



Michael Bussman, Head of School at Royal Palm Academy (RPA) in Naples, Florida, brings over 17 years of Catholic education leadership, in addition to 10 years of experience as a Naval Officer and Project Manager in private business.

Since 2021, Michael has led Royal Palm Academy with a strong focus on attracting and retaining the highest quality teachers, enhancing the school's Catholic identity, and positioning RPA for financial strength and long-term sustainability. His leadership has substantially improved strategic fundraising initiatives, setting the stage for RPA to thrive in the 21st century, as outlined in the school's Strategic Plan (2023-2028).

Michael's leadership is defined by his commitment to fostering an environment where students, teachers, and families can truly thrive. Under his guidance, the school has significantly expanded its student enrichment activities and clubs, offering diverse opportunities for students to explore their talents and interests, while nurturing a strong sense of community grounded in Catholic values. His dedication to this mission ensures that Royal Palm Academy continues to be a place where students flourish academically, spiritually, and personally.

Before joining Royal Palm Academy, Michael held senior leadership roles at both Diocesan and Independent Catholic schools, including Principal at St. John Academy and Assistant Head of School and later Head of School at Benedictine College Preparatory. In these roles, Michael was known for his visionary leadership, cultivating strong academic programs, enhancing parent engagement, and driving teacher collaboration. His ability to lead schools through periods of strategic growth, improve curriculum offerings, and strengthen Catholic identity has earned him recognition as a trusted authority in Catholic education.

Michael's extensive leadership experience also includes accreditation work with independent schools in Virginia and Florida, further solidifying his expertise in school management and educational standards. His experience leading accreditation teams and working with school boards has enhanced his strategic oversight at Royal Palm Academy, ensuring the school's continued excellence and alignment with both Diocesan and independent educational standards.

Michael's leadership journey began at the United States Naval Academy, where he was commissioned as a naval officer. During his three years of overseas service, Michael was recognized for his exceptional leadership and was subsequently hand-selected to return to the Naval Academy as a lead Navigation Instructor. After his military career, he earned post-graduate degrees from The Johns Hopkins University Carey School of Business and Marymount University, specializing in Catholic School Leadership. His unique combination of military, business, and educational leadership equips him to lead Royal Palm Academy with visionary strategic oversight.

Michael and his wife Jennifer are active in the Naples community alongside their two daughters, Virginia and Emily. The Bussman family supports Catholic Charities, the CPCI Pregnancy Clinic, and the Southern Florida JDRF, further reflecting their dedication to service and faith.