

*Voices from a Skilled Diaspora: A Phenomenological Study of Puerto Rican Teachers on the Mainland* by Kenneth DiLorenzo Baker, Ed.D.

Executive Summary

An increased need for bilingual/bicultural teachers in the Orlando, Florida-area plus a pool of qualified teachers in Puerto Rico without legal barriers to entry has led to recruitment in Puerto Rico by Orange County Public Schools. In this qualitative phenomenological study, Puerto Rican teachers who had recently migrated to the Orlando area after having worked in the Department of Education of Puerto Rico were interviewed.

The objective of this research was to uncover Puerto Rican teachers' reasons for migrating in light of Koh's Skilled Diasporic Citizenship Model (2010). In addition, the study asked the participants to compare curriculum and teaching from Island to Mainland.

The following four migration decision themes emerged from the interviews: 1) legal-political considerations were a strong driver during the migration decision; 2) socio-cultural considerations were a moderate factor during the migration decision; 3) emotional considerations were a minor consideration during the migration decision; and 4) a family tie to Orlando, whether a sibling, a parent, or an in-law, was a strong driver.

The following curriculum and teaching themes emerged from the interviews: 1) participants said they experienced tremendous differences between official curricula from Island to Mainland; 2) participants reported vast differences between curricula-as-taught from Island to Mainland; 3) participants considered themselves moderately successful in the Department of Education of Puerto Rico but quite successful in Orange County Public Schools; and 4) the participants expressed a wish for greater latitude in their current jobs, particularly in terms of classroom creativity