

## DR. MICHAEL OJEDA

Dr. Michael Ojeda is the Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the Elizabeth Public Schools and a lifelong resident of Elizabeth. He has served in this position since 2022, with prior service in the Elizabeth Public Schools as a principal, director, supervisor, vice principal, and teacher since 2000. Michael recently served as principal of Thomas Jefferson Arts Academy for eleven years, where he collaborated with dedicated professionals and countless youth to support the school's turnaround. During his leadership, Jefferson Arts went from the lowest attendance and graduation rates across New Jersey (in 2011) to among the highest, including recognition in Elizabeth's Top 10 schools, US News and World Report's Best Schools, the Washington Post's Challenge Index, and as a Model School in the Arts by the NJ Arts Education Partnership.

Michael's story is indelibly tied to Elizabeth, where he was born and has spent his entire life. His early years were filled with little league, delivering newspapers, and great friends, but what defined his childhood and path towards service were his parents. Medardo and Elba Ojeda were born in Cuba, but met and made a life in Elizabeth. Throughout their lives, they modeled the highest standards of work ethic, family, and patriotism for the countries that gave them a heritage and a home. Inspired by their triumphs and sacrifices, Michael has spent his career attempting to give back to the city and country that gave his family so much. These experiences have connected him with countless young people, educators, and families who have dedicated so much of themselves towards improving their lives and those of others.

Michael's educational background includes Bachelor of Arts degrees in History and Political Science (from Rutgers University and Kean University respectively), as well as Masters of Arts degrees in both Special Education and Educational Administration from Kean University. Michael received his doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy at the New York University (NYU) Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development where his research focused on the student experience of high school during the COVID-19 pandemic. His professional recognitions include selection as an Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) Emerging Leader, the NYU Dingman Scholarship, the Phi Delta Kappa (PDK) R. Gerald Melton Fellowship, the Elizabeth Youth Theatre Ensemble's Leadership Award, and the State of New Jersey Governor's Teacher Recognition Award.

**Elizabeth's Promise Awards, Inc.**