

Cultural background: PUERTO RICO

*(Migrant students from the island of Puerto Rico.
Puerto Ricans are citizens of the USA.)*



Language

Spanish and English are the official languages.

There may be slightly different intonations and accents than other Spanish countries.

Teaching in the classroom

The education model is very similar to the mainland USA. Puerto Rico has to follow federal laws and regulations, including mandatory education for ages 5 to 18, and ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act). Public school instruction occurs in Spanish. English is taught as a mandatory second language at all levels of schooling. Although English is required, you may find that students may not be proficient and may be uncomfortable speaking English.

High school students have very structured schedules, with minimal electives. As a result, students tend to take all of their classes with the same classmates. Switching classes and classmates may add extra confusion or anxiety. Ensure that students understand their schedule or have a peer that they follow for the whole school day.

Wealthier families who can afford private schooling often choose that route. Many families believe private schools are more rigorous and will improve their children's chances of succeeding at school.

High school dropout rates are estimated to be around 60% in recent (2014) data. However, over recent decades, the rates of high school and college degrees are increasing and becoming more important in the culture for job placement. Puerto Rico is atypical in that more students graduate with college degrees than the labor market can absorb. Many college graduates find jobs off the island.

Much of the population (over 90%) is located in urban areas with access to public schools. Due to Hurricanes Irma and Maria in September 2017, many public schools have closed indefinitely in urban and rural areas.

Family/School engagement

An estimated 93 percent of Puerto Ricans are literate. Teachers should take the time to reach out to parents, giving access to Spanish and English materials, keeping in mind that Spanish is the dominant language.

It is important to keep in mind that many recently arrived Puerto Rican citizens may lack access to a car, so transportation maybe a challenge. In addition, the recent hurricanes have hampered students' abilities to retrieve records of schooling, birth certificates, and other common requirements for enrollment. Consider adopting waivers or allowing enrollment prior to receiving these documents so that students do not miss school upon arrival.

Puerto Ricans are generally indirect communicators and tend to find public conflict to be rude and abrasive. They may partake in a joking form of indirect criticism to convey potentially negative information. If a child is having issues at school, or if information could be seen as negative, it is important for teachers to address the parents in private. Maintain strong boundaries of respect, and pre-identify statements that convey your concern without coming across as rude or aggressive. Gestures and animated conversation are preferred over stoic, neutral conversational tones.

Puerto Ricans tend to have a more event-based idea of time and may not identify lateness as rude or improper, so teachers should explain the value and standards pertaining to punctuality with respect.

Culture, gender and family

Puerto Ricans are the second-largest Latino group in the USA. In Puerto Rico, 99 percent of the population is Latino. Puerto Ricans citizens of the USA whether they were born on the island or on the mainland. They are considered migrants rather than refugees or immigrants. Although Puerto Ricans do not vote for the president of the USA, Puerto Rican residents pay taxes and have one voting

representative in the House of Representatives. The statehood of Puerto Rico was most recently discussed in a close vote in 2012 after many previously failed votes. Young adults are engaged and passionate about the issue of Puerto Rico's statehood.

Gender roles are increasingly egalitarian. Women are active in public and intellectual settings. In fact, Puerto Rico elected the first woman legislator in the Western Hemisphere in 1932.

The majority of Puerto Rican residents are Roman Catholic. They celebrate many holidays common to the USA, as well as others native to the island. Students love many things that are similar to their mainland counterparts including, technology, dominoes, fashion, music (including merengue and salsa) and the latest musical trends and dances. Puerto Ricans tend to be very proud of their families and their Puerto Rican heritage.