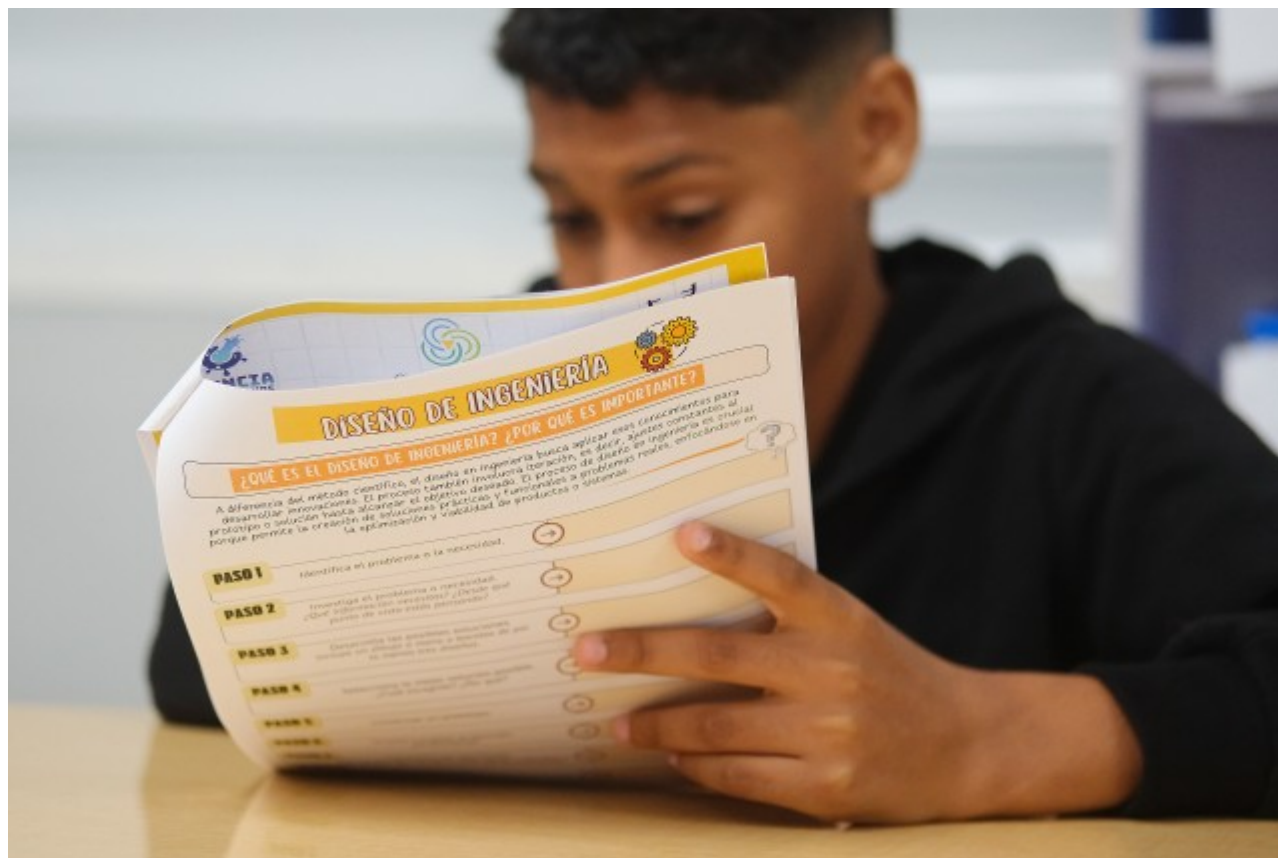


# Científicos Al Servicio: Transforming education by connecting students with local scientific talent <sup>[1]</sup>

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CienciaPR leads an initiative that promotes mentoring in STEM through educational experiences with real protagonists in the scientific field.

**San Juan, May 20, 2025** - More than 22,000 Puerto Rican students benefited from the **Científicos Al Servicio** program, an educational initiative of **Ciencia Puerto Rico (CienciaPR)** that promotes the active participation of experts in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) in science education in the country, in its virtual and on-site modality, culminated with great success in its most recent editions.

### **Role models and mentors in schools**

Starting in 2019, the school visit component of Científicos Al Servicio pairs volunteer STEM experts-professionals and advanced university students-with schools throughout the archipelago to give talks about their scientific trajectories and careers. During the 2024-2025 school year and in collaboration with the organization **Ciencia En Tus Manos** a mentoring component was integrated for the first time for school visits to students in grades 6-8.

This phase of the program offered unique educational experiences to some **396 students from 20 public middle schools** belonging to the educational regions of **San Juan and Ponce**. The STEM experts, who received a virtual training workshop on science communication and mentoring, visited their assigned schools on two occasions. During the first visit, they gave talks about their disciplines and professional careers, accompanied by an experiment designed to arouse the scientific curiosity of the students. On the **second visit**, they presented the Research Project Guide and Science Fair, an educational tool that served to motivate students to participate in research and exploration activities and to learn about the processes of the scientific method and engineering design.

The program focused on providing students with culturally relevant role models in STEM, hands-on activities that stimulated their critical thinking, mentoring experiences that sought to promote scientific exploration and strengthen their scientific self-efficacy, i.e., the belief that they are capable of carrying out scientific projects and pursuing this type of career.

"This new mentoring component strengthened CienciaPR's commitment to accessible, contextualized and transformative science education. We know that hands-on experiences and mentoring can make a profound difference in the academic and vocational development of our students," said Dr. Abniel Machín De Jesús, director of CienciaPR's Education Unit.

### **Online stories and trajectories**

On the other hand, the virtual component of the program also achieved outstanding results. During the school year, **37 online talks** were held with the participation of scientists from different disciplines. These were transmitted live through the CienciaPR YouTube channel, reaching more than **57,000 people**. Of these, **more than 22,000 students from 6th to 12th grade** obtained digital certificates of participation, valid to validate green contact hours or occupational exploration in their schools.

The talks touched on diverse topics in environmental science, chemistry, robotics, mental health, cancer, biology, medicine, space science, energy and many others. Volunteer STEM experts served as speakers in the talks moderated by **Mr. Elvin Estrada**, coordinator of the Científicos Al Servicio program for over 5 years.

"We want every student in Puerto Rico to see themselves reflected in a scientist in their community and know that they can also be part of that world. With Científicos al Servicio online, we create connections between youth and STEM experts, who are a source of inspiration and knowledge to expose them to concrete possibilities for their future," said Dr. Greetchen Díaz Muñoz, executive director of CienciaPR.

### **Culturally relevant and accessible resources**

All the resources generated as part of the Scientists in Service program, including the Guide and the recordings of the virtual chats, are stored in the Educational Resources Catalog, an open digital platform available at [www.cienciapr.org](http://www.cienciapr.org) [3]. This catalog organizes thousands of materials, mostly bilingual, created by members of the CienciaPR network -such as lessons, blogs, talks, among others- according to subject, school level, educational standards and other categories, in order to facilitate access to culturally relevant scientific content for educators, students, parents and tutors. A total of 85 educators from schools and non-profit organizations were trained in the use of the Catalog.

With this edition, CienciaPR reaffirmed its mission to transform the way science is taught and experienced in Puerto Rico for the benefit of a new generation of young Puerto Ricans. Científicos al Servicio and the Catalog have been made possible, in part, thanks to the support of the Special Joint Commission of Legislative Funds for Community Impact and the Assur, Ángel Ramos, Liberty, JetBlue and Banco Popular foundations.

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