STEM, arts, and Gifted & Talented. However, it operates within Miami-Dade County Public Schools, which enforces gender identity affirmation and LGBTQ inclusion policies from early grades.

From a traditional or faith-based standpoint, the school rates **3.5 out of 10** in alignment with conservative values. The school environment is orderly and enriched, yet district-level mandates emphasize progressive policies that may conflict with some family expectations.

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### School Information

**Name:** Ben Sheppard Elementary School

**Address:** 5700 W 24th Avenue, Hialeah, FL 33016

**Grades:** PreK to 5

**District:** Miami-Dade County Public Schools

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### 1. General Overview

The school serves approximately **939 students** and employs **59 full-time teachers**, with a student–teacher ratio of around **16 to 1**. Over 77 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, reflecting a high level of economic need. The school functions as a magnet center with a focus on STEM education.

### 2. Academic Standing

Ben Sheppard performs above the district and state averages. It ranks in the **top 30 percent** of schools statewide for test scores. Math proficiency is approximately **64 percent** and reading proficiency **63 percent**, both significantly above state averages. The school has received recognition for academic improvement and excellence in STEM.

### 3. Student Demographics

The student body is **99 percent minority**, predominantly Hispanic (97–98 percent), with a small representation of Black, White, Asian, and multiracial students. This reflects a culturally homogeneous and economically disadvantaged community with strong equity-focused support.

#### **4. Facilities and Programs**

The campus includes standard classrooms, portables, library, and media center. Programs extend beyond basic instruction to include Gifted & Talented, STEM and robotics clubs, arts, music, safety patrol, and after-school care. The school also hosts preschool and special education services and is recognized for its STEM magnet distinction.

#### **5. Values and Cultural Environment**

##### **District Policies on Gender Identity and LGBTQ Inclusion**

Miami-Dade District policies protect students based on sexual orientation and gender identity and require staff to respect chosen names and pronouns. The SAFE Network operates in all schools, fostering LGBTQ-affirming environments. These district-wide mandates may introduce early-age exposure to identity topics, which might concern traditional parents.

##### **School-Level Practice**

There are no known controversies or prominent activism at Ben Sheppard. The school fully complies with district policies, including staff training and inclusive behavior practices. Parents who prefer to limit early exposure to such topics may wish to meet with administrators to learn more about classroom implementation.

#### **6. School Board and Political Climate**

In 2022, the Miami-Dade School Board voted against recognizing LGBTQ History Month and opposed integrating LGBTQ civil rights from kindergarten through grade 12. Despite that, district inclusion policies remain active. This underscores a broader tension, district adherence to inclusive practices persists even as political resistance grows at higher levels.

#### **7. Parent Concerns**

Traditional-minded families may raise concerns such as

- Early introduction of gender identity topics to very young children
- Policies allowing identity preferences without parental notification
- A shift in focus from core academics to social identity

Even though Ben Sheppard displays no activism on campus, district mandates permeate the school environment and may not align with all parental values.

#### **8. Conclusion**

Ben Sheppard Elementary delivers high-quality academic performance, strong enrichment programs, and a supportive educational environment. It serves a diverse, economically disadvantaged community effectively.

Families who prioritize traditional values may need to consider the influence of district-level inclusion policies. While the school itself is stable and nurturing, the policy framework reflects progressive mandates. Parents are encouraged to engage with school leadership, evaluate policies for fit with their values, and explore all schooling options.

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### **Overall Rating: 3.5 out of 10**

#### **Rating Breakdown**

- **Policy Environment: 2 out of 10**  
District mandates progressive identity inclusion from PreK onward.
  - **School-Level Practice: 5 out of 10**  
No activism present; the school adheres fully to district policies.
  - **Classroom Exposure: 4 out of 10**  
Formal LGBTQ curriculum is not evident, but identity-affirming practices may occur informally.
  - **Community and Cultural Tone: 6 out of 10**  
The school is academically focused and supportive, though district influence remains.
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#### **Final Summary for Parents**

Ben Sheppard Elementary offers strong educational opportunities and a positive school culture. However, it is governed by district policies that affirm early gender identity and LGBTQ inclusion. Parents with traditional convictions should be proactive in understanding school policies, communicating with staff, and considering whether the school aligns with their family beliefs.