

## After school STEM programs: a vision <sup>[1]</sup>

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The development of after-school programs in STEM is one of the visions of our volunteer coordinator, Paola Giusti Rodríguez.

My name is [Paola Giusti Rodriguez](#) <sup>[3]</sup> and I am from Río Piedras. Although I've been a volunteer at CienciaPR for only 3 years, I've known about the organization for almost 9 years, and I share many years of friendship with many in volunteer team. [Samuel](#) <sup>[4]</sup> and I studied together at the UHS (University High School at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras) and we've known each other for more than 20 years. [Giovanna](#) <sup>[5]</sup> was my mentor at UC-Berkeley when I interviewed for graduate school and years later our paths crossed again in Boston. [Monica](#) <sup>[6]</sup> was a laboratory technician in an adjoining laboratory at MIT and through her I met [Francis](#) <sup>[7]</sup> while he was completing his graduate studies there. I remember having many conversations over coffee or eating in a Puerto Rican restaurant in the area, with Francis and Monica about different outreach ideas and initiatives.

While in graduate school, I supervised several undergraduate and graduate students, and I volunteered in an "after school" program for girls in elementary school. These experiences, along with my love for Puerto Rico and the sciences, motivated me to join the team of volunteers at Ciencia Puerto Rico. Being a volunteer at CienciaPR has provided me opportunities for leadership and has helped me feel more connected with the Puerto Rican (and Hispanic) scientific community inside and outside of Puerto Rico.

Taking into account what we have achieved and looking towards the future, I would like for CienciaPR to create or participate in an extended education program ("after school") in STEM in

public schools (grades K-8) which would be led by volunteers in the different university campuses in Puerto Rico. The intention is not for all children to be scientists. However, such initiatives encourage curiosity, exploration, teamwork, provide mentoring opportunities for children of all ages, and teach through experiments and demonstrations how science relates to their daily lives.

**Tags:**

- [After school science programs](#) [8]
- [Anécdotas de voluntarios CienciaPR](#) [9]
- [décimo aniversario CienciaPR](#) [10]

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[1] <https://www.cienciapr.org/en/blogs/equipo-informa/after-school-stem-programs-vision?language=es> [2]  
<https://www.cienciapr.org/en/user/giusti?language=es> [3] <http://www.cienciapr.org/es/user/giusti> [4]  
<http://www.cienciapr.org/es/user/sldmunoz> [5] <http://www.cienciapr.org/es/user/gguerre> [6]  
<http://www.cienciapr.org/es/user/moefeliu> [7] <http://www.cienciapr.org/es/user/francis8> [8]  
<https://www.cienciapr.org/en/tags/after-school-science-programs?language=es> [9]  
<https://www.cienciapr.org/en/tags/anecdotos-de-voluntarios-cienciapr?language=es> [10]  
<https://www.cienciapr.org/en/tags/decimo-aniversario-cienciapr?language=es>