



Community Report on Calusa Elementary School

A Traditional Parent's Perspective on School Policies and Environment

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Summary and Overall Rating

Calusa Elementary School is a Title I public school in southwest Miami, serving PreK through grade 5. It consistently ranks among the top elementary schools in the state, earning high marks for academic achievement, small class sizes, strong proficiency in math and reading, and a Gifted & Talented program. However, it operates under Miami-Dade County Public Schools, which mandates gender identity affirmation and LGBTQ inclusive policies from the earliest grades.

From a traditional or faith-based perspective, Calusa Elementary is rated **3.5 out of 10** for alignment with conservative values. The school environment is academically excellent and supportive, but district-wide identity policies and a reported incident involving nearby safety issues may raise concerns for some families.

1. General Overview

Calusa Elementary enrolls approximately 750 to 770 students with about 47 full-time teachers, resulting in an average student-to-teacher ratio of 16 to 1. The campus serves a diverse student body and offers standard facilities including classrooms, a media center, and after-school programs. The school is recognized for a world-class academic environment and partnerships with parents and community members.

2. Academic Standing

The school is rated A and scores 10 out of 10 on GreatSchools. Performance data indicates:

- Around 85 % proficiency in math
- Around 82 % proficiency in reading/language arts
- Approximately 80–84 % proficiency in science

Calusa is consistently ranked in the top 5 % of elementary schools statewide for test scores. It offers a Gifted & Talented program and demonstrates strong year-over-year student achievement.

3. Student Demographics

The student population is approximately 90 % Hispanic, with small percentages of White, Asian, and Black students. Around 38–40 % of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, lower

than many district counterparts. The demographic profile reflects a stable and moderately diverse school community.

4. Facilities and Programs

The campus includes classrooms, library/media resources, and outdoor areas. Calusa offers a preschool program, Gifted & Talented services, and after-school enrichment. Funding levels appear strong, with per-student spending above district averages. The school also hosts community engagement events highlighting student achievements.

5. Values and Cultural Environment

District Policies on Gender Identity and LGBTQ Inclusion

Miami-Dade Public Schools includes gender identity and sexual orientation under anti-discrimination and anti-bullying rules. Staff must address students by their chosen names and pronouns. The district's SAFE Network promotes LGBTQ-inclusive environments starting in elementary grades. Traditional families may see this as premature or intrusive relative to their beliefs.

School-Level Practice

Calusa Elementary has no documented controversies or activism related to LGBTQ issues. The school adheres to district standards and staff receive required trainings. Parents who prefer limited exposure to identity topics may wish to meet with school leadership to clarify how policies are enacted.

6. Recent Negative Incidents or Controversies

Two issues worth noting:

- A **rat infestation** was reported at the school more than a decade ago. While addressed, it may concern parents about facility maintenance.
- A **bus stop safety issue** occurred when a student was evacuated due to a threat against the bus, prompting district safety protocol reviews.

No incidents directly involving the school's LGBTQ policy enforcement have been reported.

7. School Board and Political Context

In 2022, the Miami-Dade School Board rejected recognition of LGBTQ History Month and LGBTQ civil rights education in high school curriculum. Elementary schools like Calusa continue to follow district inclusion mandates. The tension between statewide conservative direction and local policy persists.

8. Parent Concerns

Families with traditional values may be concerned about:

- Early exposure to gender identity and pronoun policies
- Privacy protocols allowing identity expression without parental notification
- A focus on social identity over academic instruction
- Historical facility concerns like pest control
- Safety issues around transportation and dismissal procedures

9. Conclusion

Calusa Elementary is a high-performing school with an excellent academic record, strong student support, and a nurturing environment. However, it is subject to district policies promoting early gender identity inclusion and has had minor facility and student safety concerns in the past.

Parents evaluating this school should:

1. Discuss implementation of identity-related policies with administrators
2. Review health and safety protocols regarding facilities and transportation
3. Determine alignment with family values and priorities

Overall Rating 3.5 out of 10

Rating Breakdown

Policy Environment 2 out of 10

District mandates inclusive gender identity and LGBTQ practices from PreK onward

School-Level Practice 5 out of 10

No activism evident; school remains academically focused and compliant

Classroom Exposure 4 out of 10

No formal LGBTQ instruction apparent; identity-affirming practices may occur informally

Community and Cultural Tone 6 out of 10

Academic excellence and engaged parent community, but district policies continue to guide culture

Final Summary for Parents

Calusa Elementary offers exceptional academics, strong student culture, and solid community involvement. It is embedded in a district that enforces early LGBTQ inclusion policies and has previously faced minor safety and facility issues.

Traditional families should engage with school leaders, assess how policies are applied, and decide if Calusa aligns with their educational philosophy and values.