

PUERTO RICO



Adopted Puerto Rico Core Standards in 2013

Puerto Rico School Demographics

Total #Schools	1,300	
Total #Students	410,950	
Total #Puerto Rican	400,006	97%
Total #Hispanic Non-PR	7,401	2%
Total #White Students	522	>1%
Total #Free and Reduced Lunch	320,979	78%
Total #ELL	2,896	>1%
Total #Students with Disabilities	115,265	28%

Puerto Rico developed its own college- and career-ready standards — the Puerto Rico Core Standards — during the 2012-13 school year. The standards were developed to be similar in rigor and content to the Common Core State Standards. The island began implementing the new standards in its schools during the 2013-14 school year.

Stakeholder Engagement

As the new standards were being developed, the Puerto Rico Department of Education (the Department) began an active campaign to engage stakeholders. The Department leadership purposefully sought out the input of local administrators, teachers, and higher education and other post-secondary stakeholders. They wanted a broad cross section of stakeholders to be active participants in the revision of the island's learning standards in order to build support and ownership as they moved toward the implementation phase.

The move to the new standards required a major change in professional development. During the summer of 2013 the Department began a series of boot camps to begin the process of understanding the new standards. The district has roughly 32,000 teachers and the geography can pose a challenge for large-scale meetings. The Department hosted three-day workshops in various locations to provide initial professional development. They then offered that same three-day boot camp to schools throughout the island during the school year.

Revamping Professional Learning

In Puerto Rico the state education agency is also the local education agency. The Department made a strategic effort to align all of the personnel functions of the district in order to support the implementation of the Puerto Rico Core Standards. This has been done on a local level through coaching and mentoring, which gets to the Department's goal of job-embedded professional development impacting classrooms. In order to ensure alignment locally with professional development, the Department realigned its entire professional learning inventory of offerings. Currently, all offerings, nearly 1,300, are fully aligned with the Puerto Rico Core Standards.

As they began to roll out the new standards across Puerto Rico, the Department also developed a new tool to help ensure the professional learning occurred. They developed a multilevel platform that made it possible for administrators to schedule, track, and assess the instructional supports being provided to educators. In addition, central office staff developed guides to help ensure the standards were being implemented consistently throughout the island's schools. Each guide focuses on specific areas, including differentiated



instruction, high-quality interventions, how to use professional learning communities, and how to align new instruction practices.

The new policies and procedures the Department implemented created the necessary infrastructure and fostered the creation of a culture that would support and sustain implementation of the new standards,” said Harry Valentin Gonzalez, Undersecretary for Academic Affairs.

There was a big change in terms of expectations; they have to change everything. If they are a part of the building of those standards, they will embrace the new methodology.”

“The new policies and procedures the Department implemented created the necessary infrastructure and fostered the creation of a culture that would support and sustain implementation of the new standards,” said Harry Valentin Gonzalez, Undersecretary for Academic Affairs. “This effort was system-wide.”

The biggest challenge for implementing the new standards has been implementing consistent messaging throughout the various districts. The Department has been working to create a change in how instruction is delivered within the island’s classrooms. The new standards and methodology required to implement them are a dramatic shift in how many of the teachers provided instruction previously. The Department has been working to emphasize to the field that the new standards create competence in teachers and strengthen the academic leadership at the school level.

Valentin says the transition has been mostly smooth and credits that to bringing teachers into the process early and including them in the development of the standards.

“The teacher has to be part of the process; they have to be a part of building the standards.



PUERTO RICO- DISTRICT



Santa Isabel School District

Santa Isabel District

Urban/Rural

K-12

63 Schools

18,788 Students

55% Free and Reduced Lunch

The Santa Isabel School District on Puerto Rico's southern coast began implementing the new Puerto Rico Core Standards in the 2014-15 school year. The local district worked with the Puerto Rico Department of Education (the Department) to provide training to its teachers in order to implement the new college- and career-ready standards. They sent teachers to the Department's initial boot camp, and those teachers in turn came back to the local district and worked with colleagues to get a better understanding of how instruction would be impacted.

Teachers continue to receive technical assistance from content area coaches, providing support in planning and assessment. The job-embedded professional learning helps to sustain the move to the new standards as teachers work together with mentors and coaches to develop new teaching techniques and strategies. They are focusing on how to better implement individualized learning within the classrooms.

"Our goal is to continue providing the tools our educators need and continue updating their training with the most accurate and modern pedagogical preparations so that our students

can continue benefiting in a positive way," said Victor Negrón Colón, Ayudante Especial in the Santa Isabel School District.

To assist local districts in implementing the new standards and to ensure continuity throughout schools on the island, the Department created curricular maps. In Santa Isabel they use the maps to set the curriculum of each class and every grade level in the district's 10 schools. It created a common language that the teachers can use as they collaborate to improve their own instructional approaches. The curriculum maps helped to structure student learning to assure that similar skills are being taught at each grade level. Students can move from school to school or district to district on the island, creating continuity throughout the system. The maps help district leaders align their curriculum vertically and horizontally.

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One of the biggest challenges the district faced was changing students' attitudes. Negrón says that prior to implementing the college- and career-ready standards many students didn't think about their future after graduating from high school. Now, teachers have been able to expand student interests in post-secondary work and the variety of options available to them, whether college, a trade school, or joining the workforce.

"Their views toward the future have changed and we are actually seeing an increase in the amount of students taking the College Board tests," said



Negron. “We have modernized our educational system based on students’ genuine interests, strengthening and broadening their individual skills and capacities.”

As the district looked to implement the new Puerto Rico Core Standards they looked outside of their normal school communities for help. They engaged outside stakeholders, seeking their input to enrich the curriculum and meet local student and community needs. The connections created during that time continue even today as they work with other government agencies, industries, and professionals in a variety of fields. The exposure to new fields has created additional career opportunities for the students of Santa Isabel. They can see what professional opportunities are available to them and work with teachers to tailor their instruction to meet their skills and interests.

In Santa Isabel, the standards are having a positive impact on the district. Administrators credit them with helping to better integrate students into the workforce and believe they are improving the district’s effectiveness in forming future leaders for Puerto Rico’s tomorrow.

“Classrooms have become learning centers of opportunities and development of skills,” said Negron.

The adoption of the new college- and career-ready standards and subsequent professional development from the Department has impacted classroom instruction in a positive way. The instructional strategies that are now being employed are increasing student knowledge. Traditional teaching methods that have been the norm on the island for years have shifted to a more modern and technology-driven focus, making the teacher more of a facilitator and less of a lecturer.

“Classrooms have become learning centers of opportunities and development of skills,” said Negron. “Students are the center and core of educational instruction.”

