

## THE OPPORTUNITY PROJECT

2022 PROBLEM STATEMENT

# Creating Opportunities for Parent/Caregiver Engagement in Puerto Rico Schools

Puerto Rico Department of Education

---

**The Challenge:** Develop potential new structures for parents and/or caregivers to meaningfully engage in Puerto Rico's unique education system, providing the island's schools a mechanism of accountability.

**EXECUTIVE CHAMPION:**

Mrs. Andrea P. Irizarry, Director of Family and Community Engagement, Puerto Rico Department of Education

**The Problem:** Following two natural disasters and a global pandemic, the approximately 260,000 students in Puerto Rico who are part of the public school system now more than ever need their fiercest advocates, their parents or caregivers, to ensure they are receiving a high-quality education. This is particularly true given that students in Puerto Rico currently perform lower than those in all 50 states on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Unfortunately, Puerto Rico's education system lacks a public governance structure – such as boards of education and parent advisory groups – that allows for public accountability. This prevents families and caregivers from engaging with school leadership in a meaningful way, particularly when recourse is needed for students who are not receiving the services they are entitled to. In contrast, other jurisdictions have a variety of governance structures such as state boards of education, local boards of education, or parent advisory groups like PTAs or PTOs, to name a few, that allow for reciprocal communication and mechanisms for accountability.

**The Opportunity:** The promise of a high-quality education cannot be realized without effective mechanisms in place for parents or caregivers to appropriately and publicly advocate for their children and ensure system accountability. Ample research demonstrates that parent engagement in schools is closely linked to better student behavior, higher academic achievement, and enhanced social skills. In particular, the relationship between parents and schools reinforces children's health and learning in multiple settings—at home, in school, in out-of-school programs, and in the community. Thus it is critical to meaningfully engage the over 200,000 families of children ages 9-17 in the Puerto Rico education system.

**VISION FOR SPRINT OUTCOMES:** Sprint participants develop potential governance structures similar to those of other State Education Agencies (SEAs) or Local Education Agencies (LEAs) that activate the public, empower families, and rebuild trust in the education system. The outcomes of this sprint will be primarily policy or programmatic ones, which may or may not include a technology or digital component.

**TARGET END USERS:** Parents, caregivers, students, teachers, school administrators, and other local education stakeholders in Puerto Rico

## RELATED DATA SETS

- ↳ [Common Core Data](#): Demographic information including: enrollment, race/ethnicity, gender, etc.
- ↳ [EDE Performance Data](#): Graduation rates, math/science/reading & language arts participation/proficiency.
- ↳ [Title I Funding Data](#): Schools that receive Title I Funds & School Improvement Funds.
- ↳ [Title I Part A Participation Rates](#): Participation in Title I programs.
- ↳ [Homeless and Chronic Absenteeism](#): Homeless students and those chronically absent.
- ↳ [Staffing Data](#): Teachers by certificate status
- ↳ [IDEA Special Education Files](#): Students served by IDEA

## EXAMPLES OF GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES IN VARIOUS JURISDICTIONS:

- ↳ [New York City's Family and Community Empowerment \(FACE\) Team](#)
- ↳ [Chicago Board of Education](#) (appointed)
- ↳ [Clark County School District Board of Trustees](#) (elected)

## LEAD POINT OF CONTACTS

- ↳ Chris Soto, Senior Advisor, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Education
- ↳ Loredana Valtierra, Special Assistant, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Education
- ↳ Kevin Lima, Special Assistant, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Education