

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I'm taking this opportunity to let everyone know that I have decided to retire after 31 years working for Broward County Public Schools.

It was not an easy decision. I have been doing some important and impactful work on behalf of the children of this county, with some very great people by my side. I am proud of that work and so grateful for the opportunity to have served in the many roles and various capacities over the years.

I know there is much more to be done, but after talking with my family, and after talking with my God, it feels like the right time for me to move on and pass the baton to some very capable people who can take the work to the next level.

I have so many thoughts about my time with the District. But first and foremost in my mind, and in my heart, is how much I have loved being a part of this school system and working with so many dedicated professionals.

When I joined Broward County Public Schools in 1988, I was a young teacher with four years of experience teaching underprivileged six-graders in a public school in Brooklyn, New York. I was hooked from my first day in the classroom. Their energy, curiosity, laughter, and unmitigated joy, reeled me in. They were eager to learn, often on their own terms. They asked questions that stretched my thinking on how to better apply the content to their everyday lives. I saw nothing but potential in each of them, regardless of their challenges, and THAT energized me and kept me rooted in the belief that I could make a difference in any child's life.

I knew after just a few weeks in the classroom that I would spend my career as an educator helping young people navigate their way to adulthood. I wanted to open their minds to the possibilities and opportunities that a solid education could provide them. And I wanted to do this not only by nourishing their still forming brains with skills around reading, writing, math, science, Social studies, art , etc.-- to build their confidence in their academic abilities -- but by also helping them understand the importance of forming relationships, collaborating with others on projects and assignments, and hearing and receiving other ideas and perspectives. All with the goal of helping them eventually become thriving and productive adults.

I carried that philosophy with me when I moved to Broward and became a teacher. I taught at several schools in areas of our county with high needs and amazingly resilient people. I then moved on to be a teacher coach, an assistant principal, and eventually a principal and principal supervisor. The eight years of the principalship, are the years that I grew as a servant leader. In that space, at Northside Elementary School, with a team of people who bought into a vision that if you cradle the child within the family, and you cradle the family within the larger community, then young people will succeed and grow both academically and social-emotionally.

When I was asked to lead Student Support Initiatives for the District, it felt as if all the skills I'd built up in the previous jobs had coalesced and prepared me for the job at hand. With a wonderful team of

individuals who are true student advocates, we helped to develop policies, processes, and supports for every child that walked into our schools, those who are labeled, “good”, “bad”, “different” or “indifferent”. We provided support to them all, understanding that however they come, they are the sons and daughters of this community we have been charged to serve.

There have been both leaps and incremental steps in our development of support services, and there have been challenges big and small over the years. I’ve learned and grew from all of it. And if I had to do it all again, there’s very little that I would change. That’s because throughout my career in Broward my single-minded focus has been on helping children. It has always been about the students. Whether they were kindergartners at the start of their formal educational, high schoolers headed for college or jobs, or teens still struggling mightily to define themselves, to overcome serious problems or situations they find themselves in, the goal was always to help them carve out a path towards a better place in life.

I’m going to miss every moment that I spent working for Broward County Public Schools. It’s a special place that I have loved working at, filled with people that I have loved working with.

Again, I want to thank every person with whom I’ve worked and collaborated, you contributed to my growth and to my professional fulfillment every day. There are too many of you to name. But I do want to extend my special gratitude and appreciation for our Superintendent, Bob Runcie. His dedication, wisdom, leadership, and steadfastness has been the source of daily admiration and inspiration for me. He is a reminder of what can be achieved by staying focused on what’s important. I ask that you keep supporting him and helping him serve our kids.

I also want to thank all the school board members, my colleagues, and all my clerical and administrative assistants over the years. Those individuals who worked alongside me as committee members, volunteers and district advisors, and those who were unpaid mentors to our students, – know that your service was meaningful. You were all my collaborators in this mission. I want to thank the many, many parents who placed their trust in me to help educate and care for their children.

Last, but certainly not least. I want to thank the hundreds of students I’ve taught and interacted with over these past three decades. You have taught me important life lessons. And you’ve given me hope about the future. A future that will be in your hands as the next generation of leaders.

As I go on my next journey, I wish everyone all the best. Know that I will be on the sidelines still supporting and cheering on all the good work that you do. Also know that I will still be supporting kids in this community in some capacity...Stay tuned.

Many thanks, much love and best regards,

Mickey