



# Flor de Loto Montessori

Ponce, Puerto Rico

2.5 - 9 years

Students served at full capacity: 50

Opened: September 2020

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Flor de Loto offers an authentic and accessible Montessori education for children in Ponce, Puerto Rico, and neighboring areas. The City of Ponce provides the school a municipal building for only \$1 per year, and the school invested in improvements to make it a beautiful pillar of the community. A third of Flor de Loto students attend for free through this partnership and a built-in scholarship program. Founding Teacher Leader, Dr. Lisbeth Gonzalez, has over 19 years of educational leadership in special education and school administration.

Flor de Loto experienced hurricanes, earthquakes, and a global pandemic in its short life, which caused delays in the construction and renovation process. When construction finally finished, the executive orders of the government of Puerto Rico prohibited schools from serving students in person. Despite these obstacles, Flor de Loto launched an online Montessori program. Lisbeth highlighted that their start with online classes helped to engage student's families with the school and the Montessori philosophy: "It wasn't always just the students who attended the classes; sometimes they were accompanied by siblings and parents. It became a family education environment. The families have been able to see firsthand what we do, and they are excited about our approach."

Lisbeth is passionate about building a school that serves students and the community in a variety of ways. Flor de Loto has become

a resource center through a network of partnerships, providing emergency needs such as internet service, water, and food. The school also has a music program sponsored by the Conservatory of Music of Puerto Rico, which offers free weekly music classes to students and members of the Ponceña community. In addition, Flor de Loto Montessori built an alliance with the CivicRush app, which brings together volunteers around the United States and Puerto Rico to meet local needs. Flor de Loto families are also active participants in the creation and build-out of the school, helping to prepare Montessori materials for the home, installing furniture and play areas, and donating materials, such as food and face shields. Their many contributions have made the school a collaborative place full of hope and shared vision.





**Lisbeth Gonzalez**  
Founder and Teacher Leader

Dr. Lisbeth was born and raised in Puerto Rico and decided to become a professional educator to impact the lives of children in her community. She earned a BA, MA, and PhD in special education. She taught in a special education setting for ten years before becoming a principal at a traditional public school, where she had the opportunity to work with the Department of Education to transform it into a Montessori school. As she learned about Montessori philosophy, she understood how it could help transform teachers and families. She worked on that project for nine years and saw the school's positive impact on the community, including decreased crime rates, skyrocketing test scores, and mothers inspired to become guides and classroom assistants themselves. After that, she decided to enroll in Montessori training herself. Lisbeth is currently working on her upper elementary training to expand Flor de Loto to serve children up to 12 years old.

**“When dreaming about starting my school, I wanted to have a more direct relationship with students. It wasn’t about having less work but a smaller school where the relationships and connections between kids, families, and the community would be closer and stronger.”**

