



# IMPACT REPORT 2025



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# A Note from the President and CEO

## Education Innovation as an Engine to Fuel Puerto Rico Economic and Community Advancement

Over the past several years, LEAP Social Enterprise has consistently demonstrated what is possible when bold vision, community partnership and a shared commitment to educational equity come together. What began as an ambitious idea, to extend LEAP's comprehensive community-centered education model from Camden to Puerto Rico, has manifested into an engine for student success, workforce development and long-term economic opportunity across the Island.

When I first shared my intention to bring the LEAP model to Puerto Rico, there was cautious hesitation. The Island's education system faces deep structural challenges that are driven by economic hardships, demographic shifts and longstanding injustices. Still, from the beginning, I believed that Puerto Rico's students, families and communities deserved access to the same high-quality, future-focused education that has been transforming outcomes for generations of LEAP students in New Jersey.

Today, LEAP schools in San Juan, Carolina, Cupey, Isabela, Mayaguez and Bayamón are open, thriving and acting as hubs of opportunity within their respective communities. These schools offer more than academics; they are centers of connection that integrate ambitious academics, college and career pathways, family engagement and community connections. More schools in communities from other municipalities such as Ponce, Dorado, Yauco and Trujillo Alto are on the horizon.

In 2025, LEAP marked a historic milestone by celebrating the first graduating class of LEAP STEAM + E Academy in San Juan. These graduates embody the promise of intentional investment into Puerto Rico's K-12 and college pipeline. Seven members of this inaugural class are now studying at Rutgers-Camden, pursuing their degrees on the U.S. mainland and demonstrating strong academic performance. When they graduate, build meaningful careers, leave their mark on the world, eventually return home, we know that these experiences and life lessons they gained will strengthen their home communities. Their success affirms what I've long known- when students are supported early, challenged academically, and given opportunities, they rise to the occasion.



That momentum is growing, as an additional 24 LEAP students from Puerto Rico have received early admission to Rutgers-Camden. This brings the number of students that have been inducted into the Alfredo & Gloria Bonilla Santiago Endowed Scholarship Program to nearly 850 students. This scholarship opens doors to Rutgers campuses for students who demonstrate academic excellence and commitment.

These outcomes result from LEAP's design. Every LEAP campus includes a College Access Center that connects academic progress to long-term collegiate goals, even from the earliest grades. Students and families are taught how daily learning contributes to college readiness. High school students, starting as early as Grade 10, engage with college coursework and early exposure to careers in STEM and other fields. This level of rigor is intentional because the stakes for students and families in Puerto Rico are too high to accept anything less.

An educated population is essential to sustainable economic growth on the Island, as businesses and nonprofits invest where talent is ready. By improving the education pipeline, LEAP is helping to build the human capital necessary for Puerto Rico's long-term economic and community advancement.

As LEAP grows in Puerto Rico, we remain equally committed to the communities we serve in New Jersey. In Camden, we achieved 100 percent graduation and college placement for the 21st consecutive year and launched the first cohort of nursing students through LEAP Early College with Rutgers-Camden.

Across Puerto Rico and New Jersey, our mission remains the same: to advance academic excellence, improve communities and create pathways out of poverty toward long-term economic freedom. When these goals are achieved, the impact extends beyond individual lives and ignites lasting change that fuels progress across the Island.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gloria Bonilla-Santiago".

Gloria Bonilla-Santiago, Ph.D.  
Rutgers Board of Governors Distinguished Service Professor  
President and CEO of LEAP Social Enterprise, Inc.

# Building an Ecosystem of Community Hubs for Success



Dr. Bonilla-Santiago meeting with the Governor of Puerto Rico Jennifer Gonzalez (top left), and former Governor Sila Calderon with Higher Education Leaders at high school graduation (top right). Dr. Bonilla-Santiago addresses Isabela community members (bottom)

# Growing and Sustaining Human and Social Capital

Expanding high-quality public charter schools takes more than a solid academic plan; it requires careful financial strategy, creative partnerships, and a deep, long-term commitment to revitalizing local communities. For more than twenty years, LEAP Academy in Camden, New Jersey, and now LEAP Social Enterprise in Puerto Rico, have shown that smart, deliberate growth not only strengthens schools but also transforms the neighborhoods they serve.

From the outset, LEAP's approach to growth has been grounded in the belief that schools are community anchors, supporting students, faculty and neighbors alike. Expansion has enabled LEAP to open new campuses and embed them within neighborhoods. This supports families, creates professional opportunities, develops local leadership and builds pathways to college and careers.

Developing quality infrastructure for schools within a community is crucial for fostering educational excellence and long-term growth. It provides a safe and conducive learning environment, enabling students to thrive academically and socially. It also ensures access to modern facilities and resources, such as technology-equipped classrooms and well-maintained libraries, which enhance teaching and learning experiences. Further, investing in school infrastructure also attracts and retains talented educators, improving overall educational outcomes.

This imperative frames LEAP Social Enterprise's (LSE) approach to facilities development by positioning schools as the apex of profound, broad-based community development. In this model, school are highly visible, community-owned, and deeply rooted in place.



LEAP Students interacting with the International Chamber Orchestra of Puerto Rico, led by Emilio Colón and Cara Colón



Students celebrating the ribbon ceremony of the Mayagüez School, marking the opening of a new community learning space.



Dr. Santiago and Mayor of Isabela Ricky Méndez



Grand Opening at the New School in Cupey, showcasing its state of the art facilities and reflecting LSE's commitment to high quality, student centered learning environments.

## Engaging in strategic planning through Local Partnerships and Capitalizing on Financing Tools

Building on Camden LEAP Academy's experience, LEAP Social Enterprise adopted a similar financing strategy across Puerto Rico by grounding itself in local partnerships and asset revitalization.

- **Working with Puerto Rico Mayors** - LEAP Social Enterprise collaborates directly with mayors to identify underutilized municipal buildings, often former school properties to potentially be repurposed for new LEAP campuses. This approach has shaped the development of schools in Mayagüez, Carolina, and Isabela. LSE acquired these buildings at no cost and focused exclusively on infrastructure improvements. By turning dormant public assets into active school campuses, LSE positions its LEAP facilities as neighborhood hubs that serve students, families, and communities.

In partnership with municipal leadership, Mayor Ricky Méndez meets with Dr. Gloria Bonilla-Santiago to plan the future Isabela campus as a community-anchored educational hub.

- **National Financing Tools** - LEAP Social Enterprise has secured support from New Markets Tax Credits. It works with the National Charter School Lending Group 22Beacon. There are ongoing discussions about developing a bond-financing approach similar to those that supported LEAP Academy's growth in Camden.

## Investing in Human Capital as a Growth Strategy

Financial sustainability at LEAP closely aligns with ongoing investment in people. As the organization expands its footprint, LEAP creates professional opportunities across multiple areas. This includes instruction, special education, social work, nursing, counseling, and school operations, which generates stable, mission-driven job opportunities rooted in local communities.

LEAP offers competitive compensation and year-round professional development. This helps attract and retain talent where educator shortages are a significant challenge. Ongoing professional development in bilingual education, special education compliance, social-emotional learning, and instructional leadership ensures consistent quality across

campuses while intentionally building internal leadership pipelines. Through structured onboarding, coaching, and evaluation systems, LEAP develops educators not only to teach effectively, but to lead schools over time. This sustained investment in human capital strengthens organizational continuity, reduces turnover, and builds deep local expertise.

## Strengthening Social Capital Through Partnership

The addition of new schools has further deepened LEAP's community impact by strengthening relationships among families, schools, and community partners. Across campuses, thousands of parents have participated in workshops, volunteer opportunities, leadership initiatives, and school-based programming. Through these experiences, families are empowered as active partners in their children's education and contributors to vibrant school communities.

These relationships extend beyond individual campuses. LEAP schools function as community-connected spaces that link families to external resources and support services. Ongoing collaboration among educators, families, and community partners builds durable networks of trust, shared responsibility, and collective investment in student success.

## A Roadmap for Sustainable Expansion

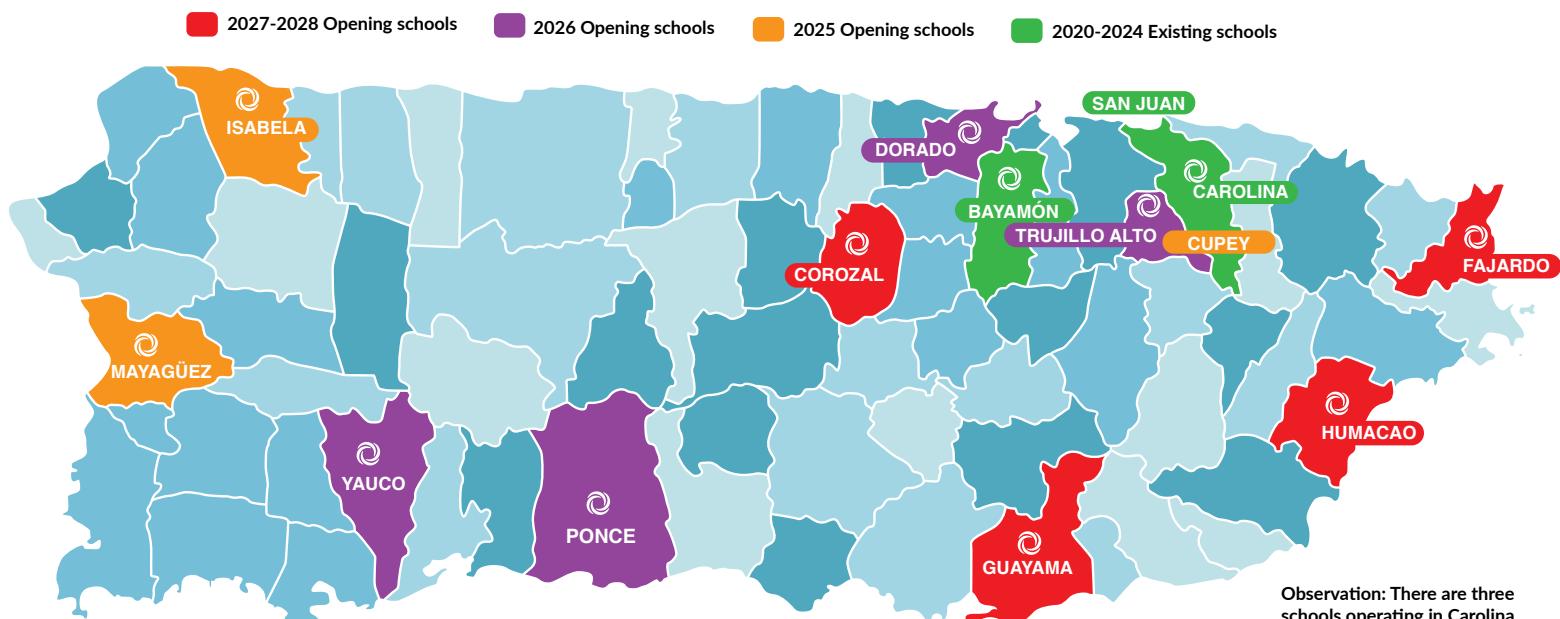
LSE's experience operating schools in Camden and across Puerto Rico provides a clear, transferable roadmap



Nicholas Prouty, Founder and CEO of Putnam Bridge, a firm active in Puerto Rico, visits the Carolina Schools to learn about the LEAP model pledging to support the Rutgers Alfredo and Gloria Bonilla Santiago Scholarship Fund.

for charter and Alianza school growth. At the core of this approach is a fundamental shift in how schools are conceived; a LEAP school is more than a building for instruction—it is a community hub that serves stakeholders far beyond the walls of the classroom.

Across multiple municipalities including San Juan, Carolina, Bayamón, Cupey, Dorado, Fajardo, Humacao, Guayama, Corozal, Yauco, Mayagüez, Isabela, and Trujillo Alto, LEAP has demonstrated how intentional school development can anchor community revitalization and long-term educational success.





LEAP events at the Isabela and Carolina campuses, where families and community members come together to celebrate, connect, and support student achievement.



## Community and Family Partnership: *Building Systems for Shared Success*

LEAP advances student success through both classroom instruction and its the Centers of Excellence, which integrate academic, social-emotional, family, and community supports into a cohesive system. Operating as community-anchored platforms, LEAP schools align rigorous instruction with family engagement, workforce development, and specialized student services to strengthen outcomes across campuses. Over the past year, LEAP has expanded Family Support Services, Workforce Development initiatives, Social and Emotional Learning, and Special Education programming, reinforcing community stability and contributing to long-term social and economic advancement across Puerto Rico.

For students, the Centers of Excellence deliver enriched academic experiences, targeted interventions,

and exposure to instructional models that promote achievement, leadership, and college and career readiness. For families, these centers provide coordinated access to wraparound supports that reduce barriers to learning and strengthen stability at home. By addressing needs related to health access, employment pathways, and family well-being, LEAP schools function as trusted neighborhood resources that support both educational success and household resilience.

Family engagement is central to this model. Through structured opportunities for participation and leadership, the Centers of Excellence build navigational capital, agency, and intergenerational trust. Parent volunteers contributed thousands of hours across campuses, reflecting strong community investment in schools and reinforcing families' roles

as partners in shaping healthy, high-functioning learning environments. At the community level, the Centers of Excellence serve as conveners that connect schools with universities, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and private-sector partners. These collaborations support workforce development, strengthen local networks, and align educational pathways with regional economic opportunities. Through applied research, data-informed planning, and continuous evaluation, LEAP documents effective practices, informs policy, and scales approaches that advance community revitalization, economic mobility, and educational equity. Together, these efforts position the Centers of Excellence as a replicable model for public Alianza and charter schools across Puerto Rico.

## Strengthening Family Support and Community Engagement

This community-hub approach is most clearly reflected in the work of LEAP's Family Support Services Center. This year, the Family Support Services Center achieved key milestones:

- collaborating on hiring school social workers and community ambassadors for each school;
- providing parent training;
- participating in student enrollment; parent-led orientations;
- and guiding new educators to align with the Center's integrated model.

The Center also launched weekly cross-disciplinary meetings among social work, psychology, nursing, and community engagement teams to ensure timely support for students and families. As a result of this coordinated infrastructure, family participation and engagement expanded significantly across campuses.

This year, about 5,000 parents received online and in-person training on topics of interest. The seminars are providing families with the information needed to self-regulate, build confidence, develop work-related skills, and foster autonomy. In addition to group-based programming, more than 125 families received individualized support through coordinated interventions and referrals related to mental health, housing, employment, and social services. Moreover, 10 social workers continued as part of the LSE team, targeting training in socio-emotional development, special education procedures, external agency referrals, and intervention planning, equipping them to respond to both new and ongoing student cases.

## Celebrating Inclusion Through Special Education Month

The first semester of the academic year 2025-2026 concluded with a multi-campus wide celebration of Special Education Month in November. LEAP campuses hosted activities that promoted inclusion and awareness for diverse learners. The Secretary of Education invited LEAP to participate in the department's opening ceremony for the month, a testament to LEAP's growing leadership and commitment to high-quality special education services in Puerto Rico.

Community ambassadors also engaged in training focused on building annual work plans, coordinating parent volunteers, identifying external resources, and supporting schools during daily arrival and dismissal efforts. Further, efforts included the launch of the Institute of Parent Ambassadors, which developed new parent leaders across campuses to strengthen school-family collaboration and create sustainable systems for long-term community engagement. These roles formalize pathways for parent leadership and civic participation within school communities.

## Scaling Inclusive Support in a Changing Educational Landscape

Alongside family engagement, inclusive academic support, particularly in special education, remains a central pillar of LEAP's community impact. Nationally, special education services continue to expand, with 7.5 million U.S. students receiving services in 2022-23. This growth reflects an increased need in parental awareness, expanded diagnostic categories such as autism and ADHD, and evolving legal mandates under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Simultaneously, this rising demand has strained school systems nationwide, contributing to significant shortages of qualified special education teachers and related service providers.

LEAP is experiencing these trends firsthand. Enrollment of students with disabilities has increased across campuses, underscoring the urgency of strengthening special education infrastructure and capacity. In response, LEAP has intensified its investment in inclusive systems by prioritizing targeted staffing, expanding professional development, and deepening collaboration among educators, specialists, families, and community partners. This approach centers on inclusion, early identification, and data-informed interventions to ensure students can access rigorous instruction with the individualized supports they need to succeed.

Through sustained investment in special education capacity, LEAP aims not only to meet growing demand but to ensure that every student is fully included in the college- and career-readiness pipeline. This work reflects LEAP's broader mission: providing equitable, comprehensive support that recognizes diverse learners as assets and positions all students, regardless of ability, for long-term success.



Project-based learning initiatives that engage diverse stakeholders across multiple campuses, fostering collaboration, innovation, and real-world problem-solving.

This year, LEAP strengthened special education services across all schools by hiring qualified district-level leaders and expanding Child Study Teams with social workers and psychologists to support student needs holistically. In fall 2025, the Special Education team worked closely with school-based staff to reinforce equity, compliance, and timely service delivery. Key accomplishments included completing and submitting Child Count validation to the Puerto Rico Department of Education, implementing weekly compliance monitoring, and continuing recruitment efforts for special education teachers and instructional support staff.

Special Education teams partnered with school staff to review and update Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), ensuring student accommodations were accurately reflected in instructional plans. Collaboration with Academic Directors, counselors, and socio-emotional staff strengthened intervention structures and improved coordination for students needing additional support.

## Elevating Instructional Leadership and Advancing Dual-Language Excellence

Sustaining inclusive, community-centered schools ultimately depends on the strength of the educators who lead them. This is why at the core of LEAP's mission to transform educational outcomes is a deep commitment to its educators. Across the network's eight campuses, strategic investments in professional development and instructional coaching are helping to cultivate a culture of continuous

improvement, instructional excellence, and dual-language innovation. These efforts recognize that strong schools begin with strong teachers. Building human capital is essential to sustaining long-term impact.

LEAP continues to build a network-wide professional development initiative with a clear focus: equipping teachers, support staff, and instructional leaders with the tools they need to drive high-quality, equitable instruction. In September, leaders delivered training on Responsive Classroom practices and the SAVVAS curriculum to help educators prepare for the 2025–2026 school year. These sessions emphasized strategies to improve classroom literacy and math instruction, build inclusive classroom communities, strengthen routines, and embed social-emotional learning (SEL) into daily teaching.

Additionally, staff from across LEAP's Centers of Excellence including Family Support, College Access, Early College, Nursing, and Special Education, joined teachers and instructional leaders in a series of workshops to reinforce the LEAP instructional model and clarify evaluation systems. Concurrently, schools in Puerto Rico implemented and analyzed results from CRECE PR, an educational assessment platform that supports early diagnostics in literacy and numeracy. Professional development sessions guided educators as they analyzed student data, aligned lesson plans with CRECE standards, and applied strategies to support foundational skills such as reading comprehension and mathematical problem-solving.



Students in a model classroom during a presentation about NASA, learning about space exploration, science, and innovation.

Another key focus area in 2025 was strengthening dual-language and biliteracy instruction, a hallmark of the LEAP academic model. Teachers led sessions designed to deepen students' understanding of both English and Spanish, explore the linguistic relationships between the two and support academic development in both languages. Additional training emphasized integrating literacy into Project-Based Learning (PBL), giving educators tools to design meaningful, standards-aligned projects that reinforce reading, writing, and real-world application.

Educators also received foundational training in Response to Intervention and Instruction (RTI) a system that supports early identification of academic needs, differentiated instruction, and ongoing progress monitoring. These frameworks are essential for supporting the diverse learning profiles of students across the network and ensuring no learner falls through the cracks.

Together, these targeted professional development investments are strengthening the collective capacity of the LEAP network. By empowering educators with research-based strategies, responsive practices and a deep understanding of dual-language pedagogy, LEAP is building a workforce prepared not just to teach, but to lead transformative change in the classroom and beyond.

Beyond strengthening instructional practice, LEAP's approach intentionally builds long-term leadership capacity within schools. Through targeted coaching, mentorship, and leadership development sessions, educators are being prepared not only to lead classrooms but to also lead

schools. This includes training in peer coaching, data-driven instruction, team facilitation and school-wide instructional strategy. By investing in internal talent, LEAP ensures that its leadership culture is rooted in the same values and practices that shape its classrooms.

This career pathway approach makes the LEAP network more than a place to teach, it's a place to grow. By creating clear opportunities for advancement and leadership, LEAP is working to retain top talent, reduce turnover, and build a self-sustaining pipeline of instructional leaders. It is a strategic model that supports both teacher empowerment and organizational sustainability by laying the foundation for a network where excellence is cultivated, recognized, and led from within.

As part of its ongoing commitment to professional growth and knowledge-sharing, LEAP will host an educator conference in early 2026, open to all teachers within the LEAP network and to educators from outside schools and districts. This event will serve as a dynamic space for collaboration, showcasing LEAP's instructional practices, leadership development models, and dual-language strategies. Workshops, keynote sessions, and peer-led seminars will focus on high-impact teaching, culturally responsive pedagogy, and STEAM + E education innovations. By opening its doors to the broader education community, LEAP is not only investing in its own educators, but also contributing to a wider movement to elevate public education through shared learning and professional excellence.

# Amplifying Student Outcomes



Students celebrating their acceptance letters from Rutgers-Camden (top left). Early College LEAP students visiting the Admissions Office at Sagrado Corazón University (top right). Dr. Santiago signing an agreement with the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus (bottom left). Dr. Santiago with Felix Rodriguez-Fernandez and a student (bottom right).



Dr. Santiag meeting Secretary of Education Eliezer Ramos Parés and Felix Rodriguez-Fernandez

## ***The Education Imperative: Transforming Puerto Rico's Education System is a Priority***

Education in Puerto Rico operates within a unique political and administrative relationship with the United States, which profoundly shapes how the island's public-school system is funded, regulated, and evaluated. As an unincorporated U.S. territory, Puerto Rico must comply with federal education laws, including ESSA, IDEA, and civil rights mandates, while also navigating structural limitations in how federal funds are allocated and accessed.

The Puerto Rico Department of Education (PRDE) functions as both a statewide agency and a single, centralized school district, making it one of the largest and most complex education systems under U.S. jurisdiction. Despite this, Puerto Rico often receives unequal treatment in funding formulas or program eligibility compared to states, while still being held to identical compliance expectations. This dynamic creates tension; Puerto Rico is integrated into the U.S. education framework but does not always receive the financial or administrative support necessary to meet federal expectations.

Puerto Rico's education system also faces significant demographic and socioeconomic challenges that impact

student outcomes. The island's population has shifted notably due to economic hardship and migration patterns, leading to fewer school-age children and changing community needs. Simultaneously, a large majority of public-school students, about 76%, come from economically disadvantaged homes, which is strongly linked to poorer academic performance and limited access to educational resources.

Poor infrastructure challenges further strain the system. Many school buildings suffer from long-term disrepair, outdated facilities, and damage from hurricanes and earthquakes. Despite federal investments, progress toward rebuilding has been uneven, and many schools continue to operate under conditions that undermine safety and instructional quality.

Natural disasters and systemic disruptions, such as Hurricanes Maria and Fiona, the 2020 earthquakes, the economic crisis, and COVID-19, have had lasting effects on Puerto Rico's educational landscape. These events repeatedly interrupted learning and contributed to academic regression, uneven instructional continuity, and psychosocial

stress among students and educators. The centralized structure of the PRDE often slows recovery efforts and limits school-level flexibility during crises.

Human-capital challenges present another major hurdle. Puerto Rico has an aging teacher workforce, with nearly 14,000 educators projected to retire within five years. Combined with low salaries and opportunities for higher pay on the U.S. mainland, the island faces persistent teacher shortages, particularly in high-need fields such as STEM and English. These shortages constrain curriculum innovation, limit advanced coursework offerings, and reduce access to specialized support services.

Higher education reflects many of the same pressures. Universities and colleges on the island have confronted substantial budget cuts, declining enrollment, and reduced public investment. As more young adults leave Puerto Rico to pursue opportunities elsewhere, the postsecondary sector risks losing research capacity and its ability to sustain a strong talent pipeline.

Given the scale and complexity of the Puerto Rico Department of Education, many researchers argue that meaningful reform will require a shift toward greater decentralization, enabling schools and communities to have more direct control over resources and decision-making. The current unitary governance structure, in which one entity acts as both the state education agency and the sole school district. It lacks meaningful checks and balances, reinforcing an over-politicized system where priorities shift with each administration. This governance model limits continuity, weakens accountability, and often hinders long-term planning. Making this challenge worse is Puerto Rico's low per-pupil funding, which remains well below U.S. averages and leaves schools without necessary resources for modern instruction, special education, or adequate staffing. Centralized budgeting further restricts timely access to funds, preventing schools from meeting student needs effectively.

Alongside decentralization, Puerto Rico urgently needs stronger accountability systems and safeguards to ensure transparency and maintain public trust.

In this context, Alianza schools under Law 85 offer an alternative model, which includes providing autonomy, performance-based accountability, and community-driven approaches that can help address long-standing gaps. Introduced as part of education reform, these are public schools that operate independently from the traditional Department of Education system, focusing on innovation and choice, often emphasizing bilingual education and STEM.

Amid these system-wide challenges, the LEAP network of STEAM Schools, operating under LEAP Social Enterprise, has already demonstrated what is possible when innovation, autonomy, and accountability align with community needs. LEAP schools have implemented rigorous academic models, data-driven instruction, and strong professional development systems while tailoring programming to Puerto Rico's cultural and economic context. Serving diverse learners, including high numbers of special education students, these schools show promising trends in student engagement, academic performance, and school climate.

LEAP's model emphasizes transparent governance, financial stewardship, and strong family engagement, while incorporating early college pathways, STEAM curricula, and community-industry partnerships. The progress of the LEAP network illustrates how autonomous public schools, when supported equitably, can contribute meaningfully to modernizing Puerto Rico's public education landscape and fulfilling the vision of Law 85.

Overall, Puerto Rico's education system reflects a mix of structural inequities, demographic changes, economic limitations, and ongoing disruptions. These factors lead to persistent achievement gaps, uneven educational quality, and limited long-term opportunities for students. Yet, despite these challenges, communities, educators, policymakers, and innovative public-school models, including Alianza schools, continue working toward a more equitable, modernized system. The future of education in Puerto Rico will depend on addressing these core inequities, improving funding structures, strengthening teacher pipelines, and supporting schools in creating resilient, student-focused learning environments.



Early Admission: 24 students received acceptance letters to attend Rutgers University–Camden College of Arts and Sciences, presented by Dean John Griffin. (Image courtesy of Venus Photography).

## LEAP Schools Strengthen the Path to Higher Education

At the heart of LEAP's educational philosophy is a powerful, intentional mode, one that prepares students not just to graduate from high school, but to excel in college and thrive in meaningful careers that advance Puerto Rico's long-term economic and community development.

This approach begins from an early age. Through rigorous coursework, structured college-access programming beginning in middle school, and career-connected learning experiences aligned with workforce readiness and postsecondary success, where students are introduced to college and career pathways. From mentorship to project-based learning to exposure to industry and higher education environments, students see themselves as future leaders, innovators, and professionals. They're not just dreaming about college, they're preparing for it in real time, with support systems that help them navigate everything from financial aid to career exploration. This includes FAFSA completion support, scholarship advising, and university application guidance for both students and families.

By embedding this college-and-career mission into the school's DNA, LEAP builds what researchers call navigational capital, which is the ability to navigate systems of higher



Student presenting FAFSA applications

education and the workforce with confidence and purpose. This intentional investment in student outcomes strengthens Puerto Rico as a whole, as successful students become skilled professionals who give back to their communities. This vision comes to life through a deliberately designed K-16 pipeline that translates ideas into systems, partnerships and measurable student outcomes.



LEAP STEAM+E high school seniors and their families visiting Rutgers–Camden as part of their college exploration experience.

## A K-16 Pipeline that Anchors the College Journey

LEAP's College Pipeline model begins long before high school graduation. Through partnerships with universities, community organizations and educators across the LEAP network, students are exposed early to the rigor and rewards of higher education. This simultaneously builds awareness of the economic and career opportunities available on the Island and beyond.

In 2025 alone, LEAP coordinated partnerships with institutions including Rutgers–Camden, the University of Puerto Rico, Polytechnic University of Sagrado Corazón, and Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico, expanding early college access and dual-enrollment opportunities for Puerto Rican students.

Students participate in enrichment programs, college-level coursework and mentoring opportunities designed to help them not only get into college, but thrive once they are there and persist to completion.

One of the clearest examples of this pipeline in action is LEAP's partnership with Rutgers–Camden.

## From San Juan to Rutgers–Camden

Before beginning their college journey, students and families from LEAP STEAM + E partnered with Rutgers University–Camden to design an immersive campus tour that provided early exposure and sense of belonging, elements that prove critical once students transition from aspiration to execution.

The visit offered an opportunity to learn more about campus life, meet faculty and staff, and connect with LEAP Academy alumni already enrolled at Rutgers University. This visit also included informational sessions on academic expectations, campus resources, and the transition to college life. This helped students and families envision themselves as part of the Rutgers community, reinforcing that college attainment is an achievable, supported pathway. The visit created a sense of community and belonging that has remained with students throughout their first year at the Rutgers–Camden campus.

Now, well into their first year, the students continue to draw on the academic rigor, leadership development and mentorship built into their LEAP education. They are not just navigating college, they are thriving. The outcomes are already measurable, as seven students from the inaugural LEAP STEAM + E graduating class have completed their first semester at Rutgers–Camden with a GPA of 3.5 or higher.

In addition, during the 2025 cycle, 24 LEAP seniors in Puerto Rico received acceptance letters to Rutgers–Camden, which were delivered during a formal recognition ceremony celebrating their achievement and reinforcing a culture that values college persistence and excellence.

"Coming from LEAP STEAM+E, I learned how to step out of my comfort zone, from overcoming social anxiety to finding my voice through public speaking," said Adriana Nalvarado Medina, an alumnus of LEAP's STEAM + E first graduating cohort. "When I started at Rutgers–Camden, I thought the transition would be a shock, but I realized how prepared I was. LEAP taught me how to manage my time, speak up, and believe in myself. Now, I feel more confident, more independent, and proud to see how much I've grown since that first day."

While individual success stories illustrate LEAP's impact, the organization's commitment to academic excellence is visible across its entire network.



Students are inducted into the Rutgers Alfredo and Gloria Bonilla-Santiago Scholars Program

## Alfredo and Gloria Bonilla-Santiago Scholars Program Honoring Legacy, Inspiring the Future

The Alfredo and Gloria Bonilla-Santiago Scholars Program stands as one of the most visible and powerful expressions of LEAP Social Enterprise's unwavering commitment to academic excellence and long-term college attainment. More than an honor roll distinction, the program is a network-wide strategy designed to cultivate talent, reinforce high expectations, and formally recognize students who demonstrate sustained commitment to academic achievement and growth.

During the most recent recognition cycle, 846 students across all LEAP schools in Puerto Rico were inducted as Alfredo and Gloria Santiago Scholars. This milestone reflects not only individual accomplishment, but the deliberate cultivation of a culture where excellence is recognized, celebrated, and expected.

### Building a Culture of Scholarship

At LEAP, recognition is intentional and strategic. The Bonilla-Santiago Scholars Program reinforces a shared identity grounded in effort, perseverance, accountability, and aspiration. Students are formally inducted during schoolwide assemblies attended by families, educators, and peers. These public ceremonies create:

- Visible affirmation of academic commitment
- A culture of aspiration across grade levels
- A model of excellence for younger students

- Reinforced expectations—college readiness begins early

Each scholar wears a distinctive insignia signifying their status, which is a powerful symbol of belonging to a community committed to achievement. This visible recognition strengthens collective identity across the LEAP network and reinforces that academic effort leads to meaningful opportunity.

In honor of Alfredo and Gloria Bonilla-Santiago, the program reflects a legacy of leadership, educational commitment, and belief in the transformative power of learning. Their names symbolize the values that define the LEAP community: resilience, service, excellence, and opportunity. Through this program, LEAP is shaping student identity, strengthening aspiration, and building a generation of scholars who see postsecondary success as both attainable and inevitable.

Philanthropic investments allow the network to enhance scholar enrichment experiences, increase access to advanced coursework and early college exposure, expand mentorship supports, and grow the long-term scholarship fund that sustains postsecondary access. By reinforcing academic identity early and pairing recognition with structured opportunity, the program helps translate achievement into graduation, college persistence, and workforce readiness outcomes. Support for the Bonilla-Santiago Scholars Program advances a scalable model that strengthens academic culture across campuses while contributing to long-term educational attainment and economic mobility in the communities LEAP serves.



Nicholas Prouty, Founder & CEO of Putnam Bridge; Dr. Santiago; and Dean John Griffin with LEAP students admitted early to Rutgers University–Camden.



## Looking Ahead: Early College Collaboration with Universities in Puerto Rico

Building on this momentum, LEAP's Early College initiative has expanded significantly through new partnerships with the University of Puerto Rico–Mayagüez and the Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico both widely recognized for their strength in STEM disciplines, engineering, and applied sciences. These collaborations now support students in Mayagüez, Bayamón and Cupey with access to dual enrollment coursework, university faculty engagement, and structured exposure to high-demand, innovation-driven fields aligned with regional workforce priorities. By extending rigorous, STEM-focused college-level opportunities directly into LEAP high schools, these partnerships strengthen the Birth–16 pipeline, accelerate credit accumulation, reduce time-to-degree, and deepen students' readiness for postsecondary success in competitive technical and professional sectors.



Partnerships with Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico (middle left), University of Puerto Rico Bayamón (bottom left).



Strong partnerships with universities and mayors are foundational to LEAP's sustainability model. Education is everyone's responsibility—and a shared priority. These moments capture collaboration with University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez, Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico and the Mayor of Carolina, celebrating reciprocal relationships that advance student success and community development.



# Highlights of Academic Excellence: *LEAP Achieves Growth and Proficiency*

At LEAP Schools, academic excellence is intentional. Every strategy, program, and partnership accelerates student growth and ensures high levels of academic proficiency. Through the unique LEAP Social Enterprise model, LEAP Schools combine data-driven instruction, extended learning opportunities and strong teacher support to transform education in Puerto Rico, strengthening the Island's future workforce and expanding access to opportunity through education innovation.



## Data-Driven Instruction: The Foundation for Academic Growth

LEAP's academic framework centers on personalized learning, meeting each student where they are and guiding them toward ambitious goals. Small class sizes of 20 students or fewer allow teachers to tailor instruction, identify learning gaps early, and provide targeted support.

The 2025 – 2026 Annual School Plan continues to be guided by three institutional goals that anchor their work: improve academic performance, align Centers of Excellence programs with LEAP's instructional core, and strengthen organizational capacity in operations, finance and technology. This ensures academic systems are sustainable, scalable and positioned to support long-term student success across communities.

To ensure that personalized learning translates into measurable growth, LEAP relies on continuous assessment and instructional feedback. Annual assessments track student progress throughout the year, ensuring instruction adjusts to students' needs in real time. During the 2024–2025 academic year, LEAP administered CRECE PR simulations, which are the standardized academic assessments administered by the Puerto Rico Department of Education. Additional assessments such as, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) and three internal benchmark cycles across all campuses were administered as well, creating a feedback loop that informed instructional planning and academic interventions. This focus on growth rather than just performance has led to measurable gains in reading and math proficiency across grade levels, particularly among students participating in targeted academic interventions. This includes students receiving special education and tiered instructional support.

## Measurable Results: Innovation Drives Proficiency

With strong academic foundations in place, LEAP expands learning beyond the traditional classroom through innovative college and career pathways. Students participate in the Early College Program starting in Grade 10, earning dual credits through partnerships with Rutgers–Camden, the University of Puerto Rico, Polytechnic University of Sagrado Corazón, and Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico. This early exposure to college-level academics strengthens perseverance, time management, and self-efficacy, skills proven to drive long-term success, while building a college-going culture that will ultimately contribute to Puerto Rico's economic and workforce needs.

These early college experiences translate directly into post-secondary success. All Grade 12 students received college acceptance letters during the 2024–2025 cycle, and LEAP's first graduating class from San Juan continues to demonstrate success beyond high school. Seven LEAP graduates are currently enrolled at Rutgers–Camden through the Alfredo & Gloria Bonilla-Santiago Scholarship Fund, entering college with transferable credits and strong academic preparation.

In the 2025-2026 class, twenty-four seniors received Rutgers University acceptance letters in November, delivered in person by John Griffin, dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Rutgers–Camden and Gloria Bonilla-Santiago, CEO of LEAP Social Enterprise.

Ensuring college access requires not only academic readiness, but financial preparedness. For the 2025-2026 class, FAFSA completion is nearing 100% with continued support through workshops and one-on-one family advising. This ensures students and families can access financial aid and scholarships, reducing financial barriers to post-secondary enrollment and persistence.

The strength of LEAP's model does not lie in any single program, but in how these components work together. LEAP's results demonstrate that when students have the time, tools, and opportunities they need, achievement follows. True academic excellence happens when students graduate not only ready for college, but for leadership, entrepreneurship, and the challenges of a changing world.



Dr. Madeline Lopez, Daniel Martínez González, at LEAP STEAM + Marine & Aerospace Isabela Campus (top). Dr. John Griffin, Dr. Santiago, LEAP senior student, Dr. Cynthia López, and Leandra Nuñez at the Admission Letter Distribution Event (middle). LEAP students at aerospace event (bottom).

## Extended Learning Opportunities: Experiential Education in Action

Academic excellence at LEAP extends beyond traditional classrooms through strategic experiential learning opportunities. Throughout the 2024–2025 academic year, students participated in a series of academic field experiences designed to deepen content knowledge, strengthen critical thinking, and connect learning to real-world applications.

Across all campuses, LEAP organized academic days and field experiences focused on STEM, literacy, history and career exploration. Students engaged in hands-on learning experiences at science parks in Carolina and Bayamón, participated in museum visits and theater performances, attended cybersecurity workshops, and explored environmental science through outdoor learning activities. These experiences reinforced classroom instruction while expanding students' exposure to diverse academic and career pathways.

Career-connected learning was embedded throughout the year as well. Students participated in Engine-4 emergency services immersion experiences, STEAM career exploration activities, and university-based events such as the UPR book fair. In San Juan, Career Day events connected students in grades K–9 with professionals including engineers and firefighters, helping students envision future academic and career possibilities.

LEAP also integrated physical wellness and teamwork into academic enrichment through initiatives such as LEAPathon, which combined physical activity with STEAM-based challenges, and field activities that emphasized problem-solving, collaboration and resilience. Older students participated in historical and cultural explorations, including an Old San Juan educational excursion in Bayamón, connecting Puerto Rico's history to academic content and civic identity.

These experiential learning opportunities support student engagement, reinforce academic skills and contribute to positive school culture. By intentionally aligning field experiences with instructional goals, LEAP ensures that learning remains rigorous, relevant, and connected to students' lived experiences.





Students from LEAP STEAM + E Academy of San Juan participated in a journey along the Camino de Santiago de Compostela in Spain, also known as the Way of St. James, a historic walking route across Spain that has been traveled for over a thousand years and culminates at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. For high school students, the Camino provides a structured experiential learning opportunity that builds physical endurance, resilience, teamwork, and global awareness through immersion in Spanish history, culture, and daily life. This experience was made possible through the generosity and educational commitment of philanthropist Luis González, and with the support of the International Studies Foundation and its president, Dr. María Díaz de la Cebosa. The journey was conducted under the supervision of the school's Early College Director, providing a meaningful and inclusive learning experience that supported students' academic, social, and personal development.





LEAP Parents and Staff participate in professional development (above and top right)

## Strong Teacher Support: Empowering Educators to Excel

Strong student outcomes depend on the adults leading learning every day. Behind every student success story is an empowered teacher. LEAP prioritizes faculty excellence through competitive compensation. That is nearly twice the average public-school salary in Puerto Rico, and an environment built on respect, collaboration and continuous learning.

LEAP invests in professional development as a direct way to improve classroom instruction and student achievement. Teachers engage in year-round professional development, including aligned workshops covering Responsive Classroom, metalinguistic awareness, bilingual literacy and creative teaching strategies. All teachers participate in individualized professional growth plans that link classroom practice to measurable student outcomes, ensuring instructional excellence is consistent across classrooms and campuses.

In May, for the 2024-2025 academic year, 100% of participating teachers reported positive feedback on professional development focused on engagement, emotional well-being, and conflict management, reinforcing a culture where educator growth directly supports student achievement. Pay-for-performance programs and ongoing evaluation ensure accountability while celebrating excellence.



LEAP Teachers participating in professional development (above and bottom right).

## Extra Credit: Strong Family Support

Academic success is strongest when families reinforce learning beyond the school day. LEAP understands that academic growth extends beyond the classroom and families are essential partners in the educational journey. During the 2024–2025 year, 1,853 parents were actively engaged in school programming, contributing more than 7,454 volunteer hours across campuses. So far in 2025-2026, through LEAP's School for Parents ("Escuela para Padres") and the Institute of Parent Ambassadors, families have participated in workshops on academic support, social-emotional development, and college readiness. More than 1,090 families participated in the "Building Strong Families" initiative. Concurrently, 100 parents formally registered as school volunteers, reinforcing academic expectations at home and in school, which research shows increases student persistence, attendance, and college readiness.



## A Replicable Model of Results

Combined, strong instruction, empowered educators, and engaged families form a model designed for long-term impact. LEAP's success is rooted in replicable best practices:

- **Positive school climate** is fostered through socio-emotional learning, cultural responsiveness, and community-building practices.
- **Family and community engagement** is strengthened in partnerships, college access, and student postsecondary readiness.
- **Professional learning systems** build educator capacity through aligned training, implementation and accountability.
- **Teacher investment** is demonstrated through pay equity, development and performance-based advancement.
- **Student support services** are strengthened through coordinated family services, counseling, college access programming and ongoing monitoring of intervention plans.

These practices form a system of continuous improvement, one in which students grow, teachers thrive, and communities advance, demonstrating how strong schools serve as anchors for broader community and economic development.

Through its the LEAP Social Enterprise model, LEAP is working to replicate these best practices across Puerto Rico and beyond, supporting schools, educators, and communities in adopting sustainable systems that prioritize equity and achievement. (**Pictured throughout, LEAP students success engagements**)







Left to right: Dr. John Griffin, Michele Pastorello, Dr. Gloria Bonilla-Santiago, Nicholas Prouty and Valentina Prouty

## Rutgers Alfredo & Gloria Bonilla-Santiago Endowed Scholarship Gala *Brings Together Leaders from New Jersey and Puerto Rico to Support Student Success*

The mission of LEAP Social Enterprise is to uplift students from underrepresented communities through high-quality schools that expand access to opportunity and prepare students to contribute meaningfully to their communities. LEAP's work focuses on helping students thrive from cradle to college, recognizing that educational attainment is a critical driver of long-term economic mobility and community advancement.

The Rutgers Alfredo & Gloria Bonilla-Santiago Endowed Scholarship Fund was established in 1999 by Community Leadership Center (CLC) director Dr. Gloria Bonilla-Santiago in loving memory of her late husband Alfredo Santiago. What began as a commitment to expanding college access in Camden, New Jersey, has grown into a powerful cross-regional investment in student success, that is financially supporting LEAP graduates in their pursuit of higher education.

As part of LEAP's comprehensive education-to-career pipeline, students who maintain a 3.5 grade point average, demonstrate strong attendance with fewer than four

absences annually, and remain in good standing with their school and community are eligible to receive a tuition-assisted college education at Rutgers University through the Rutgers Alfredo & Gloria Bonilla-Santiago Endowed Scholarship Fund. In 2024, the scholarship expanded to include students from Puerto Rico, reinforcing LEAP's commitment to building pathways that connect academic excellence to economic opportunity on the Island.

The scholarship aims to increase the diversity of the Rutgers University student body and bridge the opportunity gap in higher education by providing awards to Latino and African American students. By removing financial barriers to postsecondary education, the scholarship empowers students to persist through college and return to their communities as skilled professionals, leaders, and changemakers, strengthening both local and regional economies.



## THE ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP GALA

On November 21, 2025, more than 250 leaders, educators, supporters, and alumni from New Jersey and Puerto Rico gathered at the Condado Vanderbilt Hotel in San Juan, Puerto Rico, to celebrate student achievement and raise funds to benefit LEAP scholars pursuing higher education. The event served as a powerful demonstration of LEAP's growing ecosystem of support across regions, sectors, and generations.

This year's gala marked the first time the event was hosted in Puerto Rico, reflecting the expansion of the LEAP school model across the Island, where six LEAP STEAM campuses now operate and serve more than 4,200 students. The theme of the evening, "Rising Stars: Illuminating the Path to Success," highlighted the promise of a new generation of leaders emerging from LEAP schools and the collective responsibility to invest in their success.

The gala honored two distinguished partners who are making a profound impact on educational opportunities in Camden and Puerto Rico:

- **Nicholas Prouty**, CEO of Putnam Bridge Funding in San Juan, received the Distinguished Leadership Award for his longstanding philanthropic commitment and investment in Puerto Rico's communities. Prouty's contributions to LEAP Social Enterprise have helped LEAP Academy expand its model into Puerto Rico, bringing high-quality public education options to communities in need. (Pictured top and bottom right)

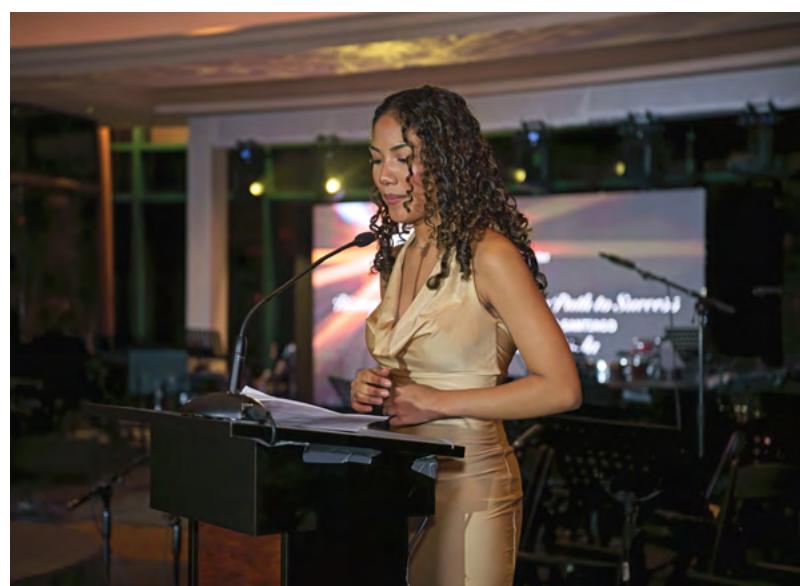


- **Eliezer Ramos Parés**, Puerto Rico's Secretary of Education, was recognized for his partnership in expanding high-quality public education options through the LEAP Social Enterprise model across the Island. His collaboration underscores the importance of public-private partnerships in driving system-level change and improving student outcomes at scale. (Picture top right)

The gala further spotlighted the voices and journeys of LEAP alumni and current students, illustrating the full arc of LEAP's cradle-to-college approach. Dr. Brian Sosa, D.D.S., a graduate of LEAP Academy's first senior class in 2005, was recognized as the 2025 Alumni Honoree. Now the owner of his own dental practice in South Florida, Dr. Sosa exemplifies how educational opportunity can translate into professional success and community impact. (Picture top left page 29)

Karolyna Valette, a first-year student at Rutgers University-Camden and one of the first graduates of LEAP STEAM + E Academy of San Juan, shared remarks as a recipient of the Rutgers Alfredo and Gloria Bonilla- Santiago Endowed Scholarship Fund. Gustavo Colón Rivera, (middle right). Additional insights included ninth-grade student from LEAP Academy University Charter School in Camden, highlighting the next generation of scholarship recipients, and Joelini Sánchez, an eleventh-grade student from LEAP STEAM + E Academy of San Juan, reflecting on how LEAP has positioned her for future academic success.

Other highlights of the event included Marcielle Rivera, TV host and producer of "On The Go Puerto Rico," who acted as Master of Ceremonies (bottom right). As well as an exceptional performance from the Orquesta de Concierto de Carolina, under the direction of Maestro Franky Suárez, an auction of hand-crafted items from students at LEAP Academy, and remarks and reflections from Dr. Gloria Bonilla-Santiago. Together, these moments celebrated not only individual achievement, but also the power of education as a catalyst for community and economic advancement (pictures throughout).







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