

Reading Policy and Practice in Puerto Rico: Challenges and Opportunities

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About Flamboyant Foundation



- A private family foundation with offices in Puerto Rico and Washington, DC
- *General focus in both locations:* improving educational outcomes for children
- *Specific focus since 2014 in PR:* reading at grade level by 3rd grade



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Puerto Rico Department of Education (PRDE)

SCALE

- 3rd largest in the U.S.
- 410,950 students
- 1,386 schools

ECONOMIC ROLE

- biggest slice of PR budget
- 51,590 employees

RESOURCES

- 37% of budget comes from US Federal Government
- 99% schools are Title I



Puerto Rico Literacy Numbers

PRUEBAS PUERTORRIQUEÑAS DE APROVECHAMIENTO ACADÉMICO 2015

Spanish all grades: 46%

Spanish 3rd grade: 57%

PISA 2012 (Research Study)

Average Reading Literacy Score: 404
(Lower than 53 out of 65 education systems)



A Rapid Ethnography of PRDE Top Performing Schools

- 7 schools classified as high performing visited in the San Juan Region
- 6 directors interviewed
- 20 classrooms observed
- 20 teachers interviewed
- 86 school staff members surveyed



Strengths of the Schools We Visited

- Positive and safe environments
- Committed staff
- Positive and kind disposition of teachers
- Sound classroom management
- Sound use of learning time
- Regular practice of read-alouds



Challenges in the Schools We Visited

- Scarcity of instructional materials and resources
- General lack of awareness of the importance and complexity of early literacy
- Dearth of knowledge of research-based practices for reading instruction
- Gaps in the assessment and tracking of student progress in reading



Existing Reading Assessments

- Standardized Tests
- Diagnostic Tests K-3
- First grade reading test
- Curriculum performance tasks



State Standardized Tests


- Annual summative evaluations
- 3rd-8th grades and 11th grade
- Created by Pearson Education
- Measures reading comprehension and writing



- Being an accountability indicator, it offers limited information about student progress in reading



Diagnostic Tests K-3

- Created in-house by PRDE
 - Measures growth on a small selection of standards
 - Administered at the beginning and end of the year
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- Tests only measure the most basic level of competency in each area
 - Teachers report that they are of very little use in their classrooms

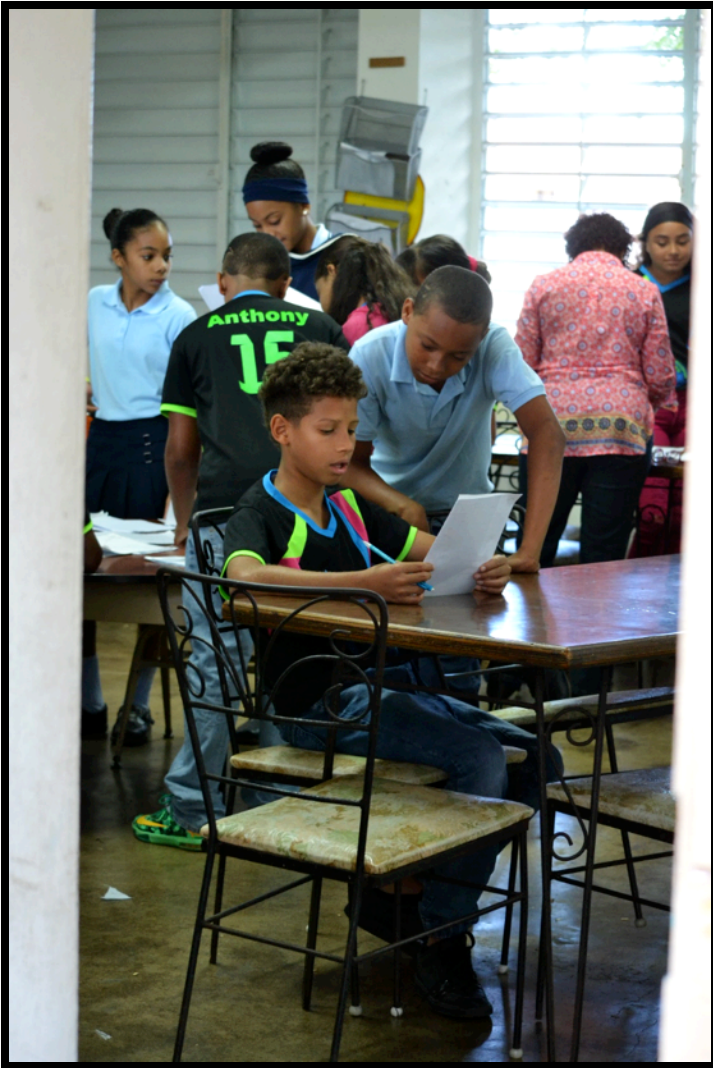


First Grade Reading Test



- Created in-house by PRDE
- Measures letter recognition, decoding, calligraphy, fluency, and reading comprehension
- Administered individually in conference
- Implementation has proved challenging





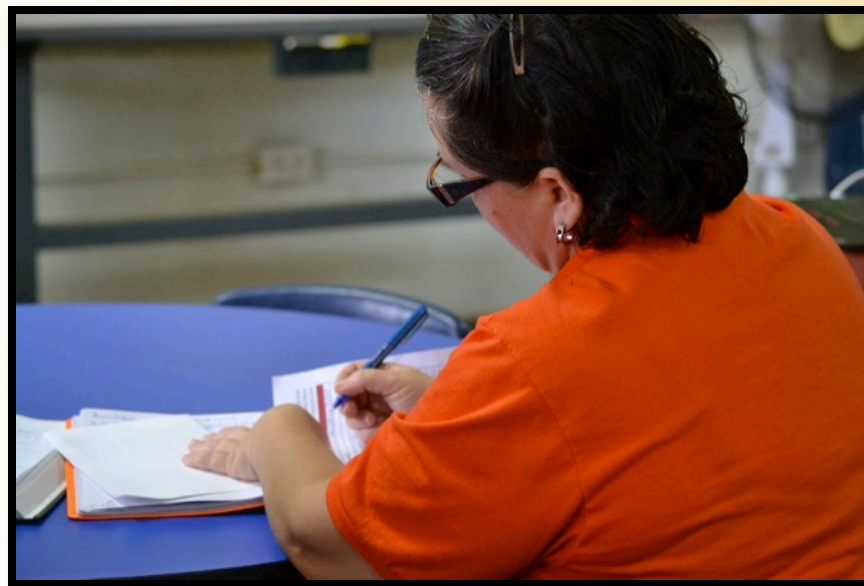
Curriculum Performance Tasks

- Classroom assessment tools
- Part of New Common-Core Aligned Curriculum Guides
- Administered quarterly (at teachers' discretion)
- While many tasks are straightforward and meaningful, on the whole there are inconsistencies and gaps that limit their systematic use as formative assessment



Next steps for Flamboyant Foundation

- Deepen our understanding of strengths, needs, and opportunities for early literacy in Puerto Rico
- Develop instructional materials for reading comprehension
- Launch professional development program for teachers on reading comprehension
- Partner with different sectors nationally and internationally to improve early literacy outcomes



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Thank you!



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