



El Cambio Correcto: A Better Way for Puerto Rico's Schools

The children and families of our island deserve schools that support growth and success, and strengthening our public education system is essential to rebuilding and revitalizing Puerto Rico. The government is looking for a quick fix to transform and improve a complex system that is failing many students. There is no quick fix; there are evidence-based practices we know work. And it starts with a process of reflection informed by meaningful dialogue among stakeholders.

GOVERNOR'S PROPOSAL

- ✗ Fails to fix the ailing system; relies on debunked and failed quick-fix idea that introducing market-based competition will improve schools
- ✗ Fails to address the needs of students or demonstrate understanding of the whole child
- ✗ Creates increased uncertainty, unnecessary bureaucracy and harmful competition for resources
- ✗ Takes needed funds and resources from neighborhood public schools
- ✗ Treats schools as a collection of goods and services to be consumed
- ✗ Closes schools indiscriminately
- ✗ Leaves out stakeholders through unilateral decision-making
- ✗ Fails to address future workforce needs

EL CAMBIO CORRECTO

- ✓ Use educationally sound, evidence-based whole-school strategies we know work; learn from systems that have improved their schools
- ✓ Use whole-school strategies to address social, health and emotional needs of students
- ✓ Create schools that serve as community hubs, stabilizing forces and beacons for other schools
- ✓ Focus on fair and equitable distribution of resources needed for teaching and learning
- ✓ Schools serve as essential hubs of their communities
- ✓ Restructuring decisions center on student well-being and learning
- ✓ Meaningful collaboration with students, teachers, parents, administrators and community stakeholders
- ✓ Work with local employers to ensure students and adults acquire skills needed to work on the island

However, savings must come from policies that do not damage a drowning system by resting on the impoverishment of students through policies that avoid spending on education, especially in educational materials. An educated population is crucial to retain population, increase the productivity of the workforce and attract private investment. —2016 Puerto Rico Fiscal Plan

The Asociación de Maestros de Puerto Rico proposes the Puerto Rican government develop a transformation zone for schools that will demonstrate a viable pathway forward for school improvement in communities across Puerto Rico, and serve as a model of what the government should be investing in.

Research indicates transformational change is possible with coherent, orchestrated action across five essential supports: a coherent instructional guidance system; professional capacity; strong parent-community-school ties; student-centered learning climate; and leadership that drives change.

To improve this network of schools, a holistic, needs- and asset-based approach will be taken that relies on collaborative efforts; community and student engagement; and a theory of action based on the belief that all students should be taught to high standards and all teachers need proper support to teach them. Variations of this approach can be found in the Chancellor's District in New York City and the Miami-Dade Transformation Zones in Florida.

The Puerto Rico transformation zone schools will:

Be student-centered and designed through a process of reflection and engagement with students, families and community. Strong ties between school and community will include meaningful roles for students and stakeholders in advocacy and decision-making.

Increase the professional capacity of educators through targeted, intensive, practical professional development and networked learning design available in each region. This structure will recognize teachers as the professionals they are, building capacity and fostering meaningful collaboration within and among schools to promote powerful learning. As local training capacity is built, these centers may be able to serve other surrounding schools in the region.

Use the schools as the hub to support the physical, social and emotional needs of students, families and the surrounding community. Community schools go beyond the classroom by working with community partners to provide resources and services for everyone in the community. These schools can offer space for various services, depending on local needs, such as a community medical clinic, support for mental health, nutritional services, substance abuse prevention, adult education classes, and career and technical education. Students who attend schools where they receive such services, supports and enrichments have improved academic performance as well as increased motivation and engagement in learning.

Use high-leverage, evidence-based practices to improve teaching and learning. Based on an individual school's needs and capacity, the school will employ practices such as culturally responsive instruction, extended learning opportunities, career and technical education, formation of a curriculum and standards committee, social and emotional learning, flexible schedules, well-rounded instruction and labor-management collaboration.

Early support for AMPR's education plan

"I am pleased to offer my wholehearted endorsement for the revitalization educational plan put forward by Ms. Diaz Rivera. The plan is based upon sound research and a large body of evidence of what is needed to improve schools serving economically disadvantaged students. Given the traumatic events in Puerto Rico since the hurricanes of 2017, and the ongoing effects of the devastation wrought by the natural disaster and the lackluster response by the federal government to the crises afflicting U.S. citizens there, implementation of this plan not only would benefit the academic needs of Puerto Rican children, it would also begin to provide the social supports and stability that are so desperately needed to promote their stability and well-being."

—Pedro Noguera, Distinguished Professor of Education, UCLA Graduate School of Education, and co-author of *Creating the Opportunity to Learn: Moving from Research to Practice to Close the Achievement Gap* and co-editor of *Unfinished Business: Closing the Racial Achievement Gap in Our Nation's Schools*.



"The [Asociación de Maestros de Puerto Rico] plan uses a solid, research-based strategy that promises to transform public education in Puerto Rico. Across the United States, school districts have relied on this template to build strong systems that provide a solid education for their students, and the model makes great sense for Puerto Rico as well."

—David L. Kirp, James D. Marver Professor, Goldman School of Public Policy, University of California at Berkeley, and author of *Improbable Schools: The Rebirth of a Great American School System and a Strategy for America's Schools*.



"The children of Puerto Rico will be well-served by transformation zones in which schools anchor local communities. Key to the success of these schools will be the teachers. As professional agents of change, they will collaborate with families to ensure that all children have a successful education."

—Susan Moore Johnson, Jerome T. Murphy Research Professor, Harvard Graduate School of Education and author of *Finders and Keepers: Helping New Teachers Survive and Thrive in Our Schools* and *Teachers at Work: Achieving Success in Our Schools*.



"A prerequisite condition for any quality public education system is equitable and adequate, sustainable public financing. Additionally, moving forward, Puerto Rico's government must exercise responsible stewardship for that financing (and related capital assets) and not simply relinquish that responsibility (or assets) to non-government providers, which have increasingly revealed their preferences for pursuing financial self-interest over the public good and provision of quality, truly public schooling in many U.S. states."

—Bruce Baker, Professor of Education Finance and Policy, Rutgers Graduate School of Education and author of *Mind the Gap: 20 Years of Progress and Retrenchment in School Funding and Achievement Gaps*.