



**FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON
THE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN FOR THE
TRANSFORMATION OF THE DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION**

**Initiative for Decentralization of
Education and Autonomy of Regions**

IDEAR's Executive Committee's Report
to Puerto Rico's community and government



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IDEAR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee is attached to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and its main function is to develop the strategy and action framework for the Puerto Rico Department of Education to implement the public policy established in EO-2023-014. The Executive Committee is composed of the following people:

1. **Juan Carlos Blanco**, Chairman of the Executive Committee and Director of the Office of Management and Budget;
2. **Noelia García**, Secretary of Government;
3. **Dr. Yanira Raíces**, Interim Secretary of the Puerto Rico Department of Education;
4. **Francisco Parés, CPA**, Secretary of the Department of the Treasury;
5. **Chris Soto**, senior advisor to the secretary of the federal Department of Education;
6. **Dr. Ana María García Blanco**, educator and founder of the Instituto Nueva Escuela;
7. **Prof. Víctor Bonilla**, President of the Puerto Rico Teachers Association;
8. **Mr. Benjamin Borges**, President of *Servidores Públicos Unidos* - American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees;
9. **Ana María Rodríguez Nogués**, expert in management of federal funds and project management.

To implement the responsibilities established in the EO, Roger J. Iglesias was designated as executive director of the IDEAR Committee.

GLOSSARY

- **Local autonomy:** The ability of LEAs to make decisions or execute processes at the regional or school level. The definition of the type of decisions or processes may vary among school districts and is subject to definitions and guidelines made by the SEA (e.g., adoption of academic programs, execution of purchases, execution of building repairs). Autonomy seeks a more personalized and higher-quality education for students from different communities.
- **LEA Advisory Council:** proposed governance mechanism for LEAs, which will be responsible for accompanying the LEA superintendent in defining plans, monitoring implementation and educational outcomes, participating in the selection of the LEA superintendent, evaluating the performance of the superintendent and the LEA, and monitoring implementation, among others.
- **School Board:** Law 85 of 2018 (Law 85) defines the School Board as the mechanism for community participation in school governance. The School Board has a key role in school decentralization and empowerment through strategic school decision-making, follow-up on annual operational plans, and goal achievement.
- **Curriculum:** The set of objectives, contents, methodological and evaluation criteria that guides educational activity (teaching and learning). It reflects a pedagogical intention and is the basic guide for the educational process in formal institutions.
- **PRDE:** Puerto Rico Department of Education. It is the government entity in charge of administering and supervising the public education system in Puerto Rico. Its main objective is to guarantee access to quality education for all students on the island, from primary to secondary levels.
- **Professional development:** Ongoing training and education provided to educators and non-teaching staff to enhance their skills and knowledge. Ensures that staff are equipped with the most current tools and methods to perform their role effectively.
- **Educational decentralization:** Process by which educational decisions and management are transferred from a central or national level to subnational entities, such as regions, municipalities, or educational institutions. This is done with the purpose of bringing educational management closer to the communities, allowing for a more precise adaptation to local realities and needs. Empowerment in decision-making is accompanied by accountability for the results of the territorial unit.

- **Educational equity:** Ensuring all students have equal opportunities and access to educational resources, regardless of their circumstances. Promotes a fair educational system where all students can reach their full potential.
- **ERP:** Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) is a system designed to help organizations manage and automate a wide range of business processes on a centralized platform.
- **Equitable Funding:** Fair distribution of financial resources based on the needs of each LEA or school. Ensures that all students have access to a quality education regardless of location or context.
- **Participatory governance:** Refers to an approach to management and decision-making where different actors and stakeholders (such as students, parents, educators, and other community members) are actively involved and have a voice and, in some cases, a vote in the process.
- **LEA:** refers to Local Education Agency. An LEA is typically a school district or other public authority that operates public schools. In general, LEAs are responsible for administering and supervising public schools at the local level under the guidance and regulation of the State Education Agency (SEA).
- **Teaching method:** Refers to the set of techniques, rules, and guidelines used by the educator to guide the educational process, facilitating the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes by students. The teaching method is chosen according to the educational objectives, the content, the characteristics of the students, and the context in which the education takes place.
- **ORE:** Regional Education Offices. These offices are responsible for managing and supervising educational services in various island regions. Puerto Rico has organized its public education system into 7 regions, and each region has its own office to manage and supervise educational matters specific to that region. The OREs were created under the framework of Puerto Rico's Education Reform Act 85 (Law 85).
- **Community participation:** Active involvement of parents, guardians, and other community members in the educational process. Promotes a more inclusive education system tailored to the community's needs and expectations.
- **Transformation pillar:** Fundamental element that drives significant change in an organization. It defines the foundations on which such change is built and supports the actions and strategies applied in the transformation.

- **Transformation recommendation:** A concrete and detailed proposal on how to carry out significant changes in an organization. Recommendations are based on a thorough analysis of the organization's current situation and aim to address specific problems within the organization.
- **Accountability:** Mechanisms and systems that ensure that educational entities (both SEAs and LEAs) meet quality and equity standards. Ensures that resources are used effectively and that established educational objectives are met.
- **SEA:** refers to State Education Agency. It is the state government agency or entity in charge of elementary and secondary education in a specific state. The primary function of an SEA is to oversee the public-school systems within its state, including the implementation of state and federal laws and regulations, the administration of state and federal education funds, and the establishment of state educational standards. SEAs may also be responsible for teacher certification and licensure, curriculum development and assessment standards, and other tasks related to the administration and oversight of public education in the state.
- **Merit system:** An approach that promotes the evaluation, recognition, and reward of educators and administrative personnel based on their performance, abilities, and contribution to educational objectives.
- **Monitoring and tracking systems:** A tool or set of tools designed to collect, analyze, and present data related to the performance and operation of schools within a school region. These systems allow administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders to evaluate educational programs' progress and effectiveness, identify improvement areas, and make informed decisions to improve student learning and well-being.
- **Cross-cutting themes:** These are contents or themes that are integrated into several areas or processes of the organization. These topics are not limited to a single discipline but interrelate and complement each other. They typically require coordination and collaboration between different teams and functional areas to be implemented successfully.
- **Use of data:** Collection, analysis, and application of data on student performance, teaching practices, and other educational indicators. It informs decision-making and allows for adapting or improving educational practices and programs.

1. INTRODUCTION: GUIDE TO NAVIGATE THE DOCUMENT

Report's Objectives

The IDEAR Committee: On May 22, 2023, the Governor of Puerto Rico, Hon. Pedro Pierluisi, in conjunction with the Secretary of the Federal Department of Education, Hon. Miguel Cardona, issued Executive Order EO-2023-014 (EO) creating the Initiative for Decentralization of Education and Autonomy of Regions (IDEAR) and establishing an Executive Committee responsible for proposing strategies and action frameworks to achieve decentralization in The Puerto Rico Department of Education (PRDE). This report presents the proposed «Decentralization Plan» developed by the Executive Committee, which will be submitted to Puerto Rico's Governor and to the U.S. Secretary of Education for consideration. With this, it will comply with the objective of creating a system that allows responding to the needs of students, schools, and their community; that will significantly improve the quality of education and services received by students; and that will make optimal use of state and federal resources provided for education in Puerto Rico.

Working Methodology: The Executive Committee, led by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OGP), Juan Carlos Blanco, convened diverse groups interested in the transformation of education in Puerto Rico, including students, families, teachers, non-teaching staff, central and regional staff of the Puerto Rico Department of Education, and specialists from the Federal Department of Education. Through this call, different strategies were established to address the issue of decentralization while guaranteeing citizen participation, including a series of discussions in different parts of the Island. In these spaces, experts from Puerto Rico's education system participated, who shared their local perspective and that of other jurisdictions, as well as legal experts, to determine the viability of this initiative within the current legal framework. Once the governor of Puerto Rico receives this report and the specific actions to be implemented are determined, progress can be made in the decentralization of the system to guarantee access to quality education.

The dialogue activities involved students, teachers, school principals, families, Special Education groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), unions, workers, and academics through 5,800 surveys. There were 50 roundtables held, in 14 sessions distributed in municipalities throughout the island, in which around 260 people participated. Three workshops were held with 56 experts and community leaders, and meetings and dialogue sessions were carried out with unions, regional superintendents,

mayors, NGOs, legislators, academic groups, school principals, teachers, and students.

Document's structure: This document includes the strategies proposed by the Executive Committee for the effective implementation of the Initiative for Decentralization of Education and Autonomy of Regions (IDEAR). This decentralization aims to benefit students and all communities in Puerto Rico.

This document is composed of six sections:

- The first section presents the initiative's context, origin, and legal framework within which IDEAR was established.
- The second defines decentralization as the appropriate platform for reorienting Puerto Rico's educational system toward the student.
- The third section raises the limitations and difficulties presented by the current system for decentralization and exposes the concerns and perceptions of the community.
- The fourth section develops the proposal to transform the educational system through five major system transformations which support the way the decentralized system would operate.
- The fifth section proposes an implementation framework to achieve this transformation in an orderly and optimal manner while controlling potential risks.
- The sixth section establishes the next steps for the presentation, approval, and implementation of the proposed decentralization plan.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Consensus on the transformation of the education system based on decentralization.

The transformation of the educational system is based on the vision that all the efforts and resources of the State and the community should be at the service of improving the quality of education for the benefit of the student.

Decentralization is defined as the distribution of the decision-making process on core educational issues from the central level to the island's public schools. The proposed model seeks to empower schools by giving them more influence over operational and administrative decisions that impact the educational community and to promote collaborative work so education is guaranteed, supervised, and improved according to the particularities and needs of each community.

The regional level will operate as a *Local Educational Agency* (LEA) and will support the educational project designed and developed by the school; the *State Educational Agency* (SEA) will be the custodian of the right to education, ensuring access for all students to a quality and excellent education.

True and effective decentralization requires a change in culture and vision, and addresses capacity building, resource management, and technical assistance at each of the system's levels.

There is consensus on the island that greater participation of students, teachers, the community, and the state in the public educational system will create the necessary conditions that improve the quality of education; the current deterioration demands urgent attention. The drop in the most relevant educational indicators is concerning and precedes the recent natural disasters and pandemic, which exacerbated it.

Proficiency in the core subjects of children and youth is falling steadily and rapidly. In 2022, less than half of students demonstrated proficiency in Spanish and only 21% in Math. In 2017, only 12% of students demonstrated proficiency in each subject¹.

Law 85 of 2018, better known as the Puerto Rico Education Reform Act (Law 85), established the basis for decentralizing the PRDE, forming a regional structure, albeit with limited autonomy. To the extent that educational decisions are made

¹ <https://perfilescolar.dde.pr/dashboard/summary/index.html?schoolcode=State>

as close as possible to the students and teachers, adapting to the environment of each school. With the effective participation of the local community, it is possible to achieve relevance and generate the necessary conditions to improve the quality of education. The community has expressed a deep desire to participate in their children's educational project, and to understand the details of how the funds and resources they deserve are distributed and allocated.

Limitations to decentralization in the current system

The current operational structure and organizational culture of the PRDE prevents the student and the school community from being at the center of all efforts and resources dedicated to education. The lack of effective mechanisms for citizen participation in decision-making, the limited autonomy of schools and their regions, and the excess of controls in the system, prevent the needs of schools and the interests of communities from being addressed promptly and effectively.

Based on the diagnosis of the public education system and the perspectives gathered from members of the school community, the main aspects of the system that have hindered decentralization were identified:

- School community participation in decision-making is limited: Despite mechanisms, such as the school boards, the active participation, with voice of families, students, teachers, and non-teaching staff is insufficiently represented in the decision-making bodies of the education system. A system lacking robust methods for citizen participation is at considerable risk of becoming politicized. This could lead to decisions being diverted from their core objective of providing quality education, promoting administrative efficiency, and ensuring effective allocation of funds and resources to schools.
- Centralized functions and regulations: Puerto Rico operates a unitary system that ranks as the sixth largest school district in the U.S., with approximately 250,000 students, more than 860 schools, over 25,000 teachers, and over 10,000 non-teaching employees. Although there are seven regional education offices (OREs), they handle more students than 97% of districts in other U.S. jurisdictions. The current size of the OREs limits their capacity to understand and address the needs and particularities of the schools they cover in greater depth. The power of school principals and regional superintendents is limited, and the most critical decisions are subject to central-level approvals and controls. This central level has not fully developed the functions of planning, definition of standards, or capacity building in the system, and it focuses on the

support processes for the operation of schools. The OREs currently do not have the resources nor capabilities to assume the functions that would allow regional empowerment in the management of education, which is replicated in critical elements of the system like special education.

- Processes that are strongly regulated by multiple offices, limit autonomous, agile, and transparent management, both in OREs and schools: The Department of Education's procedures have not been adequately adapted to the structure of the OREs, which hinder their optimal execution in schools. In critical processes such as procurement, budget management, facilities maintenance, and professional development, the need for central-level approvals and controls diminishes the efficiency and relevance of results add complexity to the administration and use of resources in schools. This scenario also affects the use and implementation of the federal funds approved to alleviate the impact of natural disasters and the pandemic, affecting the allocation of resources in an adequate and agile manner that meets the needs of students.

Transformation of the structure and culture of the education system

The implementation of the decentralization of the education system will create the conditions for students, families, teachers, non-teaching staff, the community at large, and the government to focus on improving education at each school site. To achieve this, the PRDE must:

- Develop a teaching and learning process focused on high, rigorous, and innovative academic standards in line with the science of human development and learning.
- Provide spaces to develop the talent and leadership of fathers, mothers, and caregivers in the school community.
- Provide ongoing, world-class training that helps expand the knowledge and skills of teachers and non-teaching staff.
- Optimize the time of teachers and non-teaching staff, reducing the administrative burden and allowing them to focus more on students and their families.
- Select and evaluate the leaders of the education system, including central-level staff, LEAs, and school principals, through a transparent merit system that recognizes preparation and experience, and continuous monitoring of their performance.

To achieve the transformation of the educational system, five transformation pillars or strategic objectives are proposed:

Transformation Pillar # 1 - Adjust the structure of the PRDE to support schools more effectively through a central level (SEA) focused on planning, public policies, and support to the local level (LEA), which will focus on overseeing the support, coordination, and development of local capabilities in schools.

Transformation Recommendation 1A. The SEA will specialize in planning and establishing efficient fund and resource management systems: The SEA focuses on establishing policies and rigorous academic standards, in harmony with the issues of the century, so that they reflect the current needs. In addition, it is a custodian of the right to fair, equitable and meaningful education for all students and will specialize in defining policy guidelines and regional capacity building (LEA) that will lead to the optimal development of all schools.

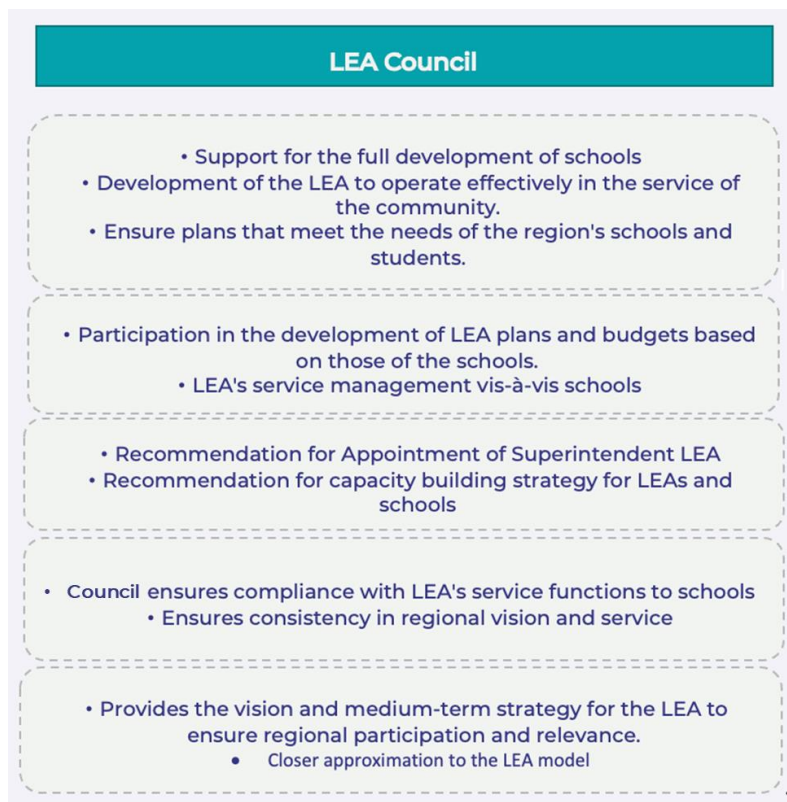
Transformation Recommendation 1B. The current tasks of the central level of the PRDE will transfer implementation capabilities to the LEAs: The regional level (LEA) will have the capacity to support schools in the full development of their academic and social project, to strengthen the shared governance structures, to develop competencies and to deliver technical support to principals and schools, in fundamental elements such as the definition and management of budgets. All of this is aimed at improving access to services for students and their families.

Transformation Recommendation 1C. LEAs will be formed with a size and scale of operation that allows them to provide effective support to schools and fosters community involvement in each region: The goal is for the LEAs to have a number of students that allows them to have a balance between close and healthy accompaniments to the schools, and a scale of operation significant enough to mitigate the cost of these structures on the system. Thus, effective support to principals, real community involvement, and the level of specialization to serve schools with needs will be achieved. The specific design of the LEAs will be established according to criteria of geographic dispersion, number of students, number of schools served, cultural affinity, and level of specialization of the schools, among others, which will be defined in a working group. This group will have the objective to propose specific LEAs based on the community's voice, expertise, and data. Based on the reality of the island, the board may propose an exception to the size or

nature of the LEA, such as differentiated attention for Vieques and Culebra.

Transformation Recommendation 1D. An open, merit-based selection, evaluation, and professional development process that will enable LEAs to operate with qualified LEA superintendents: LEA superintendents will be selected through a merit system that ensures they have the academic preparation, experience, and skills necessary to perform the LEA duties through an open and public process that includes participation of the communities being served.

Transformation Pillar # 2 - Develop a governance system that allows the community to actively participate in the decision-making that affect the regional education project and school life, being the custodian of the resources allocated to its student body. The community will actively participate in defining plans and making major system decisions through School Boards and Advisory Councils for each LEA. These mechanisms should ensure that schools and regions are the hubs of transformation and innovation in the system and will also serve as a vehicle for transparency of information and accountability for the management of their resources and funds.



Transformation Recommendation 2A. Empowered School Boards: Law 85 of 2018 defines the School Boards as the mechanism for community participation in school governance. Although its implementation has been inconsistent and only some schools effectively use them, work will be done to strengthen them as key actors in school decentralization and empowerment. The School Board will create the school's strategic decisions in ways such as participating in the development of the school's strategic plan, following up on annual operational plans, and the fulfillment of goals.

The School Boards will participate in the selection of the principal by providing the nominees to the LEA and evaluate his/her performance as an academic leader and supervisor of funding and resource management, and will participate in the formulation, follow-up, and review of the budget, among others. As an oversight mechanism, it will receive the internal and external audit reports made on the implementation of resources in the schools and will influence the strategic decision-making of the schools.

Transformation Recommendation 2B. LEA Advisory Councils (CAL) with citizen participation: LEA Advisory Councils (CALs) will be created and will be responsible for supporting the LEA superintendent in defining plans and monitoring implementation and educational outcomes. Among other responsibilities, the CAL will participate in the selection of the LEA superintendent through the public nomination of candidates to be submitted to the secretary; evaluate the performance of the elected superintendent; validate the LEA budget; and receive reports from the control system and audits on the implementation of resources in the LEA. CALs will verify the equitable allocation of funds to schools and their appropriate use.

Transformation Pillar # 3 - Increase flexibility and budgetary autonomy of schools for operational support processes, starting with purchasing processes, facilities maintenance, and technology processes, which will be executed mostly in schools to improve agility and adaptability.

Transformation Recommendation 3A. Schools will have greater capacity and flexibility to define and manage their budget, with the support of the LEA and based on an objective process to meet the needs of their students: Schools will manage their budget and purchases according to their educational model, their plans, and their particular needs. The LEAs and the SEA will support capacity building, the selection of

qualified suppliers based on open and transparent processes, and the management of third parties involved (such as ASG, Federal Education, etc.).

Transformation Recommendation 3B. Operational processes, with special attention to purchasing and facilities maintenance, will be modified to respond quickly and provide greater autonomy and flexibility to schools and LEAs: Once schools have formulated their budget according to their needs, it is critical to ensure that goods and services (including facilities maintenance) effectively reach schools in a timely manner. This will optimize the use of funds and allows for the school to have access and direct services improving responsiveness capability in situations of need.

Transformation Recommendation 3C. Strengthen data analysis capabilities and information systems for decision making: Each school, LEA and the SEA will have the data analysis skills necessary for decision making in relation to their responsibilities. An island-wide shared data system will be created, under standards established by the SEA, to which each LEA and school will have access. Dedicated analysis areas will be created in SEA and each LEA and will train schools in the use of data for academic and budgetary decision making.

Transformation Recommendation 3D. The administrative structure of each school will be strengthened to ensure administrative processes and maximize the possibility of investing attention and effort in academic issues. New positions will be created in the schools for this purpose, such as resources dedicated exclusively to administrative tasks or academic leadership, which will facilitate the work of the principal in ensuring the academic quality and overall proper functioning of the institution. The new roles, which may differ from school to school, will be defined based on pilot experiences during implementation and an understanding of the current functioning of the schools.

Transformation Pillar # 4 - Decentralize academic management and staff development to achieve relevance and quality of education in each school. For decentralization to fulfill the purpose of providing a higher quality and relevant education to students, it is necessary for the schools to have a say in the definition and use of the appropriate teaching tools to implement, according to the context of each school, and the standards and curriculum defined by the SEA for the children and youth of the island. In this sense, regional and central

structures, processes, governance, and other efforts should grant greater autonomy to schools in 3 main axes:

Transformation Recommendation 4A. The school will have greater flexibility in the choice and operationalization of its educational model and/or strategy, with permanent guidance from the LEA, and under the parameters defined by the SEA: The school will be provided with greater flexibility in the choice and operationalization of its educational model for all regular, technical, vocational, and extended education. The SEA will set academic standards, through the official "general and basic" curriculum, and guidelines for assessment systems applicable throughout the island, based on federal and state standards. It will also provide information and guidance on applicable educational models and strategies, which will be selected by the school (e.g., traditional, Montessori) with the support of the LEA. Additionally, the SEA will provide a wide range of alternative instructional methods and pedagogical tools, among which each school will be able, together with their corresponding LEA, to select and develop in alignment with its environment and community. Thus, local curricular flexibility will be exercised within the frameworks established by the SEA for all of Puerto Rico's and federal standards.

Transformation Recommendation 4B. Special education will be managed by the LEA and implemented at the school to bring services closer to the students and improve their relevance. In order to enhance the timeliness, relevance and excellence of special education services, the evaluation and provision of services to the school, supported and guided by the LEA, will be assigned whenever feasible. In this way, the school will be responsible for managing services, articulating specialists, and identifying staff training needs, ensuring student progress. The LEA, on the other hand, will be a facilitator in the process with the purpose of providing the necessary resources, supporting the school in the process, and verifying compliance. This implies that the Special Education Centers will evolve to a smaller number of establishments, but with a more specialized structure to guarantee services.

Transformation Recommendation 4C. The management and staff development process at the school will be strengthened to enable the school, LEAs and SEA to work in a complementary and effective manner under decentralization: Decentralization of academic management requires coordinated processes and complementary capabilities in schools, LEAs, and SEAs. For example, to achieve an effective decentralization it will count with a

particular process of professional selection, recruitment, and development of teachers and non-teaching staff. In this way, each school will have the right workforce and will identify its needs and interests, and according to these, request professional development activities that are useful and relevant. It is important to clarify that this decentralization proposal will not render ineffective the provisions of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, or the rights acquired in the Grievance Procedure.

Transformation Pillar # 5 - Reconfigure the monitoring and risk management system at the state and federal levels to ensure compliance, transparency and effective participatory governance that does not hinder educational management.

Transformation Recommendation 5A. Reconfigure the PRDE's internal risk management system from transaction-based control to aggregate monitoring by risk level, with mechanisms for continuous improvement and intervention for underperforming LEAs: A key element in transferring functions from the SEA to LEAs and schools is to ensure mechanisms to manage the risks associated with the decentralization process. For this reason, it will be necessary to strengthen and evolve the system so that the current transaction-based control at the central level migrates to subsequent monitoring and aggregate monitoring by risk level. This should include not only the fiscal part, but also the planning and programmatic execution. Finally, it will be necessary to strengthen the capacity to manage audit findings [within the PRDE], with the purpose of having continuous improvement and guarantying compliance.

Transformation Recommendation 5B. Strengthen the handling of findings in existing external audits and those required by state and federal law: Ensure that the outreach incorporates LEAs and strengthens the impact of current audits conducted by the Office of Inspector General (OIG), Comptroller's Office, Single Audit, and Third Party such that they are transparent, and that the PRDE can manage findings, and that they are used as input in the monitoring of governance bodies.

Proposed Implementation Plan

The transformation of the educational system must be planned in an organized, calm but agile manner, aiming to have a high impact in the shortest possible

time, minimizing the risk of losing all the positive things that are currently happening in schools. Therefore, it is recommended to implement decentralization through the following 5 initiatives.

Initiative #1 - Integration of the IDEAR Office into the Department of Education to ensure coordinated execution of the implementation plan. This office will have designated funds to ensure effective and coordinated execution of all areas of transformation linked to the decentralization process. IDEAR will support implementation in areas such as coordination of implementation teams, resolution of legal issues, communications, community relations, and consultation with local and international experts. IDEAR will also evaluate the implementation of the pilots at all levels of the PRDE and make recommendations for the evolution of the model based on the lessons learned from the pilots.

Within the IDEAR Office, eight implementation teams will be created to detail the implementation plan, which will operate from September 2023. These will focus on creating guidelines, manuals, and defining detailed processes to ensure the proposed transformations and ensure the strength of the transformation. The teams will include members from PRDE, USDE, OGP, representatives from the school community, unions, and experts. The implementation teams are:

- **Implementation Team #1:** Operationalization of the LEAs.
- **Implementation Team #2:** Formation and strengthening of governance bodies and definition of the selection process for LEA superintendents.
- **Implementation Team #3:** Comprehensive redesign of purchasing processes.
- **Implementation Team #4:** Decentralize academic management to achieve relevance and quality in the school.
- **Implementation Team #5:** Special Education.
- **Implementation Team #6:** Human Resources.
- **Implementation Team #7:** Finance and budget, IT monitoring and tuning.
- **Implementation Team #8:** Reconstruction and maintenance of facilities.

Initiative #2 – Development of three pilots to define the process for the creation and certification of LEAs. During 2023-2024, the first three groups of schools representing the diversity of Puerto Rico’s educational system will be developed to form the LEA model pilots. These pilots will work on the required changes at the SEA, LEA, and school levels.

I2A. LEA model: three representative LEA model pilot areas will be selected to maximize learning from the pilots: an urban pilot area of average academic

performance, a pilot area with low academic performance schools, and a rural pilot area. In these pilots:

- a. the proposed governance structure will be developed through the establishment of the LEA Advisory Council (CAL), which will have representation from the school community.
- b. a merit and competency-based system will be established for the appointment of LEA superintendents through a LEA Advisory Council (CAL) nomination process.
- c. the necessary structure will be developed at both the LEA and the school to give them the autonomy in terms of budget definition and management and capacity building necessary to support the school's mission.
- d. the support processes for the schools will be refined to ensure that they serve the academic activity with the agility and transparency required for proper operation.

The certification process will be established so that these LEA models can be formally designated once the pilots are completed and the required regionalization, regulations and operating manuals are in place. To do this, support will be contracted from experts who will identify needs for training, process design and support in the deployment of the model.

I2B. SEA: “Healthy” supervision and support capacities of the central level (SEA) to LEAs will be developed, such as support in the definition of educational models, planning according to them, setting high goals and standards, and transparent mechanisms in terms of use of resources and money and their monitoring, so that decisions and actions are taken closer to the schools.

I2C. Schools: the design and details of school and fiscal autonomy, participatory governance of this unit will be worked with the pilot schools, and the School Board will be strengthened. The school will request and coordinate with the LEA for support in various areas, such as staff training, data analysis, curriculum, and educational models. The goal is to achieve effective changes in the classroom. The above will be accompanied by the definition and deployment of a capacity building module for the principals of the pilot schools, with the aim of ensuring conditions within the school to guarantee the professional development of teachers, the use of resources to strengthen the teaching process and to enable the design of participatory governance and collective work that this model requires.

Initiative #3 – Strengthening the administrative capacity of all schools with new roles in the local structure and more effective School Boards. The administrative

capacity of each school on the island will be strengthened, with new roles determined according to the particular conditions of each school, in order to free up the time of the teaching staff and the school principal to be dedicated to educational tasks. Additionally, the full appointment and effective functioning of all School Boards will be sought, along with accountability mechanisms for the school principal. This implementation initiative will need to be detailed by the governance and human resources redesign implementation teams.

Initiative #4 – Re-engineering of cross-cutting processes necessary to enable effective school autonomy, focusing on purchasing, facilities maintenance, information technology, academic management, and school budget allocation. Experts will study and integrate effective processes on the Island. Processes that simplify and optimize cross-cutting management will be sought priority will be given to purchasing and facilities maintenance processes, as well as the budget allocation process based on a clear formula. These processes must incorporate other projects being executed in the Government of Puerto Rico, such as the implementation of the ERP of the Treasury Department and the Public Service Reform, so that they are adapted from the beginning to the general definitions adopted for the Island. Risk management and information technology processes will be adjusted and adapted to the new model based on SEA, LEA and school roles and the definition of process reengineering.

Initiative #5 – Regionalization of the PRDE under the new configuration, followed by a formalization of the LEAs, as prerequisites are met by the community in each region, with the objective of forming all the LEAs in the shortest possible time: After determining the regions that may become LEAs, the PRDE will be reorganized, through a minimum regional structure that allows implementing cross-cutting processes in accordance with the decentralization model. The formalization of LEAs will follow a staggered and orderly process that will allow each LEA to be constituted when prerequisites involving community initiative are met. When the basic governance components of the LEA are in place, including all school boards and the election of community representatives to join the CAL, the LEA will be formally constituted.

Initiative #6 – Ensure the organizational transformation of the central level of the Department of Education (SEA) to accommodate the new LEA processes and configuration. The implementation process will be accompanied by gradual changes in the organizational structure of the PRDE to develop the necessary capabilities to support and expedite the necessary changes. The IDEAR Office team will initiate the design of new administrative processes during the pilot

phase. Concurrently, they will continue the organizational transformation to complete the transition to the new target organizational structure for the PRDE as outlined in Transformation #1. A change management strategy will be designed and implemented transversally to the organizational changes to ensure that the PRDE team adopts the new work model and organizational culture that a transition to a decentralized model entails.

3. CONTEXT AND ORIGIN OF THE IDEAR INITIATIVE

The need to decentralize Puerto Rico's education system has been considered and debated at various times and contexts in recent years. Law 85 established a legal and institutional framework for a transformation in this direction, however insufficient progress has been made in its implementation and the expected benefits for students have not been achieved. The delicate situation of public education, aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters that struck the island, increases the pressure to undertake a transformation that translates into substantial improvements in quality. This situation has led to a consensus among various stakeholders in the system to lead a robust and determined effort that will give rise to true decentralization and transformation of education in Puerto Rico.

Children and youth have experienced six consecutive years of significant interruptions in schools, including extended periods of absence. In addition, the student population in the public system has been declining at an accelerated pace and is now only 57% of what it was 10 years ago. Furthermore, standardized test scores have shown a negative trend in recent years, going from an average score of 225 in 2017 to 216 in 2022, according to information reported by The Nation's Report Card.

The high participation of students who qualify for Special Education programs also represents a greater demand for resources and capabilities. While in 2022, 31% of students in Puerto Rico's public system participated in Special Education programs, this percentage was 15% in other U.S. jurisdictions.

Financial and administrative management capacity are also a challenge for system improvement. The investment per student, relative to the cost of living, continues to be lower than that of most states in the United States, according to information obtained from the *US Census Bureau*, the PRDE and *The Missouri Economic Research and Information Center*. On the other hand, the funds that the Federal Government has made available to help rebuild the educational system have not been used at the expected speed to respond to the island's needs due to administrative limitations to meet the required processes and conditions.

Meanwhile, teachers perceive that they are not receiving sufficient support to carry out their tasks, whether in terms of materials, training, salary, or benefits. In addition, there has been evidence of a significant migration of teachers to other states, representing a considerable challenge to ensure the trained human capital required for quality education in Puerto Rico.

Law 85 focused on creating conditions allowing for greater decentralization so that critical decisions to provide quality education for students would be made closer to the school. Likewise, it gave regional autonomy importance to adapt teaching methods and tools to each community's reality. In this sense, the Regional Education Offices (ORE) were established as a vehicle for delegating functions and bringing decisions and specialized support closer to the schools.

Vision of the transformation set forth in Law 85 – Excerpts from the explanatory memorandum.

- Much of the system's inefficiency results from the lack of knowledge of the needs of a school or educational region from the central office in San Juan.
- The objective of this reform is to put the best interests of students primarily, so that they can receive a quality education....
- To achieve this end, the school must create the ideal conditions for students to appropriate the tools that society offers them for their development; recognize the diversity of students and develop alternatives to ensure that they develop their capabilities to the maximum.
- ...this Law promotes a more efficient and decentralized internal structure of the Department...
- The proximity between the Regional Education Office and the schools will make it possible to attend with greater diligence and efficiency the needs and particularities of the school communities they serve.

The vision of decentralization and efficiency promoted by Law 85 has not materialized. Fiscal constraints and the COVID-19 pandemic limited the efforts and resources the island's government could allocate to the implementation of changes. In this context, the education backlog has not been reduced, the PRDE processes have not adapted to the decentralization mandate, and most of the ailments that prompted the establishment of Law 85 related to transparency, community participation, and efficiency remain. As a result, the consensus among society's different strata on the urgency of practical actions that lead to fundamental changes in education quality has been strengthened.

Educational Community Survey Findings

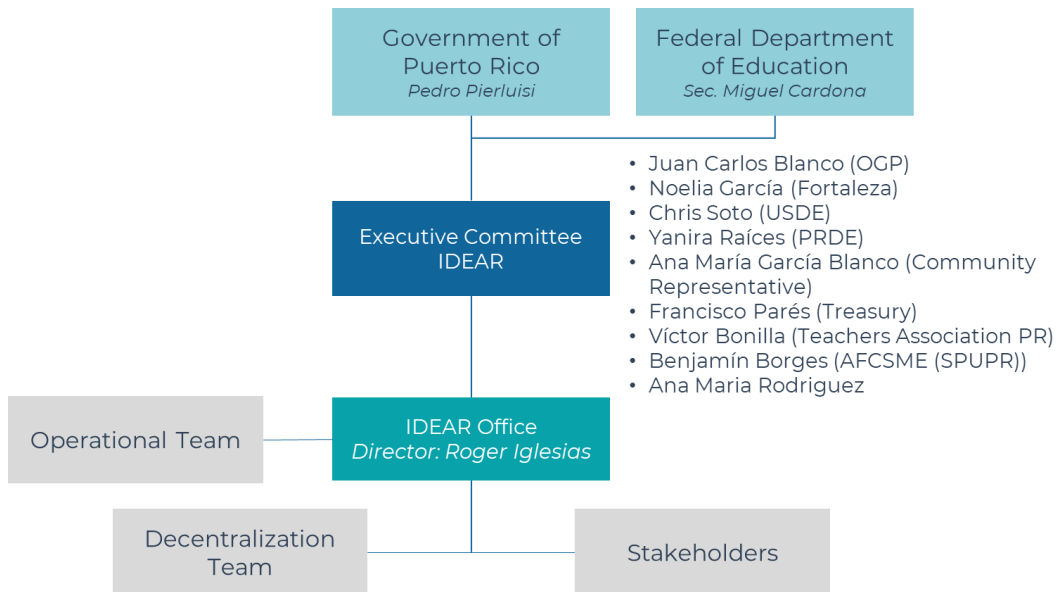
- Students and teachers want an improvement in the quality of education, infrastructure, communication, and food.
- Parents want activities and spaces to establish greater closeness and direct communication with the teaching staff to become more involved in their children's education.
- The system is perceived to be highly bureaucratic.
- There is uncertainty and distrust about the methods of allocating funds, the efficiency of their use and transparency.
- There is a high degree of partisanship in the selection decisions of the PRDE executives.
- There is a desire for greater collaboration among the educational community and a desire for increased citizen participation in decision-making in the education system. 70% of teachers and principals surveyed by IDEAR relied on their own resources to purchase some materials in the 2022-2023 school year.
- 43% of students surveyed by IDEAR are not optimistic about the future of education in Puerto Rico.

In response, Puerto Rico's Government, with the support of the Federal Government, structured an initiative to promote an organized and phased process for the decentralization of Puerto Rico's Department of Education. This effort was called the Educational Decentralization and Regional Autonomy Initiative (IDEAR)², made official through Executive Order 2023-014³, which declares the decentralization of the Puerto Rico Department of Education as governmental public policy. The Executive Order also created the IDEAR Executive Committee as the main governing and monitoring body of IDEAR. The Committee comprises high-level representatives of the school community, teachers and non-teaching staff, local government, and Federal Education.

² <https://de.pr.gov/idear>

³ <https://docs.pr.gov/files/Estado/OrdenesEjecutivas/2023/OE-2023-014.pdf>

Graph. Governance bodies of the decentralization project.



*Dr. Yanira Raíces replaced Eliezer Ramos as Secretary of Education in July 2023.

This document presents for the consideration of the IDEAR Committee, the action plan for the decentralization of Puerto Rico’s educational system. For the construction process, the voice of the Puerto Rican school community has been heard through conversations, surveys, and other spaces throughout the island, with the participation of local and other state experts, officials from the PRDE and other agencies of the Government of Puerto Rico and the United States Department of Education (USDE), who evaluated and defined how the current system could be improved based on local and international best practices. With the Government’s approval, this plan will be officially promulgated and IDEAR’s Executive Committee will oversee its implementation.

4. DECENTRALIZE TO REDIRECT THE EDUCATION SYSTEM TOWARDS THE STUDENT

The transformation of the educational system is based on the vision that all the efforts and resources of the State and the community are at the service of improving the quality of education for the benefit of the student.

This change represents a significant evolution in the approach to education and local management, as well as a more efficient public management that is closer to the real needs of Puerto Rico.

The most important attributes of this change include:

- Allow aspirations and goals to come directly from families and students, who are the *raison d'être* of the education system.
- Create opportunities for service innovation and improvement of the educational system.
- Ensure effectiveness and efficiency.
- Establish more productive and constructive relationships between the central organization, regions, and schools – change the culture.
- To develop in teachers the idea of becoming promoters of their students' dreams.

Decentralization is defined as the transfer of decision-making power over critical educational issues from central levels to the island's public schools. This change occurs in different dimensions of the educational system's operation:

- Structures and processes that enable an agile and effective day-to-day operation in schools, and collaborative work between the central and local levels.
- Participatory governance mechanisms that empower schools and regions in decision-making.
- Flexibility to adapt and implement public policies that are aligned with local circumstances.
- Responsibility for managing state and federal resources allocated and distributing them according to local priorities.
- Accountability for results and monitoring capacity at the central level.

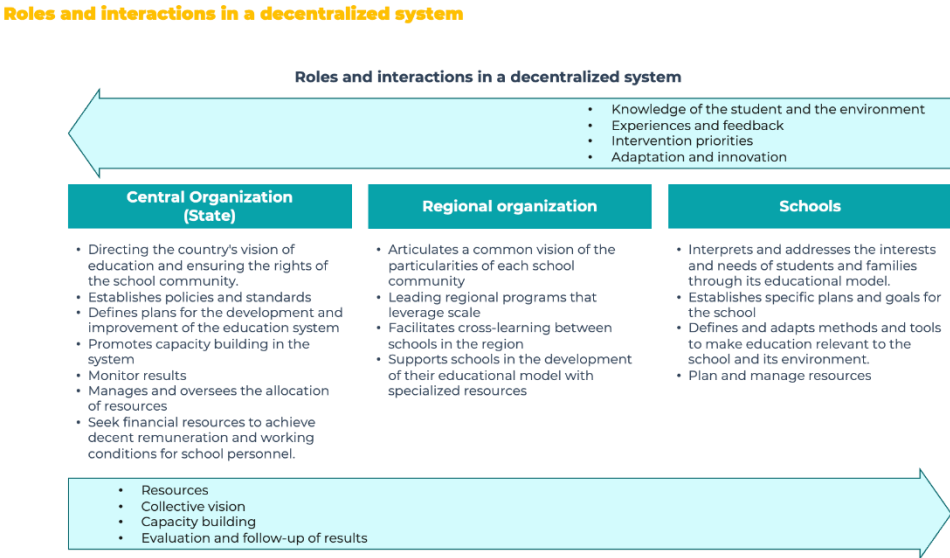
Specifically, the proposed model seeks to empower schools by giving them more major influence over decisions that impact the educational community and to divide responsibilities between the central level (SEA) and regional entities (LEA), and to promote collaborative work so that education is managed, supervised, and improved according to the particularities and needs of each

community. In this way, the regional level will operate as an LEA and will support the educational project designed and developed by the school; the SEA will be the custodian of the right to education, ensuring access for all to an excellent education.

Decentralization, as defined, is an appropriate platform to develop this transformation, because it fosters empowerment in the components of the system closest to students and families. To achieve this, decentralization cannot be limited to organizational structure changes. True and effective decentralization requires a change in culture and vision, and addresses capacity building, resource management and technical assistance at all system levels. It must also create a different sense of ownership, in which people at all levels share responsibility for executing optimally against measurable goals and outcomes. In addition, it must ensure that teaching takes precedence over operational matters, considering its impact on learning and the quality-of-life opportunities it can give to students.

Decentralization redefines the roles played by government, region, and school, and encourages relationships not based on hierarchies or vertical lines of command. Rather, the model is based on assigning responsibilities and functions at the levels where they are needed so that the system can produce the best results for students as illustrated in the following graph:

Figure. Roles and interactions in a decentralized system.



To enable this change, the premises that underpin the system must be defended, and they become fundamental pillars for achieving the objectives of quality, equity, and efficiency in education.

Organizational

- Clarity in roles to avoid overlapping and gaps in responsibilities.
- Continuous development of capabilities and human resources.
- Collaborative relationship and fluid communication between the state and local levels.

Change management and culture

- Autonomy with responsibility.
- Community participation.
- Flexibility to adopt policies according to local priorities.

Fairness and transparency

- Commitment to equity so that all students can access quality educational opportunities.
- Equitable and transparent financing.
- Effective use of data to inform decisions and make improvements.

5. CHALLENGES IN THE DECENTRALIZATION OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM

The organization of the PRDE should be adjusted to achieve effective decentralization. Although 7 Regional Education Offices (ORE) were established as of Law 85, they do not operate in a complete level of autonomy and do not empower schools in decision-making. In addition to the fact that the internal organization has not been modified to favor an effective delegation of the most important decisions to the OREs, there have also been no effective channels to include the school community in decisions that affect the development of schools and the quality of education. Experience in the United States and other countries shows that community participation in decisions about the direction of schools and regions is an essential component for achieving an adequate level of autonomy that translates into better education. However, the processes, structures, and control paradigm within the PRDE and other agencies involved prevent the regions from operating autonomously in management.

Participation of the school community in decision-making is limited:

The lack of effective mechanisms to involve the community in school and regional decision-making restricts the system's capacity to identify and interpret students' needs and the school's context to achieve the expected results. The different dialogue exercises showed that the community demands greater transparency, participation, and capacity to decide what happens in schools so that students' learning process is in accordance with their realities and available resources.

Community Position: Citizen Participation in Schools

“How are they going to decide what a Vieques student needs from San Juan? Those of us who know the students and the needs of the school are the ones who live their day-to-day lives. If we really want to change the system, it is important that we cry out to be heard, because we are not being heard.”

- School teacher-

“In my school the school board doesn't work because the principal doesn't want it, because it takes power away from her.”

- School teacher -

Law 85 establishes the formation of School Boards as a mechanism for the school community's participation in the school's management. Although, to date, 81% of schools have already installed their councils, their existence has not fulfilled the objective foreseen in the law. The lack of robust mechanisms for democratic selection and support to strengthen the processes and capacities of the councils has meant that their role in school governance is neither proper nor effective. The lack of support and guidance to strengthen the processes and capacities of the councils has led to the fact that their role in school management is not homogeneous and that there are significant divergences in operational aspects such as their functional scope, selection mechanisms (representativeness) and frequency of meetings, among others.



“The School Boards concentrate, above all, on managing the school's own resources such as what is received from raffles and events organized by the community.”

- School Principal -

“A large part of the School Boards have been appointed, but they almost never meet.”

- Regional Superintendent -

Additionally, the law did not establish explicit mechanisms for community participation in the management of the ORE, as is the usual practice in decentralized systems. This loophole has been one of the main reasons for the “non-decentralization” and deterioration of the system. Regional superintendents are appointed and removed by the secretary without a consultation process or a protocol to ensure that candidates meet the minimum qualifications and the consent of the community they will serve. Thus, the lack of a plural and participatory body to establish plans, follow up, raise consultations, and interpret population's needs, implies that the regions rely on the central organization, headed by the Secretary of Education, as the sole source of direction and control. This reality contrasts with the vision of decentralization.

Community position: Regions and appointment of leaders.

“It is not clear how the ORE works internally, there is disparity of municipalities in each region, and they do not give it proper management.”

I don't know who to turn to if I have a problem, because they only help me if I go on Tuesday or Thursday."

- School Principal-

"Superintendents or principals always elect them because they are a "buddy." Those positions should be elected based on merit. We must eradicate partisan politics."

- School teacher-

Functions and capabilities are highly concentrated:

Puerto Rico is one of the few jurisdictions in the U.S. that continues to operate as a unitary system, in which the same agency performs the central (SEA) and regional (LEA) functions. The education system, considered in its entirety, ranks as the sixth largest school district among all U.S. jurisdictions. Currently, the 7 OREs into which the PRDE is divided have slightly more than 860 active school sites, nearly 25,000 teachers and more than 10,000 non-teaching employees. Enrollment for the current school year is close to 250,000 students.

The central structure plays operational roles and has few resources dedicated to establishing an educational project for the island. Some processes that are typically the responsibility of regional structures such as the management of comprehensive services, personnel recruitment, and budget management are carried out in the central structure.

Community position: Pains of a centralized system

"They always want to give the same thing to everyone. They do not understand that the needs in San Juan are different from the needs in Adjuntas. There should be a needs study and it should come from the school."

- School Principal -

“Central level [in San Juan] should be in charge of administration, and we should be in charge of education, of the academic part. How are we going to form future leaders if we are focused on filling out forms that nobody reads?”

- School teacher -

For their part, the OREs are not organized and prepared to perform the functions of the LEAs. The size of OREs is larger than required to maintain proximity and close knowledge of the region. The average size of OREs is larger than that of 97% of U.S. school districts, according to statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). In addition, principals and teachers consistently report not receiving enough attention from regional superintendents or ORE staff. Furthermore, regional superintendents have limited roles in key issues such as managing their budgets, managing resources, hiring and professional development of staff in the regions. This situation results in decisions not being implemented in a timely manner and outcomes not being tailored to the region’s needs.



“We take advantage of all the training opportunities offered by the Department, but we can’t design programs that we feel we need for our teachers.”

- Regional Superintendent -

The current system’s rigidity is also manifested in the fact that OREs and schools are limited in innovating and adapting teaching methods to their community’s context. The central level of the PRDE oversees defining the standards and the general curriculum for the school system, however, there are no mechanisms that provide the flexibility required for implementation to adjust to local realities. The OREs and schools do not have the capacity or the authority to evaluate, choose and promote modifications to teaching models that respond to the needs of their environment. This situation restricts the opportunity for teachers and principals to bring their knowledge and capacity to interpret the needs of their students to create programs adjusted to the needs of their school community.

Community position: Academic management

“We need a curriculum that is adapted to our region, that responds to the needs of the students and not one that is forced by the central office that pigeonholes the children. They must understand that the school in the city is different from the countryside school.”

- School teacher -

Finally, centralization limits efficiency, effectiveness, and relevance in Special Education, due primarily to 3 factors:

- The PRDE's service delivery model for Special Education has a structure that operates independently, which implies a significant challenge to meet the high demand of the system in a way that addresses the individual needs of each student. While there are now 11 Special Education Service Centers (CSEE) where services are provided and students are evaluated, the guidelines are centrally issued and are not aligned with the school's needs. This, coupled with difficulties with providers, takes decision-making away from students, creates delays in service delivery, incurs recurring fines for the PRDE, and creates a misalignment of organizational structures between the central level, OREs, and Special Education Service Centers (CSEE).
- The problem is exacerbated by the significant increase in the proportion of special education students in Puerto Rico over the last 10 years, going from 19% in 2012 to 31% in 2022. This high percentage results in greater pressure on the system, which demands resources and makes it challenging to meet all individual needs on time. This high percentage also evidences the need to review and adjust the evaluation process to ensure that students are classified appropriately, accompanied by strengthening monitoring mechanisms so that resources are used efficiently.
- The Rosa Lydia Vélez case, which was sentenced in 2002, imposes 87 stipulations or tasks on the Puerto Rico Department of Education to provide services to students with disabilities, which exacerbates the conditions and time to comply with the services. Today, the PRDE is in noncompliance with this ruling and must work in a coordinated manner to overcome the barriers to streamline the system, fulfill the commitments, and provide services to students.

Community Position: Special Education

“The schools must have all the services on the school campus, not take the students to another place. It is a danger to have to take them out of the schools to provide them with services.”

- School teacher -

“Every student’s needs are different, I’ve had students in eighth grade who can’t read well. You cannot treat everyone the same.”

- School teacher -

Current administrative processes limit the autonomous management capacity of schools and OREs:

Some of the most essential processes for the operation of the PRDE cannot respond in a timely and effective manner to the needs of the schools. This situation prevents schools and OREs from having complete control over the conditions for teaching. To ensure that decentralization can be realized, the processes of procurement of goods and materials, budget management, and facilities maintenance need to be reviewed, as approximately 82% of the PRDE’s processes are mostly controlled by the central level, according to interviews with department staff. This limitation becomes even more critical in dealing with emergencies and crises such as those created by the natural disasters that the island has faced in recent years when significant delays and failures were evident in the delivery of critical goods and services to restore minimum operational conditions in schools.

Community position: Administrative and operational inefficiency

“It is baffling that the gym court at my daughter’s school is still unusable since Hurricane Maria.”

- Mother -

“At the beginning of the school year, I ordered 20 erasers for my classroom whiteboard, besides receiving the order in February of the next year, I received 48 mini erasers, which are for 4-year olds’ little whiteboards.”

- School principal-

Current response times for purchases of materials and services are excessive, even for requirements approved in the school budget. Internal and external controls on the PRDE process mean that some transactions require up to 18 approval steps, 4 of which come for the trustee. Regarding technology purchases, PRITS approvals are also required, which can delay the processing of requirements.

In order for the procurement process to respond to school needs, it is necessary to define strategies by segments according to their risk and to reduce the administrative burden on the teaching staff in the schools, in the regions and at the central level. It is also essential that new strategies be designed for requisitions made by schools and regions, such as the one implemented in this new school year through the “P-Card” (procurement/purchasing card) initiative with the objective of facilitating access to regular purchases of materials associated with authorized contracts. These strategies must be accompanied by tools to monitor their use. In this case, the “Information Access Portal” was implemented, which is an electronic platform that reflects the activation status, use and budget allocated to the “P-Card” initiative by municipality.



“I have requisitions [for supplies] from two years ago that have not yet arrived at the school.”

- School Principal -

The budget management process must also be modified to ensure the participation of principals so that it truly addresses the needs of the school community.

Further, the lack of authority and capacity in the schools and regions to plan and manage their budgets imposes a high degree of rigidity in making decisions to reallocate resources or budget sources. This situation is reflected in the fact that the OREs and schools are subject to the central level's approval and their response capacity to dispose of resources included in their budget. In this sense, decentralization requires more significant involvement of schools and regions in defining and managing their budgets.

“The principals get a budget where they are told what amount of money they are entitled to; they are told what they can spend it on and when.”

- Regional Superintendent -

The difficulty in performing school maintenance – including repairs to the water system, electrical equipment, bathrooms and sanitary facilities, grass cutting, painting, etc. – also affects their ability to operate in satisfactory and dignified conditions for students. Currently, facilities maintenance management is not directly managed by the schools or the region. In schools operated by the Public Buildings Authority (AEP) (approx. 42% of the total number of schools), there is little flexibility to modify or decentralize the procedure since it requires AEP to participate in the process, with different level of involvement according to the [currently] agreed contracts. In the schools administered by the Office for the Improvement of Public Schools (OMEP), approximately 58% of the total number of schools), it is evident that the internal response capacity is limited, and the procedure is not agile when a third party must be contracted and/or material must be purchased. In this case, some facility maintenance is carried out more quickly through municipal agreements or OMEP's direct team, but its scope is limited for now. In the decentralized model, it is necessary to train school personnel and allow them to participate in planning and attending to the conditions necessary for schools to operate in optimal conditions.

“The toilets at my school have not been working for more than a month.”

- Teacher-

6. DESIGN: HOW THE DECENTRALIZED SYSTEM WOULD OPERATE

To respond to the challenges of the system, a redesign of the educational system aimed at effective decentralization is proposed based on the following premises:

- Focus on quality teaching and learning for the success of all students.
- Provide worthy spaces for knowledge exchange among teachers and their presence at the academic decision-making table.
- Develop a culture of open doors, family leadership and involvement in school affairs.
- Continuously develop the knowledge and skills of all the people in the education system to carry out their tasks.
- Align the culture at the executive levels of the PRDE and government so that the education system serves the school.

Under this vision, five structural transformation pillars aimed at generating effective decentralization are proposed, bringing educational decisions to the school, and involving teachers, non-teaching staff, and families of the school community.

The five structural transformation pillars proposed for Puerto Rico's public education system are:

- **Transformation Pillar # 1** – Adjust the structure of the PRDE to support schools more effectively through a central level (SEA) focused on planning, public policies, and support to the regional level (LEA), which will oversee support, coordination, and development of local capacities in schools.
- **Transformation Pillar # 2** – Develop a governance system that allows the community to actively participate in making decisions that affect the life of the school and give direction to its regional educational project and allows it to be the custodian of the resources and monies allocated to its student body.
- **Transformation Pillar # 3** – Increase flexibility and budgetary autonomy of schools for operational processes, starting with procurement, facilities maintenance, and technology, which would be implemented mostly in schools to improve agility and adaptability.
- **Transformation Pillar # 4** – Decentralize academic management and staff development to achieve relevance and quality of education in each school.

- **Transformation Pillar # 5** – Reconfigure state and federal oversight and risk management systems to assure compliance, transparency, and effective participatory governance without hindering educational management.

The definition and scope of each of these recommendations is explained below.

TRANSFORMATION PILLAR # 1 – ADJUST THE STRUCTURE OF THE PRDE TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS MORE EFFECTIVELY THROUGH A CENTRAL LEVEL (SEA) FOCUSED ON PLANNING, PUBLIC POLICIES, AND SUPPORT TO THE REGIONAL LEVEL (LEA), WHICH WILL OVERSEE SUPPORT, COORDINATION, AND DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL CAPACITIES IN SCHOOLS.

Decentralization requires an approach to action by each level of the organization, which differs substantially from the current unitary model. Therefore, the whole structure of the PRDE will be adjusted to allow for the new model's implementation. The SEA structure will strengthen its abilities and culture to promote capacity building in the LEA. At the same time, operational functions will be delegated to the regions. As such, At the central level there will be a structure for the SEA to be specialized in planning, educational leadership, evaluation, monitoring and risk management in the system. The LEAs will receive the operational functions and will have professionally prepared leaders to assume the expanded tasks at the regional level; their size and geographic scope will be adjusted to allow them to provide effective support to schools. Appendix 10.1 – *Proposed functions* includes the proposed organization to comply with this separation of roles in the SEAs and LEAs.

Transformation Recommendation 1A. The SEA will specialize in planning and establishing efficient fund and resource management systems. The definition of the educational vision of the system, public policy and regulatory guidelines will remain at the central level; which will act with the role of SEA of the PRDE. In addition, the culture and skills to support more closely LEAs will be created, and capacities needed by LEAs for their management will be developed, which are different from the execution skills that currently prevail at the central level.

Transformation Recommendation 1B. The current areas of the central level of the PRDE will transfer execution capabilities to the LEAs. All current areas of the PRDE will be restructured so that the processes and structure corresponding to operational and implementation tasks will be transferred to the LEAs. This change is aimed at creating regional structures that are at the service of the schools under a region articulator role that further has mechanisms that secure community participation, and transparency as opposed to the current regional model that operates as an administration and control mechanism guided by definitions from the central level under a hierarchy relationship. In this sense, the Department's LEAs should, among other things, be able to support the professional training of teachers and non-teachers in schools, simplify and

streamline the delivery of resources, and support them in developing their educational model and strategies. To this end, some areas such as special education, budget, facilities maintenance, and procurement, among others, will become part of the regional administration as elements of the LEAs. In this way, LEA structures will be formed with a scale of operation that allows for effective support to schools, real community involvement in each region, and a level of specialization for schools with specific needs.

Graph. Roles of SEAs, LEAs, and schools under the decentralization model for Puerto Rico.

<p>School (local level) Run</p>	<p>Definition of school vision and strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure student academic achievement based on student needs. • Select educational model and adapt methods and tools. • Define school plans and goals based on student needs. <p>Execution and/or participation in decisions that impact the school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify needs for resources / budget, services, goods and personnel, and participation in selection process according to contracting or purchasing process.
<p>SEA (central level) <i>Provides conditions and ensures quality education</i></p> <p>Vision and public policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directing the country's vision of education and ensuring the rights of the school community. • Defining regulation, policies, guidelines and standards • Define strategy based on best practices and data • Define strategy and guidelines for special education, as well as evaluation and diagnostic standards. <p>Capabilities and implementation support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop management capacity in the LEAs - accompaniment, advice, guidance, training • Coordinate and secure processes with benefits of scale or specialization, e.g. facilities development, canteens, transportation, etc. • Identify qualified suppliers and make available to LEAs • Manage complaints and legal matters with the legal unit. <p>Follow-up and relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor legal and regulatory compliance • Securing funds for the sector 	<p>LEA (regional level) <i>Manages and provides operational support to schools</i></p> <p>Government and support to schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the implementation of public policy in schools. • Support schools in the budgeting process. • Consolidating and analyzing data to support decision making • Articulate school-based special education assessment and service delivery. <p>Operational support to schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate the provision of operational services to students at schools, e.g. transportation, security and meals • Provide complementary services to students, e.g. psychology, enrollment, etc. • Ensure timely maintenance of facilities • Manage procurement and purchase of goods and services. • Manage the personnel selection and hiring process <p>Oversight and relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor legal and regulatory compliance • Involve the community and local stakeholders

Transformation Recommendation 1C. LEAs will be formed with a size and scale of operation that allows them to provide effective support to schools and involve the community in each region. Regional management structures will be created that may be designated as LEAs, which will be subject to the usual State agency control mechanisms as units of the Department of Education and will be visible entities to the Federal Government. In addition, the analysis on the number of LEAs must be aligned with the Administration's initiative that seeks to standardize the directorates of the Central Government, including the Island's public corporations.

It is projected that the LEA configuration might include fewer schools per region than the current ORE configuration. The desirability of an increase in the number of LEAs is evidenced by school community perceptions, comparison

with similar school systems in the U.S., and the anticipated decrease in distance to schools within LEAs.

- Members of the school community have expressed the difficulty of the current model to adequately support schools and provide high-value support to principals, due to the high number of schools (110) and students (37 thousand) served on average by each ORE today.
- Figures from the National Center for Education Statistics show that the size of current OREs is at the high end of the distribution of LEAs in the United States. Current OREs would only be exceeded by about 3% of existing LEAs in the U.S., suggesting that the size of Puerto Rico's educational regions should decrease.
- The effectiveness of LEAs in providing support to schools may be determined by the geographic proximity of the schools of which they are made up.
- LEAs' support functions to schools require a minimum fixed structure in each LEA, as well as teacher facilitators with sufficient subject matter expertise to cover the schools.
- The organizational structure of each LEA should have officers in central support areas and a number of teacher facilitators, OMEP workers and technicians that would vary with the number of schools.

The final design and configuration of the LEAs should respond to each region's reality and conditions, considering cost and effectiveness criteria. The final design should represent an optimal balance in the expected impact of the following criteria, among others, on the operation of each LEA:

- Geographic dispersion: the distance that must be traveled to and from the LEA to the schools.
- Total Number of LEA (Total Cost): primary determinant of the total cost of the LEA system, due to the weight of the fixed cost represented by each new structure; this cost should be minimized, always ensuring the effectiveness of the system.
- Affinity in pedagogical needs: due to the specialization required in the group of facilitators, the more homogeneous the needs of the schools served by each LEA, the greater the specialization and therefore the more significant the effectiveness of the support.
- Cultural and extracurricular affinity: like the case of pedagogical needs, greater affinity facilitates and makes support more effective.
- Availability of human resources given the high number of personnel required, it must be ensured that the structure requires personnel that

can be effectively recruited on the island, avoiding LEAs with insufficient personnel and therefore low effectiveness.

- Administrative organization of supplemental public services: if possible, the number of LEA counterparts should be minimized to coordinate the provision of related services such as police, social protection services, municipal administration, utilities, emergency services and other applicable services.

Transformation Recommendation 1D. An open process of selection, evaluation and professional development based on the principle of merit will allow LEAs to operate with highly trained LEA superintendents. The key component of the structure of every LEA is a superintendent with the capacity to lead the educational project of a particular region, design and monitor the administrative structure necessary for the optimal development of each school. A merit system will be established through which the necessary profile and qualifications of the superintendent and a professional development plan will be developed to guide him/her in this cultural and structural transformation of the education system. Both the SEA executive and the school community it serves will annually evaluate LEA leaders and make suggestions for tenure or change. A profile will be created for the selection process of LEA staff, including superintendents. Current LEA leaders and other candidates will be evaluated according to the profile, in order to present shortlists to the Secretary of Education who will evaluate the candidates and select according to his or her criteria. The LEA advisory councils (CALs) will be formed prior to the selection process and will participate in it. In the *Appendix 10.2 – LEA Superintendent Profile and the Selection and Evaluation Process* The details of the profile and selection process are shown in Appendix 10.2 – LEA Superintendent Profile and Selection and Evaluation Process. The profile and selection process are shown. Beginning with the appointment of the superintendent, CALs will be continuously involved in the evaluation of the superintendent’s performance.

TRANSFORMATION PILLAR # 2 – DEVELOP A GOVERNANCE SYSTEM THAT ALLOWS THE COMMUNITY TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN MAKING DECISIONS THAT AFFECT THE EDUCATIONAL PROJECT AND SCHOOL LIFE, AND ALLOWS IT TO BE THE CUSTODIAN OF THE RESOURCES ALLOCATED TO ITS STUDENT BODY.

The community will participate in significant system decisions through strengthened School Boards at the school level and Advisory Councils for each LEA at the regional level. System governance will ensure that both LEAs and schools, key players in decentralization, are led with active community participation, to influence decision-making, and to strengthen the system’s accountability and promotes transparency to the community itself. For this task, the governance system agencies will have access to information on the implementation of schools and LEAs (e.g., budgetary and academical implementation, as the case may be), as well as to the opinions made on them by control agencies such as *Single Audit*, OGP, OIG, the Comptroller, the Federal Government, and the PRDE’s own internal control. *Appendix 10.3 – Mechanisms for Escalating Situations*, shows the process by which the community may escalate different issues to these control agencies. The LEA Advisory Councils and the School Boards must have clear statutes, approved, accepted, and practiced by the plurality of their members, which is a key factor for their successful management. *Appendix 10.3 – Mechanisms for Escalating Situations*, details the strategic purpose and mission of each control agency.

The following design principles are established to shape the governance structure:

- Gradual transition to the new model and agile testing of key components – it is proposed to start with an initial outline that prioritizes the essential elements to mature over time and incorporating adjustments as it proves successful, or opportunities are identified for the benefit of student well-being.
- Protection of the operational elements that work today.
- Capacity building at the SEA level to support the development of these governance bodies – their formation is key to the decentralization process, but the capabilities and discipline must be ensured to operate them effectively so that they have the proposed impact and influence. This includes training members of the bodies to develop key capacities.
- The process should be accompanied by a cultural change oriented to learning and continuous improvement at all levels: SEA / LEA / school.

The aim is to achieve representativeness and balance in the composition of the bodies. [Appendix 10.2 ** - Profile Governance Support Officers](#) details the scope and functions of this position.

To achieve the proposed design principles, the implementation will be carried out through pilots that will allow to prioritize, test, and improve the actions proposed in the governance system. Additionally, a Governance Support Officer will be appointed, who will monitor the governance system and attend LEA's Council meetings and School Board meetings (when summoned) to ensure proper functioning (frequency of meetings, election of members, ensuring impact on decisions, escalation of issues, etc.).

Transformation Recommendation 2A. Empowered School Boards: The School Board, formed for each school according to Law 85, will have expanded functions in the decentralization, with the objective of nourishing the executive decisions of the school by addressing the specific problems and interests of the community. Although they exist today for most schools, it will be key to strengthen them and enable the necessary elements for the community to participate and influence school decisions. The island already has successful experiences in the implementation of School Boards, which must be built upon to broaden their scope and capitalize on lessons learned (e.g., Julio Ressay School 70282 -Bayamón-, Manuel Bou Galí School 70870 -Corozal-, Visitación Pagán School 12633 -Orocovis-, and University Gardens -San Juan).

The proposed scope of these councils is as follows:

- Participate in critical decisions that allow the school to develop and meet the needs and interests based on the local reality (e.g., selection of the educational model or educational strategy, construction of the strategic plan, preparation of budget and action plans, definition of goals).
- Contribute to the definition and follow-up of strategies oriented to develop students' social-emotional skills.
- Collaborate in the definition of operational plans when required (e.g., security) and identify needs for services or activities in the school (e.g., extracurricular).
- Approve rules for school operations.
- Participate in the interview to select the school principal and second-level officials, based on the established profile and criteria (will send its formal recommendation to the LEA Superintendent).
- Participate in the School Principal's evaluation, reports and proposes a professional development plan.
- Follow up on school progress to ensure students' academic achievement.
- Make recommendations to the corresponding bodies regarding the management of the school's budget and the proper use of funds, as well as evaluate and approve activities that generate funds for the school.

- Receive *Single Audit* and internal control reports issued by SEA on the management of resources in their region.
- Disclose to the school community the activities carried out and the results of its management.
- To elect the community members of its CAL.

The composition of the Council will vary between 9 members (for small schools) and up to 13 (for schools with elementary and secondary levels) to ensure representativeness and balance (details in the table at the end of this section). These two alternative compositions will be tested in the pilots to determine the most effective one.

In order to have an effective Council, its members must be trained. The composition of School Boards under the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (“ESSA” of 2015) focuses on School Sustainability, Participation and Autonomy which is an essential process to empower key stakeholders in the education community and strengthen decision-making in schools.

School Board training is designed to provide its members with the tools and knowledge necessary to play an active and effective role in school management and improvement. The contents of the training cover various aspects, such as:

Roles and Responsibilities: Participants gain a clear understanding of the roles and duties as members of the School Board, as well as their interaction with other stakeholders inside and outside the school.

Management and Decision Making: The importance of participatory management and informed decision making in school leadership is emphasized. Participants learn to analyze situations, evaluate options and make decisions for the benefit of the educational community.

Leadership and Communication: School Board members develop effective leadership skills, as well as open and transparent communication strategies with teachers, students, parents, and the community at large.

Planning and Evaluation: Participants are introduced to the school’s strategic planning and evaluation processes, allowing them to actively contribute to the definition of goals, objectives, and improvement strategies.

Community Involvement: The importance of involving the community in the educational process and how School Board members can encourage the participation of diverse stakeholders is highlighted.

ESSEA Awareness: Detailed information is provided on the approach and how it aligns with the objectives of sustainability, participation, and autonomy.

Transformation Recommendation 2B. LEA Advisory Councils (CAL) with citizen participation: LEA Advisory Councils play a critical role under the Every Student Succeeds Act (“ESSA” of 2015). These councils are designed to provide advice and guidance to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) in their quest to promote educational quality, community engagement, and school autonomy. The operation of these councils is based on the principles of collaboration, transparency, and participatory decision-making. Each LEA will have an LEA Advisory Council (CAL) that will be instrumental in focusing the LEA’s actions on the needs of the community and increasing the transparency of the system. The value of the creation of this council focuses on promoting accountability and transparency on LEA results; relevance and adaptability to the needs of the school community; agility in implementation at the regional and school level; and community participation in the ideation and creativity process. The councils should function as spaces for open and constructive dialogue. Discussion of ideas, presentation of diverse perspectives, and consensus-building on key decisions are encouraged. Within the scope of this council, the following is proposed:

- Participate in defining the vision and medium-term strategy for the LEA, considering the community’s needs.
- Follow up on the strategic plan implementation and submit a concept to the LEA Superintendent.
- Participate in the construction of the budget contemplating community needs and be attentive of the fair allocation of resources and budgets to each school of the region.
- Follow up and monitor the implementation of the budget of all schools and submit a justification to the LEA Superintendent.
- Participate in the evaluation and selection of the LEA superintendent candidates, by recommending shortlists to the Secretary of Education to be evaluated and designated. This selection will be made public.
- Participate in the performance evaluation of the elected superintendent and his/her direct reports with the support of the PRDE central area (SEA) and in the development plan’s definition.
- Oversee alignment among regional school principals’ decisions, especially in level changes.
- Receive reports from the school community on situations that arise in the schools and are hindering their development.

- Document monthly meeting for the LEA Superintendent and the community.
- Provide an annual report on the progress in achieving the proposed goals.
- Receive internal or external control reports on the implementation of resources in the LEA.

The council will be made up of 12 members that seek to ensure representativeness and balance, who are listed in the table at the end of this section. The composition of these bodies is a suggestion that should be detailed by Implementation Team #2 and tested in the pilots, ensuring that the configuration alternatives evaluated are odd numbered. It is also recommended that this composition be flexible to the specific case of each school. As the model evolves and matures, the student vote on the LEA Advisory Council, the number of representatives from the educational community and the number of representatives of non-teaching LEA employees on the CAL can be evaluated.

Table. Structure of CAL and School Boards members

MEMBER TYPE		ADVICE LEA	SCHOOL BOARD
School officials	School Principal	1	1
	Teachers	2	2-3
	Non-teaching staff	1	1
	Support personnel	0	1-2
Community Rep.	Student	1 (voice, no vote) *	1-2
	Parents	2	2-3
	Higher Education Representative	1	0
	Rep. Business sector / community	1	1
	Special Education Representative	1	0

Public Officials	Representative of the central administration	1	0
	LEA representative – non-teaching personnel	1**	0
	Representatives of elected officials (mayors or assembly members)	1	0
	LEA Governance Support Officer	1 (voice, no vote)	1 (voice, no vote)
Total members		12 vote + 2	9-13 vote + 1

* As the model evolves and matures, student voting on the LEA Advisory Council may be evaluated.

** In cases where there is a conflict of interest, the LEA representative shall disqualify himself/herself.

The [Appendix 10.3 – System Overview and Selection of LEA Advisory Councils and School Boards’ members](#) further details the selection of CALs and School Boards’ members. In any case, these bodies shall have approved bylaws that clearly define the minimum number of public meetings, frequency of meetings, the composition of members and the term of their mandate, the scope of responsibilities, among other items. Additionally, meeting minutes will be published on the school’s website, and they will receive annual training related to performing their roles.

TRANSFORMATION PILLAR # 3 – INCREASE FLEXIBILITY AND BUDGETARY AUTONOMY OF SCHOOLS FOR OPERATIONAL SUPPORT PROCESSES, STARTING WITH PROCUREMENT, FACILITIES MAINTENANCE AND TECHNOLOGY, WHICH WOULD BE EXECUTED MOSTLY IN SCHOOLS TO IMPROVE AGILITY AND ADAPTABILITY.

Transformation Recommendation 3A. Schools will have greater capacity and flexibility to define and manage their budget, with the support of the LEA and based on an objective process to meet the needs of their students. The definition and management of budget resources will be aligned with the responsibilities of schools, LEAs, and SEAs under the decentralization model, so that schools can make use of the flexibilities provided in the law to manage their needs. Budgets will be set based on objective criteria, with numerical formulas per pupil or other objective criteria where applicable, to ensure equity and compliance with State and Federal Law. In principle, budgets management would be distributed as follows:

- School: the sector's resources, training, maintenance of facilities, purchase of materials, provision of services to students and, in general, those corresponding to all school operations under the decentralization model.
- LEA: resources for the operation of the organizational support structure for schools envisioned in the decentralization, including academic facilitators, budgeting and control areas, and implementation of services at regional level, including special education and technology centers.
- SEA: budget required for its planning and support work, including infrastructure works, definition of academic standards, and capacity building in LEAs and schools.

The LEA supports the capacity development in schools to manage its budget, ensuring that the school is fully aware of the basis for budget allocation per student, per title [section of the law] and per fund; of the alternatives to transfer budget items; and of the mechanisms to manage the budget throughout the year, following the guidelines, flexibilities and restrictions involved in the management of each source of funds, whether state or federal. For its part, the SEA will support the LEAs in system transversal capacity development and management of third parties involved, such as the union, OGP, PRITS the federal government for budget management in funds by title.

At the SEA level, the consolidation of the budget of the entire PRDE would be maintained, with a key role in technical assistance to the regions regarding the procedures required for the correct use of each source. [Appendix 10.6 – Model](#)

proposal: budget and financial management offers more detail on the recommended changes to the budget process.

Table. Illustrative Example of Budget Flexibility: ESEA Section 1003

PURPOSE OF THE TITLE (ESEA 1003)	ALTERNATIVES FOR USE OF FUNDS (ACCORDING TO USDE DOCUMENTATION)	IMPLICATION FOR DECENTRALIZATION
<p>Improve student outcomes in the schools selected for comprehensive or specific support</p>	<p>Activities that the LEA determines, based on evidence, that can achieve the objective. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development for teachers in a particular course. • Student tutoring. • Activities to promote family involvement. • Increasing the length of the school day. 	<p>The LEA will have the autonomy to support the intervention alternative selected by the school community, with full knowledge of the Title’s regulation and under which it is carried out.</p>

Source: USDE, <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2020/02/1003awebinarandpresentation.pdf>

Transformation Recommendation 3B. Operational processes, with special attention to procurement and facilities maintenance, will be modified to respond quickly and provide greater autonomy and flexibility to schools and LEAs. Decentralization will not be effective if operational and support processes are not aligned with greater educational flexibility for schools. The processes must give LEAs and schools the timely resources, personnel, and services necessary to implement their decisions in academic matters. This implies that the processes will be implemented in the school itself, to the extent possible. The operational processes most in need of change to fulfill the purpose of decentralization are procurement and facilities maintenance. According to the school community, these processes present deficiencies in relevance and timeliness that negatively affect teaching in the school. Adjusting these processes would be a priority action of the transformation:

- Purchase of materials, equipment, and services: The proposal aims to maximize the relevance of each purchase and minimize the conversion time from requisitions to purchase orders and delivery to the school, making the procurement decision more agile, flexible, and autonomous for the school and LEAs, as implemented with the “P-Card” initiative and the basic food baskets.

For this purpose, the following process is proposed:

- The SEA will maintain the role of setting procurement guidelines for all types of purchases. These guidelines will be agreed upon by SEA with ASG (goods), PRITS (technology), TPFA (all purchases), the USDE (goods and services under Federal programs), and in general all agencies of the State or Federal government that regulate the use of public funds.
- The SEA will execute the procurement process for cross-system goods and services (by scale, specialty, or complexity), but the rest will be managed and selected by the LEA, with the participation or influence of the school.
- Regarding suppliers, the SEA will provide a wide range of alternatives for selection by the LEAs and schools. Whether by accessing the list of ASG-registered suppliers that are qualified and technologically up-to-date, or by framework contracts that the LEAs and schools can opt for to meet their requirements for goods and services. School communities will have the option to direct local suppliers to register with ASG in order to strengthen the local economy.

Crucially, the process requires a redesign to simplify controls and responsibilities that will be addressed in the implementation, and must align with other Puerto Rico's government projects, including the ERP implementation.

Appendix 10.5 – Model Proposal: Procurement of Materials, Equipment and Services provides more detail on the proposed changes in procurement by modality.

- Facilities maintenance: Maintenance includes any intervention in the educational facilities that does not involve a change in the building's structure. Decentralization will be strengthened by improving maintenance management processes performed by OMEP in conjunction with the LEAs; designating a maintenance budget per LEA allowing the region to plan its needs and manage them as the year progresses; and facilitating the process of contracting services and purchasing goods at the regional level. The latter will be achieved through a combination of actions:
 - Simplifying controls in the process for procurement of materials and maintenance services,

- Making agreements with ASG so that enlarge the list approved suppliers and develop auctions for the provision of contracts on a framework to cover the totality of maintenance services.
- Developing municipal agreements or adjusting the scope of existing agreements in places where the LEA, in agreement with the school finds it convenient,
- Clarifying the responsibility of the PRDE for the maintenance of infrastructure leased to AEP, formulating agreement for this with AEP, as needed according to contract specifications to secure a fast, timely, and properly funded execution.

It should be clarified that this transformation of the facilities maintenance process will not affect the implementation of new infrastructure development projects, or where existing infrastructure is structurally modified. These projects will continue to be coordinated, contracted, programmed, and financed from SEA's central level; however, the planning, execution, and scheduling will count with the school and community to secure that the school day is not interrupted. This centralization is maintained due to the required specialization of the personnel in charge, both in project management and management of specific funding sources, both State and Federal, and the occasional nature of the projects at the local level.

Like the execution of infrastructure projects, the legal, physical security, and *stakeholder* management processes will continue to function in a comparable manner to the current one, with minor adjustments, as shown in [Appendix 10.8 – Model Proposal: Legal, Stakeholders, Security, and Infrastructure](#).

Transformation Recommendation 3C. Strengthen data analysis capacity and information systems for decision making. Each school, LEA and SEA must have the availability and capacity for data analysis necessary for decision making in relation to their responsibilities under decentralization. Thus, a unified and shared data system will be created, under established standards by the SEA and administered by each LEA, to which each school will have access. Both the SEA and each LEA will have dedicated areas for data analysis, and each school's leadership will be trained to use the data, reports and results in decision making, and to request analyses relevant to their community.

The SEA staff will be strengthened to support the LEA in this process of listening, designing, and implementing a basic data collection plan and with space for the school community to add indicators that they need to see. The LEA in turn, supports the school on information management and will recruit trained

personnel to lead the process of data collection and analysis, interpretation, and distribution of data. This approach for data management requires a culture of decision making based on data and information, and on the discipline of generating, preserving and actively using structured information. Some examples of decisions that may be impacted by the use of data and information are the design of public policy (by SEA), understanding the effectiveness of teaching methods (LEAs and SEA), and the professional development of each teacher (LEAs and schools).

Transformation Recommendation 3D. The administrative structure of each school will be strengthened to ensure administrative processes and maximize the possibility of investing attention and effort to academic issues. To allow for the adequate attention to academic matters, the structure of each school will be strengthened aiming to establish an organization that guarantees the possibility to dedicating enough resources to coordinate the administrative processes as well as to lead the educational mission. The way to ensure this balance may vary according to the particular circumstances, needs, scale and focus of each school. It is envisioned that new positions in schools could be created for this purpose, such as resources dedicated exclusively to administrative tasks or academic leadership, to facilitate the work of the principal in ensuring the academic quality and overall smooth functioning of the institution. (See Appendix 10.7). The new roles, which may differ from school to school, will be defined based on the experiences of the pilot during implementation and an understanding of the current functioning of the schools.

The selection of individuals for these new required roles will be open and will include a certification process to ensure that each administrative officer has the skills required to be successful in this key role. The certification, selection and evaluation process will follow the process defined for the school principal.

TRANSFORMATION PILLAR # 4 – DECENTRALIZE ACADEMIC MANAGEMENT AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT TO ACHIEVE RELEVANCE AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN EACH SCHOOL

Transformation Recommendation 4A. The school will have greater flexibility in the choice and operationalization of its educational model, with permanent support of the LEA, and under the parameters defined by the SEA. Relevant and quality education requires adapting the content and way of teaching, and the professional development of teachers, as closely as possible to each student and their context. Therefore, decentralization will enable each school to select the educational model or strategy and adapt its operationalization through the selection of teaching methods and tools, according to the characteristics of its community, and always within the standards defined by the SEA, as well as in compliance with local, federal regulations including the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

To grant this flexibility to schools, an adjustment is required in the roles of schools, LEAs, and SEAs in curriculum management, in such a way that the latter 2 become supporters, facilitators and overseers of the process.

- The SEA will set standards through an official curriculum and defining an evaluation system that operates at the island level and is aligned with local and federal (ESEA and *State Assessment Peer Review*, among other) guidelines and regulations. In addition, the SEA will enable alternative educational models and strategies, along with a portfolio of proven methods and supporting tools, that offer sufficient choices to schools as a starting point to adapt to their environment. The SEA would also be responsible for defining objectives and guidelines for student support programs such as infirmary, social work, and counseling. These elements will guide LEAs and schools in framing the curriculum management process within an overall vision of education defined by the SEA.
- In this process, the LEA would have a key role in supporting each school in the process of selection and operationalization of the educational model and strategies as well as adapt the student support program. This support will have 3 essential components: 1. Guidance and assistance to schools with strengthened capacity in curriculum management, 2. Oversight so that the decisions made are aligned with SEA and federal regulations, and 3. Dissemination and utilization of best practices among schools.
- Finally, the proposed model involves building capacity in the school for this selection and operationalization of educational models or educational strategies, which requires the evaluation and training of the

personnel in charge according to their educational model or strategy, and professional focus, and the permanent support of the LEA and logistical support. The school will have more flexibility to select its educational model, strategies, instructional methods, and tools, yet everything must happen under the framework of the SEA rules and current regulations.

Appendix 10.8 – Model proposal: management of standards, curriculum and methods provides more detail on the proposed changes in curriculum management, which extend not only to traditional education but also to extracurricular, vocational, and extended education.

Table. Definition of terms in curriculum management

TERM	DEFINITION	ROLES
Standards	Learning objectives that define the expectation of what a student should know and do with that knowledge at different points in time, typically at the end of each grade and for different subjects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEA defines unique standards based on state and federal guidelines. • LEA and schools implement them
General curriculum	Structured sequence of contents and experiences that must be part of the education received by each student at different moments or grades and that allow him/her to achieve the defined standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEA defines general curriculum for the island. • LEA and schools implement
Educational model and strategies	Both theoretical and practical approaches (e.g., Montessori) that determine the principles, values, and beliefs about how teaching and learning should take place, and that allow to define the way in which the official curriculum is adapted and implemented, guiding the selection of content and instructional methods to deliver the curriculum and achieve the standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEA defines alternative educational models and strategies. • Schools choose educational model or strategy most relevant to their community. • LEA supports schools in their selection

Instruction methods	Strategies and techniques to deliver instruction and facilitate learning according to the educational model and curriculum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEA has a portfolio of proven instructional methods. • School selects methods among those provided by SEA. • LEA supports schools in their selection
Tools and practices	Resources, materials, or technologies to support teaching (physical or virtual) – e.g., books, <i>software</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEA has a portfolio of proven tools for the classroom. • School selects tools among those provided by SEA. • LEA supports schools in their selection

Transformation Recommendation 4B. Special education will be managed at the LEA and implemented at the school to bring services closer to the students and improve their relevance.

The special education program in Puerto Rico presents some of the most significant challenges in the United States. The Rosa Lydia Velez case, which was decided in 2002, imposes 87 stipulations or tasks on Puerto Rico’s Department of Education to provide services to students with disabilities, which exacerbate the conditions and timeframes for providing services.

This situation demands a change in the model to bring services closer to students and adapt them to their needs. Schools, which are the closest to the student, will become the managers and providers of services. The primary objective of the transformation of Special Education services is for the LEA to be an articulator in resources, providers, and requirements to streamline the system and oversee compliance with established commitments and deadlines. To increasingly adapt them to the student’s needs. The expectation is that the school and the LEA will manage the student’s evaluation, closely monitoring

their situation and progress so that students with special education needs can enter and remain in the system. Finally, the SEA may oversee defining the policy, guidelines, and directives, as well as providing LEAs with the minimum elements for the provision of services, such as the allocation of resources and the identification of qualified providers. The best practices that are intended to be implanted to attend the issue of Special Education will be worked in conjunction with the Associate Secretary of Special Education with the subject expert working teams. **Appendix 10.9 – Model Proposal: Special Education**, contains further details of the proposed separation of roles between SEA, LEA, and school in the case of special education.

The following is a summary of the major proposed changes to the model for decentralizing the management of Special Education services to the LEA and schools:

- Better align the organizational structure of the Associated Secretary with the LEAs and the rest of the areas of the PRDE.
- LEA would acquire the role of articulating and facilitating services in schools, where most of the services will be implemented to bring them closer to the students.
 - The Special Education Service Centers in general transfer their capacity to LEAs and schools. For cases where the need exists, some Specialized Centers will remain open to provide services for highly complex cases.
 - Schools would strengthen their capacity and flexibility to provide services in their facilities, with the assistance and support of the LEAs; the school principal acquires the role of service manager, which implies greater ownership of his or her part of the special education program. This will allow to reduce to the minimum possible the time that special education students must be separated from the school context to perform their therapies.
 - LEAs would have an articulating, managing, and facilitating role for schools.
 - Schools, in coordination with LEAs, would conduct the student assessment and diagnostic process (based on SEA guidelines).
 - Key role of schools in assessing or diagnosing students and monitoring their progress to determine continuity, with LEA support.
 - SEA's monitoring role in ensuring that students are classified appropriately.

LEA would manage most of the training to special education teachers and regular teachers with more relevant subject matter to support students' needs and manage curricular accommodations. The SEA will conduct training across the system, by scale or policy.

- LEA could procure goods and services with greater impact on the process (based on the broad portfolio of suppliers identified by SEA), following the guidelines of the procurement process established by the SEA and the federal government. The SEA may make purchases or contract cross-cutting services that, due to specialty or scale, will be more efficient or pertinent to perform from the central level.
- The LEA could have more autonomy and flexibility in selecting and hiring, according to the provisions established in the Collective Agreement or by rights acquired through the Grievance and Complaint Process.
- Researchers could be assigned to the regions with presence at the LEA and reporting to the central level. Attorneys from the legal team would be assigned to a group of LEAs, with a rotational presence among the assigned LEAs, yet also reporting to the central level.
- LEA would have a data consolidation and analysis role to support decisions at the regional level, and SEA would keep track at the aggregate level.
- The process compliance and execution of the tasks derived from the RLV case would be in executed by the LEA, but the SEA would maintain responsibility, perform permanent monitoring, and maintain a relationship with the court.

The main change in service delivery will be the migration of capabilities from the Centers to the LEA and schools. With the purpose of not disrupting the delivery of the service or jeopardizing the fulfillment for the students, it is proposed to test this model in the initial pilot decentralization zones while the Service Centers for the OREs that operate under the regular structure continue to exist. This will allow identifying advantages, adjustment needs, and implementation risks to take timely action.

Going forward, implementation will take place progressively over 4-5 years, with an important focus on capacity building (at the SEA, LEA, and school levels) and on ensuring monitoring and compliance with the regulation and commitments made.

- **Transformation Recommendation 4C. The process of management and development of teaching and non-teaching staff in the school will be refocused so that the school is the driving force behind the quality of the human factor in the provision of educational service. Decentralization of**

academic management requires coordinated processes and complementary capabilities in schools, LEAs, and SEA. An important complementary capacity to strengthen and decentralize will be the human resources management by way of 3 dimensions: 1. Selection of non-teaching and teaching staff on special recruitment, 2. Professional development of teaching and non-teaching staff, 3. Personnel management in the schools for items such as certifications, transfers within the same LEA, and resignations. It is important to clarify that this decentralization proposal will not remove the provisions on the Collective Agreement, or the rights acquired through the Grievance and Complaint Process.

Having the right staff in schools is key to the student learning exercise. To this end, the following adjustments are proposed in terms of selection, hiring, development and management:

- Adjust the selection processes, in accordance with current regulations, to expedite the hiring of personnel. For regular teaching staff, LEA will carry out the process, subject to the shifts register provided by law. For non-teaching and teaching staff under special hiring⁴ the selection and hiring process will be delegated to the LEA, in coordination with the school for interviews. Teacher recruitment must be done under uniform parameters, in compliance with the applicable laws and regulations, under shifts registration and ensuring that the principle of merit prevails.
- The teacher certification process will be maintained at the SEA level.
- Professional development, aimed to identify trends, patterns, and areas for improvement based on the information collected, will be strengthened throughout the system, from an integral and robust staff evaluation performed by the school and supported by the LEA. These evaluations will result in the design of improvement plans for each collaborator aimed to bridge the gaps through trainings and strengths enhancement. In this role, the LEA will consolidate training needs in its region and will identify training providers.

⁴ Special hiring occurs when the shifts register does not yield any candidate willing to take the position offered, in which case a call for applications and selection process similar to that for non-teaching personnel is opened.

- The LEA will coordinate with the schools the shared implementation of professional development processes for teachers or non-teachers from several schools, always considering the students' study or school time.
- **Appendix 10.10 – Model Proposal: Selection and Development of Teaching and Non-Teaching Personnel** provides more detail on the proposed changes in the selection, hiring, and development of teaching and non-teaching personnel.

TRANSFORMATION PILLAR #5 – Reconfigure the monitoring and risk management system at the state and federal levels to ensure compliance, transparency and effective participatory governance that does not hinder educational management.

Risk monitoring will be made effective and transparent by strengthening the internal control function in the PRDE and its findings management capacity, which will be complemented by external audits and a continuous support from the LEAs Advisory Councils and School Boards By transferring most of the budget implementation from the central level (SEA) to the regional level (LEA or school), the current *de facto* monitoring system, which is the direct approval of each individual transaction by the SEA, is eliminated to a great extent. In its place, it is proposed to strengthen the PRDE’s internal control cycles, optimize the use and management of the audit and external control tools provided by the Law, and ensure that information on the monitoring and control of the use of funds in SEAs, LEAs and schools is public. These internal and external audit mechanisms will serve as input to the School Boards and LEA Advisory Councils for their oversight and supervision management.

Transformation Recommendation 5A. Reconfigure the PRDE’s internal risk management system from transaction-based control to aggregate monitoring by risk level, with mechanisms for continuous improvement and intervention for underperforming LEAs. The internal control system will be adapted to ensure effective control over the operation in an agile and efficient manner, so as not to hinder educational management. The main actions will be:

- Train SEA and LEA personnel designing and operating an agile and transparent system for managing funds and resources to streamline the execution of processes.
- Design and deploy new statistical monitoring capabilities on resource management, ex-post, and adjusted to the risk level of transactions, to monitor the performance of LEAs and schools at the individual level.
- Leveraging PRDE’s existing resources related to internal control by expanding the scope of Office of Federal Affairs (OFA) current monitors at the central level to oversee the totality of federal and state resources, and strengthening the newly created Office of Compliance.
- Establish tracking systems for educational management performance that allow the community, School Boards and LEA Advisory Councils to monitor at the school level the fulfillment of objectives and the evolution of student academic achievement.
- Maintain control through central approval over transactions that represent a high economic risk (e.g.: high-cost implements) or require a

prominent level of technical knowledge for their correct application (e.g.: sophisticated and occasionally purchased special education equipment).

- Establish intervention protocols by the SEA for underperforming LEAs looking to ensure continuous improvement, including the criteria that trigger intervention, and the nature of the intervention according to the type of case, which range from training and additional support to taking over the operation.
- Create a function in SEA of constant advice and training to ensure sufficient knowledge and capacity on the part of the LEA to apply procedures correctly.

Transformation Recommendation 5B. Strengthen the management of findings in existing audits and those required by state and federal law and ensure to the community full access to findings. The proposed decentralization structure is monitored by several external agencies related to the State and Federal governments. The PRDE, and the LEAs, are monitored by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG), and the Office of the Comptroller of Puerto Rico, and the Federal government. The PRDE is also subject to perform a *Single Audit* required by the Federal government. Finally, PRDE is subject to a Trustee, the Fiscal Oversight Board, that monitors the management and implementation of federal funds. As such, it will seek to ensure that these audits and monitoring reports are assessed and implemented, in an effective manner, through the following actions:

- Ensure that the reports and findings of each control entity contain incorporated the level of analysis of SEA and each LEA, securing that the system operates as planned.
- Include in formal meetings of each LEA Advisory Board and School Board the review, discussion and recommendations around the information and findings corresponding to reports at each level of supervision.
- Reports and findings are shared in a friendly and transparent manner at the national level for the consultation and use of the entire Community.
- Strengthen the capacity of the PRDE to process, understand and manage the findings of *Single Audit*, OIG, Comptroller, and the Federal Government, being accountable to the Community and local governance bodies on the results of such management.

7. IMPLEMENTATION: CHANGE SEQUENCE AND PROPOSED LEARNING PILOTS.

The implementation plan's objective is to define what efforts will be undertaken in implementation, how they will be structured, when they will be done, who will be responsible, and what resources will be available. The criteria for the implementation plan design and for the proposed implementation initiatives are presented below.

Criteria used for the design of the implementation plan

Many government organizations embark on transformation processes, but only 20% meet the objectives set⁵. This is not because the transformation visions are too ambitious; but because the planning and execution of the implementation do not incorporate best practices to that have been proven to be successful. In this sense, to achieve the proposed vision for the education system of Puerto Rico, it will be necessary that the implementation contemplates a set of design principles that have proven to increase the probability of success in the transformation of government entities:

1. Clarity of purpose and priorities: The focus of the IDEAR initiative is to decentralize the education system and remove critical barriers for the functioning of schools as a mechanism to improve the quality of education on the island. These objectives establish a clear and unambiguous purpose and allow prioritization of change initiatives and focus efforts.
2. Coordination and timing during the execution: progress should balance the time needed for planning meticulously and the speed for achieving benefits. The transformation should seek to capture tangible results while building a foundation for structural and sustainable change. This agility must be balanced with coordinating the initiatives with other efforts within the Department and the Puerto Rico Administration.
3. Clear, transparent, and recurrent communication: The plan must contemplate sustained communication of the vision for the system, the objectives, plans, progress, and learning towards the community and the different stakeholders. Likewise, it is necessary to have feedback from leaders and representatives who can provide input and different perspectives to continuously improve the design and transformation.
4. Ability to change: To materialize change, it is necessary to ensure that the main actors have the capabilities to assume their new roles and responsibilities. Building these capabilities requires a sustained and

⁵ [delivering-for-citizens-how-to-triple-the-success-rate-of-government-transformations.pdf](#) (mckinsey.com)

systematic effort to develop, measure and reinforce the assimilation of the different efforts and tools employed. Likewise, it is necessary to consider that the required capabilities will also evolve rapidly, and the methods and objectives used will have to be adapted. Thus, capability building must transcend the transition horizon and become a permanent function within the system.

5. Consistent commitment: The clarity conveyed by the main actors and leaders regarding their commitment to change is one of the key factors in maintaining place and ensuring continuity of implementation efforts. For this reason, it is important that governance arrangements are in place to ratify and reinforce goals and motivation among the leadership team and to promote the communication of achievements throughout the process. These mechanisms should help sustain and renew commitment and collaboration among the different actors and stakeholders that participate in the process.

Priorities and sequence of transformations

The definition of how the transformations need to be implemented and the implementation sequence considers 4 elements: The starting point of the PRDE, the complexity of executing the change, the interactions with other local and federal agencies and government efforts, and the search for maximum impact and learning in the short term.

Some examples of these elements are:

- Department of Education starting point: School Boards are elements that already exist in some schools, while LEA Advisory Councils that have never existed.
- Complexity of executing: expanding the number of LEAs so that they can each focus on supporting a group of schools, is a complex procedure that requires detailing processes and finding additional staff to execute.
- Interactions with other local and federal agencies and government efforts: The redesigning processes such as the one for procurement must be coordinated and aligned with the designs and timing of the Enterprise Resource Planning System (ERP) project being implemented by the Government of Puerto Rico, as well as with the specific conditions established by the Federal government.
- The search for maximum impact and learning in the short term: selecting which schools to start the implementation of the decentralized model through pilots must consider test the model in different types of

geographies and characteristics (urban vs. rural schools, testing in different regions). However, the pilot will not prioritize the implementation of the model in schools that are not representative in the short term due to their complexity and will not prioritize running all the LEA processes during the first phase.

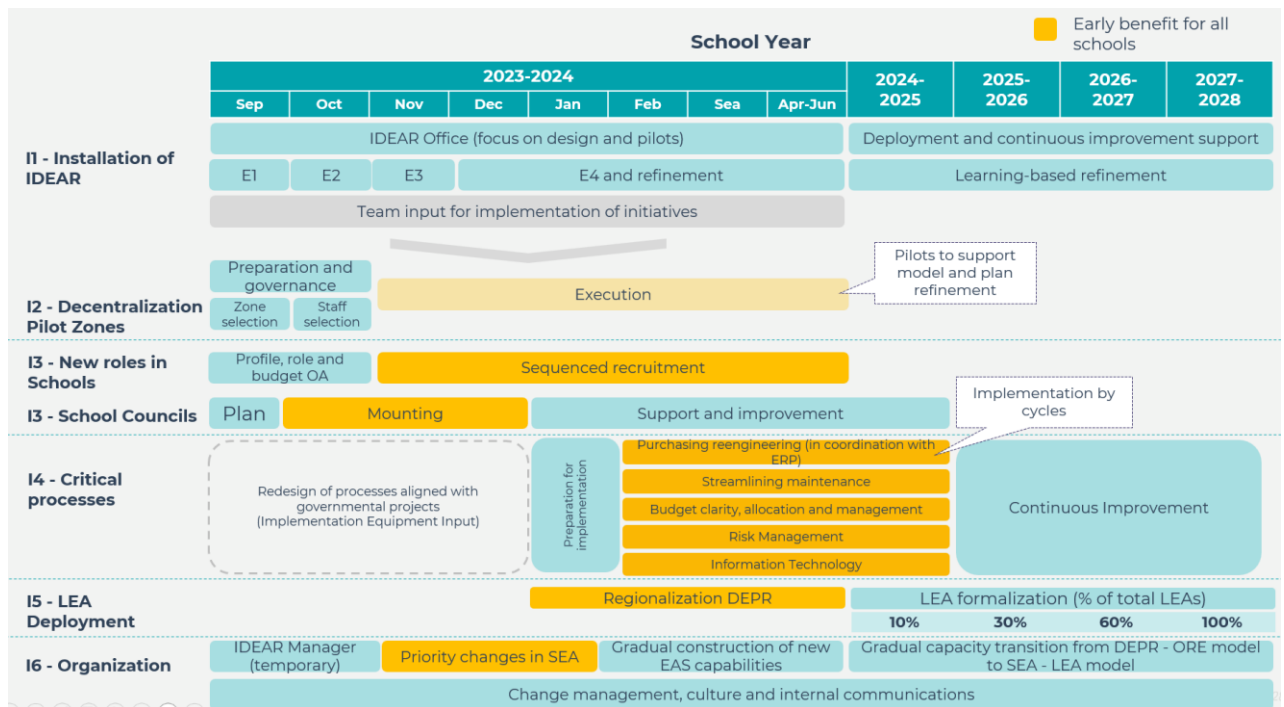
Definition of implementation initiatives

To this end, a series of initiatives have been defined that will make it possible to achieve the desired transformation. These initiatives will be carried out under an agile methodology that ensures consistency among the implementation efforts and in the development of organizational capabilities, the effectiveness of external communications, timeliness in the resolution of legal aspects, efficient use of resources during implementation, and avoidance of unnecessary distractions that may deteriorate the performance of the schools. The proposed decentralization initiatives are:

- **Initiative #1** – Integration of the IDEAR Office into the Department of Education to ensure the coordinated execution of the implementation plan on all fronts.
- **Initiative #2** – Development of three pilots to define the process for the creation and certification of LEAs.
- **Initiative #3** – Strengthening the administrative capacity of all schools with new roles in the local structure and more effective School Boards.
- **Initiative #4** – Reengineering of cross-cutting processes necessary to enable effective school autonomy, focusing on procurement, facilities maintenance, information technology, academic management, and school budget allocation.
- **Initiative #5** – Regionalization of the PRDE under the new configuration, followed by a formalization of the LEAs, as prerequisites are met by the community in each region, with the goal of forming all LEAs in the shortest possible time.
- **Initiative #6** – Ensure the organizational transformation of the central level of the Department of Education (SEA) to provide the required support for the new LEA processes and configuration.

These initiatives will be carried out starting during the 2023-2024 school year and ending with the 2027-2028 school year:

Graph. Implementation plan by initiatives



E1 - first deliverables of the roundtables: selection of schools for decentralization pilot zones, CE and CAL procedure manuals, LEA superintendent selection process, investment case for new capacities.

E2 - second deliverables of the roundtables: formation of pilot governing bodies, ensuring the appointment of superintendents of pilot decentralization areas, decentralized special education procedures.

E3 - third deliverables of the roundtables: organizational transition plan for the department, decentralization effort budget, definition of LEA configuration for the island, LEA creation and certification process, LEA operation manual, support to teachers, training processes,

E4 - final designs of the roundtables.

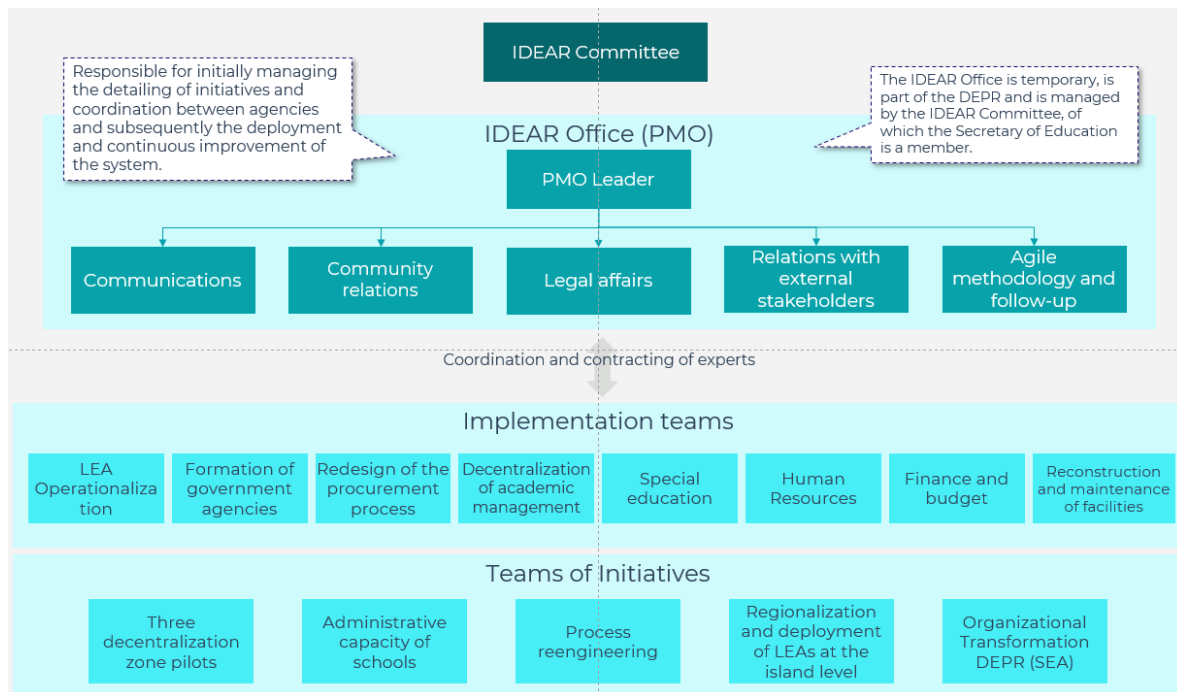
INITIATIVE # 1 – INTEGRATION OF THE IDEAR OFFICE INTO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO ENSURE COORDINATED EXECUTION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN. THIS OFFICE WILL HAVE DESIGNATED FUNDS TO ENSURE THE EFFECTIVE AND COORDINATED EXECUTION OF ALL AREAS OF TRANSFORMATION LINKED TO THE DECENTRALIZATION PROCESS

The transformation of education in Puerto Rico requires not only executing several initiatives simultaneously, but also ensuring coordination among the initiatives and the timely management of cross-cutting issues. To this end, it is recommended that the structure of the IDEAR Executive Committee be maintained, to ensure the transformation under a structure of accountability every 60 days to the Governor of Puerto Rico and the community at large. To enable the Committee to provide effective leadership, the IDEAR Office will be in the Department of Education, under the direction and supervision of the Secretary of the Department of Education and will report periodically to the IDEAR Executive Committee. The Office will have dedicated teams for implementation of recommendations and expert support, selected on an as-needed basis, and with access to required information for the purpose of building metrics and tracking internally, as well as providing visibility to the public regarding the progress of the implementation plan.

The IDEAR Office will be a temporary entity, with a minimum duration of 3 years and with the option to be extended to 5 years if necessary, and will be composed of personnel with the required expertise to carry out the execution of the implementation plan such as validation of structures, budgets, financial modeling, etc. Its main functions will be to ensure educational transformation through an agile and participatory methodology that ensures consistency in the development of culture and capacities, the effectiveness of external communications, the effective involvement of the community through the coordination of periodic meetings, the timeliness in the resolution of legal issues and the coordination of resources in the execution of these initiatives. The IDEAR Office will be responsible for selecting experts from Puerto Rico, other U.S. jurisdictions and the world as needed to address these issues.

The IDEAR Committee will maintain its oversight role to the IDEAR Office in the deployment of the model and will serve as an interim body for governance and direction of the transformation process and accountability to the public during the transformation.

Graph. IDEAR Office structure required for implementation.



Within IDEAR, eight implementation teams will be established for the purpose of executing concrete actions in relation to the implementation plan. These teams will initially focus on the detailing of proposals, the definition of processes, the formulation of criteria and the creation of operational guidelines and manuals. Subsequently, they will be responsible for incorporating lessons learned into the designs and generating final versions for model deployment. In general terms, these teams will be composed of members of the PRDE, USED, OGP, representatives of the school community, union groups and experts in specific areas who will be nominated and elected by the IDEAR committee. The period of operation of the implementation teams will extend from September 2023 until the end of the implementation, enabling mechanisms so that teachers do not lose teaching time with their participation in these teams. The proposed teams, as well as their main objectives, key issues to be addressed, main milestones and members, are presented below:

Implementation Team #1: Operationalization of the LEAs



Target

- Define the size and configuration of future LEAs.
- Define the 3 LEA model pilot zones.
- Design the process of regionalization and designation of LEAs.

- Design the process for local and federal certification of potential LEAs.
- Define the operating model and organization of the LEAs.
- Creation of LEA operations manual.
- Define a model for the operation of support operational services for students such as transportation, school cafeterias, etc.



Key Issues

- Define criteria to form the 3 pilot zones of the LEA model and select the zones so that, as a whole, they represent the most common and relevant situations for the deployment of the model.
- Define specific criteria for inclusion of schools in LEAs at the island level.
- Design island-wide LEA configuration scenarios – number of LEAs and composition of each LEA.
- Identify the milestones required by the state and federal government for the creation of an LEA.
- Define criteria and processes for certifying LEAs that are compliant with state law (e.g. Law 85) and federal definitions (e.g. 20 USC⁶).
- Specify the design of the operating model and structure of the LEAs.
- Identify key implications for the operation of the LEA after undergoing the certification process, (e.g., funding it may receive directly from the state or federal government, capacity building and organizational structure).
- Prepare and lead the approval of key issues by the legislature.



Dates

- Definition of LEA model pilot zones: September 30, 2023.
- LEA configuration definition: November 30, 2023.
- Definition of the process for the creation and certification of possible LEAs at the island level: December 30, 2023.
- Definition of the operation model for student support operational services: January 31, 2024.
- Operating manual: February 28, 2024.

⁶ USC 20 7801(30) defines *Local Education Agency* as “a public authority legally constituted within a State for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a State, or of or for a combination of school districts or counties that is recognized in a State as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools.”



Participants

- **Leader:** Representative of the PRDE.
- Representative(s) of the school community.
- Representative(s) of school principals.
- Superintendents' Representative(s).
- PRDE representative(s) (It is recommended that the Auxiliary Secretariat for Planning participates in this team).
- USED representative(s).
- Government Representative(s).



Capabilities

- Legal experts
- Experts in sociology, demography and planning of Puerto Rico (e.g., members of the state or municipal Planning Board).

Implementation Team #2: Conformation and strengthening of governance bodies and definition of the selection process for LEA superintendents



Target

- Define the formation process and operating manual of the proposed governance bodies.
- Establish a program to strengthen the School Boards to ensure the effective participation of the school community and support school principals.
- Define the process for the effective and efficient selection of LEA superintendents.
- Form the PRDE leadership academy.



Key Issues

- Detail the composition of the governing bodies and their participation mechanisms based on the proposed transformation.
- Design the process for the formation and selection of the members of the governing bodies.
- Design a program to strengthen the School Boards that allows to make effective their role of monitoring, supporting, and advising the school principal.
- Design the selection process for LEA Superintendents.
- Design the performance evaluation process for school principals and LEA Superintendents.

- To create procedural manuals and content guides for the correct operation of government agencies, making sure to have the Community Schools Act as a reference.
- Define rules to avoid conflicts of interest in voting for possible situations identified in the team.



Dates

- Process for the formation of the governing bodies and their procedure manuals: October 30, 2023.
- Superintendent selection process: October 30, 2023.
- Formation of the governing bodies that are part of the pilot: November 30, 2023.
- Secure appointment of pilot LEA superintendents: November 30, 2023.
- Start-up of the leadership academy: November 30, 2023.



Participants

- **Leader:** Secretary of Education.
- Representative(s) of the school community.
- Representative(s) of school principals.
- Representative(s) of the superintendents.
- Representative(s) of the PRDE.
- Government Representative(s).
- USED representative(s).



Capabilities

- Governance experts.
- Legal / public policy experts.

Implementation Team #3: Comprehensive Redesign of the Procurement Process



Target

- Detail the procurement process – end state and transitions during implementation.



Key Issues

- Support the identification, contracting and development of expert consultants for the review of processes.

- Based on the findings and proposals of the expert advisors, establish detailed duties for the school, LEA, and SEA, as well as the role of other agencies in procurement management and monitoring of LEAs.
- Identify needs for adjustments to the information systems to adapt them to the revised processes and define contracts or projects to deploy the adjustments – ensure alignment with the ERP implementation project to guarantee consistency and avoid duplication of efforts.
- Ensure the coordination of the proposal with the external (non-PRDE) entities involved in the processes such as OGP, ASG, PRITS and TPFA for the correct breakdown of the processes.
- Lead the construction and approval of process procedure guides for staff for the SEA, LEAs, and schools.
- Define implementation cycles and corresponding deliverables.



Dates

- Definition of the redesigned process: December 2023.
- Operating manuals and guidelines: December 2023.



Participants

- **Leader:** PRDE representative – procurement.
- Representative(s) of the school community.
- PRDE representative(s) – procurement processes team.
- Treasury representative(s).
- TPFA, OGP and PRITS representatives.
- USED representative(s).
- ASG Representative(s).



Capabilities

- Experts in process redesign.
- Legal experts.
- Experts in fiscal component, budget and/or finance.

Implementation Team #4: Decentralizing academic management to achieve relevance and quality in the school



Target

- Design of the operationalization process of the educational model and strategies.

- Define capacities needed at all levels of the PRDE to carry out academic decentralization.
- Design a process for the evaluation and development of teaching personnel.



Key Issues

- Define the capacities needed in schools, LEAs and at the central level to carry out the proposed transformation pillars, design the required training.
- Consult with academic experts regarding the most effective instructional methods and tools.
- To produce guides and manuals for the use of these tools and methods of instruction.
- Design process and material for teacher evaluation.
- Ensure alignment of proposal with state and federal laws (ESEA).
- The teacher training process must articulate the efforts made at all levels of the PRDE and respond to the needs of teachers.



Dates

- Guides and manuals for the use of tools and instructional methods: October 2023.
- Design of the curriculum operationalization process: November 2023.
- Design of teaching evaluation process and materials: November 2023.
- Training process design: November 2023.



Participants

- **Leader:** Secretary of Education.
- Teachers or facilitators representative(s).
- Representative(s) of school principals.
- PRDE representative(s) – academic affairs.
- USED representative(s).



Capabilities

- Experts in academia.
- Experts in state and federal legal matters.

Implementation Team #5: Special Education



Target

- Define plan for transition of responsibilities from Special Education Service Centers (CSEE) to schools and LEAs.
- Define capacities required in LEAs and schools to assume CSEE responsibilities.
- Define the new CSEE configuration.



Key Issues

- Define steps to be followed to integrate CSEE personnel into the Schools or LEAs.
- Define additional capabilities required for the transfer of responsibilities.
- Define the functions of the positions integrated to the LEAs, Schools, and central level.
- Modify general procedures manual for the provision of Special Education services in Schools and LEAs.
- Design transition guide detailed transition plan.
- Ensure a transition plan that does not generate trauma to the current processes of the Auxiliary Secretariat of Education.



Dates

- Transition plan including pilot functions: October 2023.
- Special Education Procedures Manual: October 2023.
- Required capacities: November 2023.
- New CSEE configuration: November 30, 2023.



Participants

- **Leader:** Representative of the PRDE – Special Education.
- Representative(s) of the CSEE.
- Representative(s) of school principals.
- Representative(s) of the superintendents.
- Representative(s) of the PRDE – Special Education.
- USED representative(s).
- Teachers or facilitators representative(s).



Capabilities

- Experts in Special Education.
- Experts in state and federal legal matters.

Implementation Team #6: Human Resources



Target

- Prepare the organizational transition plan required for each of the initiatives in the implementation plan.



Key Issues

- Define temporary and fixed structures required for each stage of implementation.
- Define required profiles at all levels of the PRDE to ensure implementation.
- Define capabilities and training required to effectively implement each of the proposed initiatives.
- Define personnel transfer plan in response to the organizational transformation of the PRDE.
- Structuring a plan for the selection and recruitment of necessary personnel for the development of all initiatives.
- Keep in mind the type of personnel recruitment according to case (transitory, irregular, etc.), as well as the required dedication.
- Define change management strategy and plan to follow.



Dates

- Organizational transition plan: November 2023.



Participants

- **Leader:** PRDE Representative – Human Resources
- Representative(s) of superintendents.
- Representative(s) of the PRDE – Human Resources.
- USED representative(s).
- OGP representative(s).
- Representative(s) of the Teachers Association and the SPU.
- OATRH representatives.



Capabilities

- Experts in organizational design and transformation.
- Experts in human resources and merit systems.
- Technology experts.

Implementation Team #7: Finance and budget, IT monitoring and tuning



Target

- Ensure the financial viability of the proposed model and identify the main implications – costs, savings, investments, use of funds.
- Detail the information technology budgeting, monitoring and adjustment processes.



Key Issues

- Build business cases for initiatives and implementation.
- Identify possible sources of cost, savings, and investment.
- Establish the source of funding for the initiatives (type of fund, *grant*, program, etc.).
- Advance, if required, the necessary steps to request and allocate funds, including, but not limited to, work plans, budget reallocations, etc.
- Conduct complementary financial analyses to support the definitions.
- Support the identification, contracting and development of expert consultants for the review of processes.
- Based on the findings and proposals of the expert advisors and set forth in the Community Schools Act 18 of 1993, establish detailed duties for the school, LEA, and SEA, as well as the role of other agencies in budget management and monitoring of LEAs.
- Detail the process for allocating state and federal funds to schools – regulations and allocation criteria.
- Identify needs for adjustments to the information systems to adapt them to the revised processes and define contracts or projects to deploy the adjustments – ensure alignment with the ERP implementation project to guarantee consistency and avoid duplication of efforts.
- Ensure alignment of the proposal with the external entities involved in the processes, such as OGP and USED, for the correct implementation of the processes.
- Lead the development and approval of process procedure guides for SEA and LEA staff.
- Define implementation cycles and corresponding deliverables.



Dates

- Budget: November 2023.
- Definition of redesigned processes: December 2023.
- Operating manuals and guidelines: December 2023.



Participants

- **Leader:** OGP representative.
- Representatives of the school community.
- Representative(s) of PRDE – OFA, Budget, Finance, Compliance and OSIATD.
- USED representative(s).
- Treasury representative(s).



Capabilities

- Budget and finance experts.
- Experts in process redesign.
- Experts in control mechanisms.
- Technology experts.

Implementation Team #8: Reconstruction and maintenance of facilities.



Target

- Identify reconstruction needs and define action plan.
- Detail the facility maintenance process – end state and transitions during implementation.



Key Issues

- Support the identification, contracting and development of expert consultants for the review of processes.
- Based on the findings and proposals of the expert consultants, establish detailed duties for the school, LEA, and SEA, as well as the role of other agencies in procurement management, maintenance, budgeting and monitoring of LEAs.
- Identify needs for adjustments to information systems to adapt them to the revised processes and define the contracts or projects to deploy the adjustments – ensure alignment with the ERP implementation project to guarantee consistency and avoid duplication of efforts.
- Ensure the alignment of the proposal with the entities external to the PRDE involved in the processes, such as the OGP and the AEP for the correct fulfillment of the processes.
- Lead the construction and approval of process manuals for SEA and LEA staff.
- Define implementation cycles and corresponding deliverables.



Dates

- Definition of redesigned processes: December 2023.
- Operating manuals and guidelines: December 2023.



Participants

- **Leader:** Representative of the PRDE -OMEP.
- Representative(s) of the school community.
- Treasury representative(s).
- OGP and AEP representatives.
- USED representative(s).



Capabilities

- Experts in school infrastructure.
- Experts in process redesign.
- Legal experts and process redesign experts.

INITIATIVE #2 – DEVELOPMENT OF THREE PILOTS TO DEFINE THE PROCESS OF CREATING AND CERTIFYING LEAs

Three pilots will be developed to refine the governance system, processes, and the optimal scale of LEAs to define the final configuration, and the corresponding deployment strategy, to strengthen the school to address the academic lag. The pilots will identify lessons learned to be incorporated in the deployment of the model and the configuration of the totality of the LEAs. The LEA model pilot areas will be chosen to represent the most common and relevant situations for the deployment of the model throughout the Island and taking into account community proposals for the model's design. They could include a mix of vulnerable areas (e.g., municipalities affected by natural disasters in the South), dense (metropolitan areas) or dispersed (rural), with diverse geographic conditions (mountain, coast), or other particular characteristics. The set of areas chosen as pilot areas for the LEA model, made up of an adjacent group of schools, should constitute a manageable set from an operational perspective and include situations that are sufficiently illustrative of the Island as a whole. Once the three groups of pilot schools have been identified, the process of creating LEA model pilot zones will begin, which will include the following steps:

- Strengthening of the School Boards – ensuring the conformation, roles, and functioning.
- Establishment of the Pilot Zones Council – election and appointment of members and start-up.
- Designation of the pilot zone leader – superintendent or manager.
- Configuration of key capabilities – direct assignment of teams or support to the team in pilot areas.
- Creation of capacity development modules for school principals – ensuring that the leadership team is trained for the transformation of the system to a more participatory and transparent one.

In the pilot areas of the LEA model, the changes implemented in the cross-cutting processes will be adopted and the development of key capacities specific to the pilot areas in the establishment of participatory and inclusive governance structures, budgeting, data analysis, academic management and professional development will be initiated. The development of these capacities will be done at the pilot zone and school levels through the definition of the corresponding process, the definition of metrics, the definition of training needs for the team, and the start of operations. Process development will be done through agile methodologies of continuous iteration, providing the teams with the capacity to quickly adjust to the lessons learned during the process. The experiences of the pilots seek, above all, to create knowledge for the

development of a strategy for the deployment of the model throughout the island and the operating regulations of the LEAs.

Additionally, the creation of an academy to develop capacity development modules for the LEA model pilot zone leaders (principals and superintendents) and the SEA and the development of a detailed profile for school principals will enable the core of the education system to have the necessary capacities to take advantage of the powers derived from decentralization, ensuring that the conditions within the school allow to empower the development and achievement of students, maximizing the value and potential of the teaching and non-teaching staff that serve the schools.

Under this initiative, we will provide the necessary training, process design, support in the configuration of the LEA model pilot zones and in the management of the key transformation milestones, aligned with what has been established by the LEA's Operationalization Implementation Team. This team will provide best practices that maximize the success of the transformation and ensure the execution capacity required to give speed and forcefulness to the required change.

INITIATIVE # 3 – STRENGTHEN THE ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY OF ALL SCHOOLS WITH NEW ROLES IN THE LOCAL STRUCTURE AND MORE EFFECTIVE SCHOOL BOARDS.

Sector transformation changes depend on the adequate administrative capacity by the school to manage its increased operational and academic autonomy, and its participation in the governance of the LEA. To develop this capacity, an administrative capability will be strengthened in each school on the island, with new roles determined by the condition of each school, to free up time for the teaching staff and the school principal, allowing them to focus on educational tasks. In addition, the entire appointment and effective functioning of all School Boards will be sought, along with accountability mechanisms for the school principal. This implementation initiative must be detailed by the implementation teams for the redesign of the formation of the governing bodies and human resources.

The definition of new roles will advance based on the understanding of the different needs of the schools on the island. The appointment of additional staff for each school will be made giving priority to internal staff of the PRDE, and under an open, participative, and agile recruitment and selection process supported by the School Board and its principal. This school-based selection process will be complemented by a professional development plan to train the officers on the necessary administrative or academic areas that are specific to perform their role. School principals are expected to be involved in the processes with support from the regional and central teams, and to close the 2023-2024 school year with all positions hired.

The formation of the School Boards will begin with the LEA model pilot areas developed during 2023-2024, and the goal is for all schools on the island to have a duly constituted council by the end of the 2023-2024 school year. To this end, principals will be supported in forming or strengthening their School Boards, ensuring the democratic selection of its members, the complete assignment of members and the scheduling of the year's meetings. In addition, the council will be trained on its functions and duties, scope, and management tools will be provided to support the dynamic: calendar of meetings for the year, methodologies and basic documents for meetings, and accountability mechanisms.

INITIATIVE # 4 – REDESIGN OF CROSS-CUTTING PROCESSES NECESSARY TO DEVELOP EFFECTIVE SCHOOL AUTONOMY, FOCUSING ON PROCUREMENT, FACILITIES MAINTENANCE, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, ACADEMIC MANAGEMENT, AND SCHOOL BUDGET ALLOCATION.

During the 2023-2024 school year, adjustments to the key cross-cutting procurement processes, budget management, risk management, facilities maintenance, and information technology will be implemented. These processes will affect all schools. The intervention of the cross-cutting processes seeks to ensure the agility required to respond to schools' needs.

As a priority, those processes that have a greater direct impact on students and teachers, and that can be adjusted without the need for structural changes related to LEAs will be selected, the same that at the beginning of the program would be on a pilot process and not completely deployed. To achieve this, a cycle-based intervention strategy will be developed to achieve positive impacts on schools during the 2023-2024 school year. The changes to the processes will consider the support required by both the LEAs as they are formed and the current organization, based on ORE and a centralized structure, which will continue to operate while the LEAs are fully deployed. Therefore, a mixed operating model will be employed during the transition to accommodate this partial deployment of LEAs model. Likewise, the projects currently being implemented by the Government of Puerto Rico, such as the ERP of the Department of the Treasury and the Public Service Reform, will be aligned [with the model]. This implementation initiative shall be detailed by the Process Redesign, Human Resources, and Finance teams depending on the process, identifying the current performance of the processes and their determinants, setting ambitious improvement objectives, redesigning workflows to optimize spending and execution times to meet needs, and identifying implementation requirements in terms of tools, time, training, and cost.

- Procurement of materials, equipment, and services: It is proposed to carry out three adjustment cycles. The first cycle will be focused on simplifying the structure of controls and approvals, allowing for a more agile approval process for purchases. A second cycle will seek to utilize resources released by this simplification to strengthen control over purchases, statistically, *a posteriori* and adjusted to the risk of transactions. Finally, the third cycle, which will start simultaneously with the second cycle, taking advantage of the greater efficiency at the central level, will seek to expand pre-approvals or contracts to include as many purchases as possible under these contracting modalities, complying with applicable state and federal regulations.

- Budget management: A first cycle will be focused on the implementation of the pilot in selected schools, where the new budgeting process will be tested to increase school autonomy. Based on this pilot, a definitive design of the process will be obtained, and the required capacities will be identified by the SEA, LEA, and school. A second cycle will consist of building these capacities at the SEA level, and the skills, also in SEA, to develop the capacities in the LEAs. A third cycle will be to support and build capacities, from the SEA, in the LEAs as they are being formed, or in regional structures where it is decided to implement the budgeting process prior to the formalization of the LEAs.
- Risk management: A first adjustment cycle will be related to implementing the monitoring of procurement processes within the PRDE, which would enable the elimination of several current controls and thus simplify the process. The next adjustment cycles would be related to internal control over the use of resources in decentralized processes, initially facility maintenance, seeking to replace the current exhaustive centralized control as transparently as possible with a more efficient statistical control. Finally, a third cycle of adjustments will be related to the implementation of OIG, Comptroller and Single Audit reports at meetings of CAL governing bodies and School Boards.
- Facilities maintenance: Three cycles of adjustment to the maintenance process are proposed. The first cycle will focus on expanding the coverage and increasing the agility of the contracting mechanisms currently available. This includes expanding the supply of relevant maintenance providers for the sector with registration in ASG (including auctions for comprehensive maintenance service providers) and expanding the scope or entering into municipal agreements in which convenience is determined at the local level. A second cycle would seek to hand over the responsibility for prioritizing, contracting, and managing maintenance to the schools directly, with the support of the LEAs that are formed or the PRDE directly, including the allocation and management of a specific budget for this item. Finally, a third cycle will be oriented to advance conversations with AEP to defining strategies that will allow streamlining the provision of maintenance services in accordance with existing agreements.

- Information technology: This capacity at the SEA level will support all process changes. To ensure optimal support, from the outset, a structure and processes for standards management and IT implementation within the PRDE will be designed, with sufficient resources and scope to adapt to the changes envisioned in the transformation plan.

INITIATIVE #5 – REGIONALIZATION OF THE PRDE UNDER THE NEW CONFIGURATION, FOLLOWED BY A FORMALIZATION OF THE LEAS, AS PREREQUISITES ARE MET BY THE COMMUNITY IN EACH REGION, IN ORDER TO FORM ALL LEAS IN THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE TIME.

After designating the regions that may become LEAs, the PRDE will be reorganized in accordance with these regions, with a minimum regional structure that allows for the gradual implementation of cross-cutting processes in accordance with the decentralization model. The regions will be formally established as LEAs, granting them a new governance and entity as a state agency, after fulfilling the prerequisites established by the respective school community. Accordingly, the organization of the central level (SEA) will be adjusted to serve the established LEAs, as established by the decentralization model. This implementation initiative shall be detailed by the implementation teams.

The regionalization of the PRDE prior to the formalization of the LEA will have the necessary scope to allow the implementation of adjustments to cross-cutting processes contemplated in the other implementation initiatives, in accordance with the decentralization model. The purpose of this regionalization is to minimize the need to design processes that are only transitory, and/or to wait for LEA formalization to implement changes to processes that have a positive impact on all schools. In this way, critical processes, such as procurement, can be adjusted, supported by the previous regionalization of the PRDE, to operate very close to full decentralization, even when the LEAs have not been fully formalized.

The regionalization and subsequent formal constitution of the LEAs will be the conformation of regions that will define the implementation teams.

Each designated LEA, whose region will have already been incorporated into the previous regionalization process of the PRDE, will begin its creation and certification process, always in accordance with state law and federal definitions, when the community requests it and meets the requirements of participation and democratic governance structure, which will be, above all, the formation of a governance based on school boards and the election of community representatives to the LEA Advisory Councils (CAL). Thus, LEA formalization is expected to occur in phases, starting with the first pilot LEA model zones at the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year and ending with all LEAs by the end of the 2027-2028 school year at the latest.

When an LEA is formally constituted, the first task of the CAL will be to promote and participate in the selection of candidates for LEA superintendent based on

the established profile and submit it for evaluation and consideration by the Secretary of the Department of Education. Once appointed, the Superintendent will begin operations according to the previously defined governance regulations. The deployment of the model will be supported by training and coaching processes for the personnel that will enable the development of critical capacities to operate the same. Likewise, the change and culture management required for the implementation of the new model will be supported. The adjustment of the SEA's structure and capacities for the support and evaluation of the LEA, as well as the integration of the leaders' academy, will be carried out in a manner consistent with the pace at which the LEAs are being formed on the island, within the described regionalization context that the PRDE will have already advanced. During the transition to the configuration of the totality of LEAs, the PRDE should support schools under the current and the fully decentralized model. This mixed model of support is facilitated by the PRDE having previously regionalized under the final region configuration.

INITIATIVE # 6 – ENSURE THE ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE CENTRAL LEVEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (SEA) TO PROVIDE THE REQUIRED SUPPORTS FOR THE NEW LEA PROCESSES AND CONFIGURATION.

The transformation of the PRDE towards the proposed decentralization model implies adjustments in the organization to form the SEA. The reorganization effort must be consistent with the state of processes at each moment of the transformation, and particularly with the state of development of the LEA configuration. There will be temporary structures in the SEA during the change process, and the final SEA structure will only be implemented after the complete LEA structure is configured at the end of the transition.

The Office of IDEAR's primary function will be to lead and ensure the transformation process within the Department. The Director of the Office will report directly to the Secretary of Education and will coordinate the organizational changes of the SEA. He/she will also be responsible for leading the change management and cultural change effort within the Department required to operationalize the new model.

The organizational transformation of the SEA will encompass all areas of the current PRDE, including academic and special education functions, to ensure they adequately support the transformation process, identification of staff for new positions, definition of duties, professional development, and training programs. This transformation will involve personnel allocation in response to the new capacities being formed in the SEA and LEAs, which will take place under a framework of the previously established personnel agreements. For this purpose, the IDEAR Office will interact with Human Resources implementation team. In addition, the academy of leader development will be working parallel to the organizational transformation.

8. CONCLUSION AND CLOSING

This document constitutes the recommendations on the strategy and framework of action to implement the public policy of an organized and phased process of decentralization of the Department of Education. As stated in the Executive Order that created the Initiative for Decentralization of Education and Autonomy of Regions (IDEAR), this public policy seeks to:

"... that the SEA's own functions be segregated from the functions corresponding to the local educational agency and that the latter be exercised with greater autonomy in the structures of the ORE resulting from the design of the decentralized model. Once the OREs have adequate administrative and organizational scaffolding, they will be designated as LEAs and will assume their responsibilities in accordance with the applicable regulations and the usual practices of the model at the federal level. During the implementation process of this Executive Order, the improvement of the quality of the educational services received by students shall be promoted, as well as to seek the optimal use of the federal funds to which the Department has access."

The IDEAR Executive Committee will seek to support the continued orientation, communication and discussion with the community of this public policy; oversee the implementation of the recommendations contained in this document, or variations thereof arising from public discussion; facilitate Department officials and community members to operate effectively within the new model; and generally interact as needed with State and Federal government agencies and community members to ensure that the public policy produces the intended benefits for the full development of students.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

From IDEAR, we wish to express our deep gratitude and recognition to each one of those who have participated in the development and materialization of this monumental effort for the transformation of education in Puerto Rico. Education, being the fundamental pillar of the economic development and progress of our Island, is the main tool for the creation and development of professionals, so that our children have access to competitive markets.

The educational transformation recommended here is the tangible result of the dedication and collective effort of individuals, guilds and entities committed to a better future for all. At this significant moment, we would like to give special recognition to those whose work and commitment have been the fundamental basis for the creation of this document:

To the Governor of Puerto Rico, Hon. Pedro Pierluisi, who recognizes the need to design a decentralized internal structure for the benefit of our students. In light of this, he issued Executive Order OE-2023-014, establishing the Initiative for Decentralization of Education and Autonomy of Regions (IDEAR) and creating this Executive Committee in charge of developing a strategy and a framework of action for the transformation of the Puerto Rico Department of Education.

To the distinguished members of the Steering Committee: Juan Carlos Blanco, Noelia García, Dr. Yanira Raíces, Francisco Parés, CPA, Chris Soto, Dr. Ana María García Blanco, Prof. Víctor Bonilla, Benjamín Borges, and Ana María Rodríguez Nogués, whose representation covered diverse perspectives and sectors, contributing invaluable to the development of the strategies that will now guide the continuation of this initiative.

To Secretary Miguel Cardona and the members of the U.S. Department of Education who participated in the process, whose vision and permanent support have been essential to enrich and strengthen this path towards educational excellence. To the experts Christina Kishimoto, Richard Lemons, Vanessa Carlo-Miranda, Tameria Lewis, Sylvette Santiago, Esthela Allison, Pedro Noguera, Pedro Rivera, Janice Petrovich, Samuel E. Abrams, Miguel Pabón and Leopoldo Navarro who guided from their knowledge and experience the definitions to ensure the incorporation of learning that could be valuable for Puerto Rico.

To the volunteers and committed members, to the entire team of facilitators, whose collaboration made possible the development of spaces for participation in the community and to the entire community that stepped forward to contribute to the educational transformation, contributing their experience, knowledge and desires with generosity and passion.

To the dedicated team of the Puerto Rico Department of Education, whose tireless effort week after week was reflected in the outcome of this initiative, demonstrating their unwavering commitment to transformative education.

Sincere gratitude is also extended to the different unions that work tirelessly day after day for the improvement and advancement of education. Their work is essential in building a solid and resilient educational system.

Last but not least, thanks are due to the entire educational community: committed principals and devoted teachers, students eager to learn, involved parents and caregivers, the non-teaching community and all those who believe in the power of education. You are the reason and driving force behind this collective effort.

With much appreciation,

Roger J. Iglesias

Director

IDEAR Executive Committee

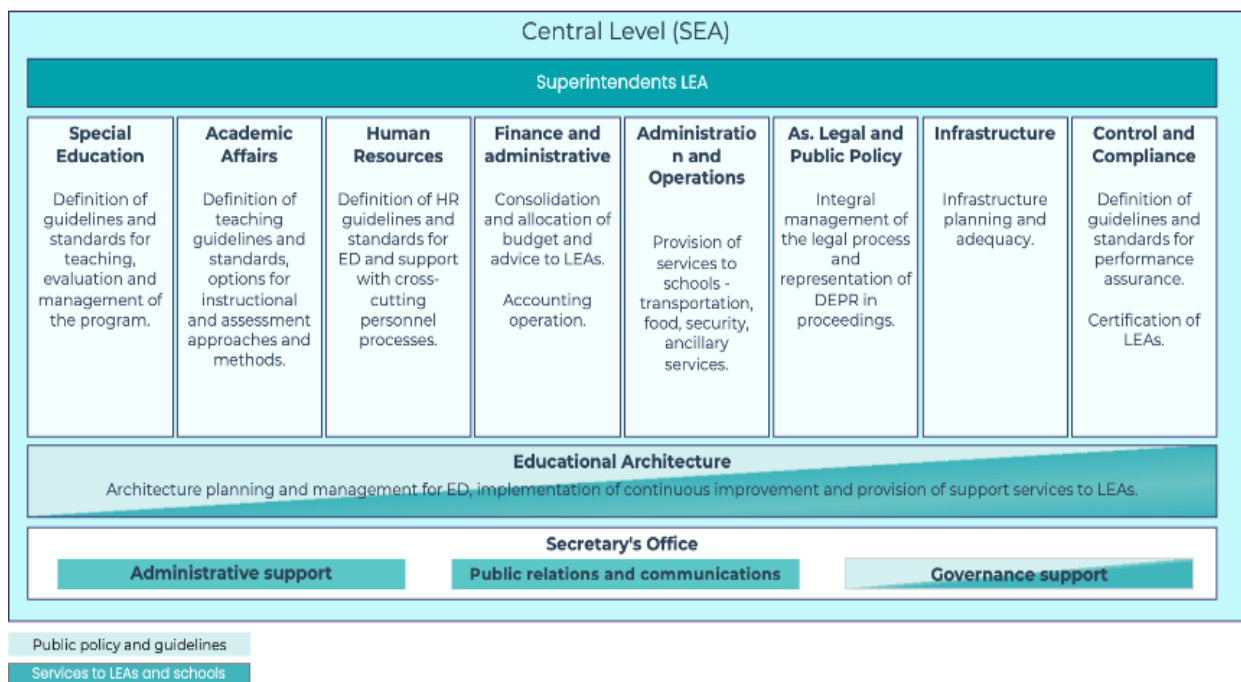
10. APPENDIX

The appendices presented in this section should not be considered final definitions. They are included to serve as an adaptable source of guidance to be detailed by the implementation teams proposed in this report.

Appendix 10-1 - Proposed functions

Scope of functions proposed for the SEA:

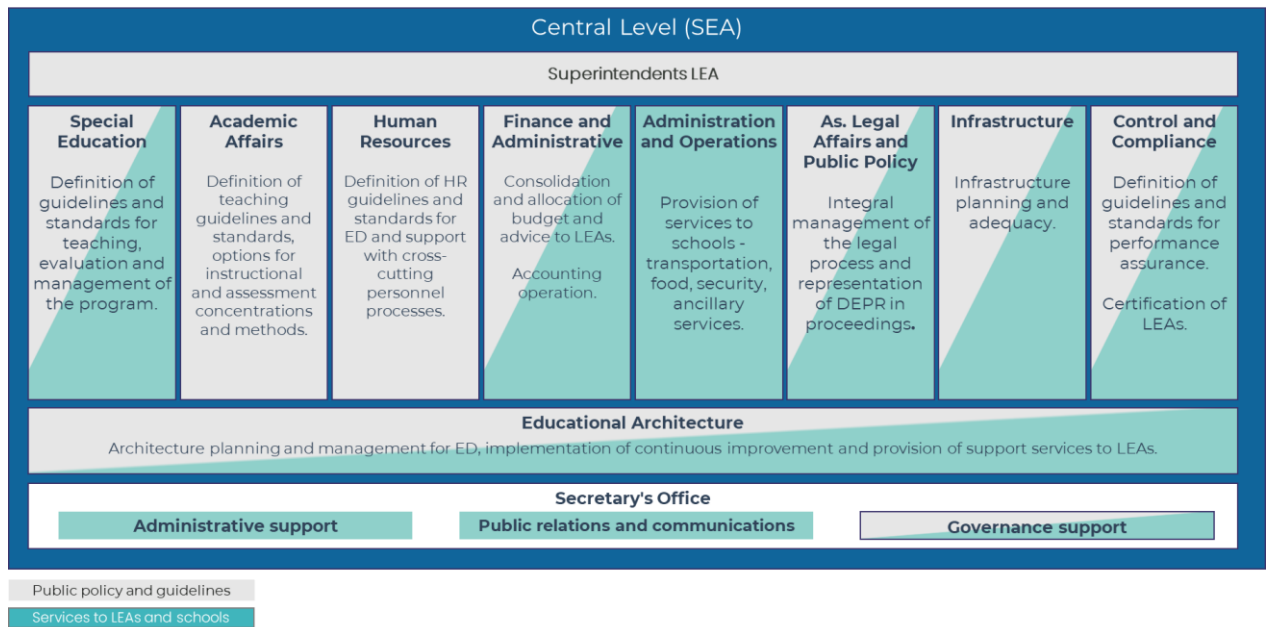
We propose an SEA focused on defining guidelines and supporting LEAs in strengthening their capacities - some areas maintain their service delivery vocation.



Appendix 10-1 - Proposed functions

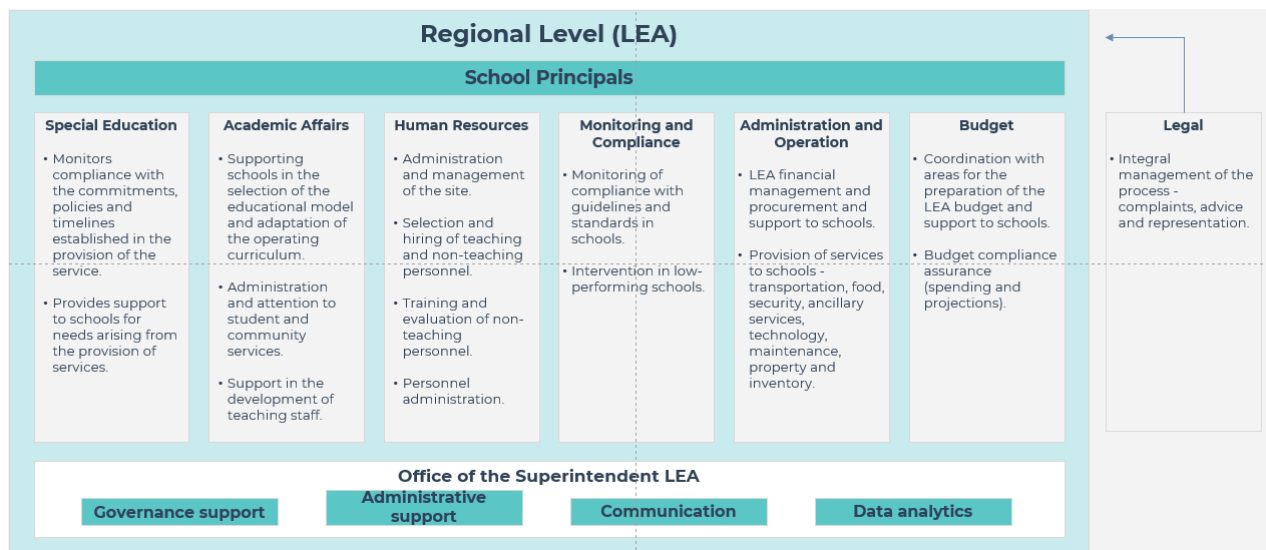
Scope of functions proposed for the SEA:

We propose an SEA focused on defining guidelines and accompanying LEAs in strengthening their capacities - some areas maintain their service delivery vocation.



Scope of proposed functions for LEAs:

We propose an LEA focused on supporting the management of schools, strengthening their management capacities.



Appendix 10–2 - LEA Superintendent Profile and Selection and Evaluation Process

Profile of the LEA superintendent:

To determine the profile of the LEA superintendent, a *benchmark* was conducted in which 85 profiles from 29 states in the United States were reviewed. It was decided to provide higher relevance to academic background in education and experience in educational leadership, rather than administrative experience. In the selection process, the aim is to empower the LEA Council by granting it the responsibility of evaluating and selecting the candidates who will later be evaluated by the Secretary of Education for the final appointment. This measure seeks to decentralize the system and grant the LEA Advisory Councils greater autonomy in their decisions.

Profile	Proposed Selection Process
<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University preparation in careers related to education, human development and learning science; leadership of educational projects and elementary or secondary schools. • Master's degree in Education, Developmental and Learning Science, Curriculum and Educational Administration or a related area. • Doctorate in Education (desirable, but not required). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LEA Advisory Council opens calls for applications and begins selection process for superintendent candidates. 2. The LEA Advisory Council evaluates the merits of the candidates' profiles and sends a list of three recommended candidates (terna) to the Secretary of Education of Puerto Rico. 3. The Secretary of Education accepts the recommendations and selects one of the proposed candidates or rejects the recommendations, if not duly justified, and returns them to the LEA Advisory Council, explaining his or her decision.
<p>Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 5 years of successful teaching experience. • At least 5 years of successful experience in K-12 educational administration (regularly 5 years)-school administration. • Experience in educational leadership positions - school principal, assistant superintendent. 	
<p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership in education and instruction, team and community building, collective work and healthy coexistence. • Administration Supervision - complex financial and budget management. • Communication and good relations - with the educational community, families, and supervisors, Board members. • Understanding of the particularities of the State - knowledge of laws and regulations. • Efficient work with Stakeholders - assertive relationship with different people involved in the educational process. 	

Superintendent selection process:

The superintendent selection process is expected to increase community participation through the LEA Advisory Council to strengthen the principle of merit and transparency of the process. The proposal implies that the Council will be able to propose candidates for Superintendent for consideration by the Secretary, based on the following process:

- The LEA Advisory Council opens calls for applications and begins the process of selecting candidates for Superintendent.

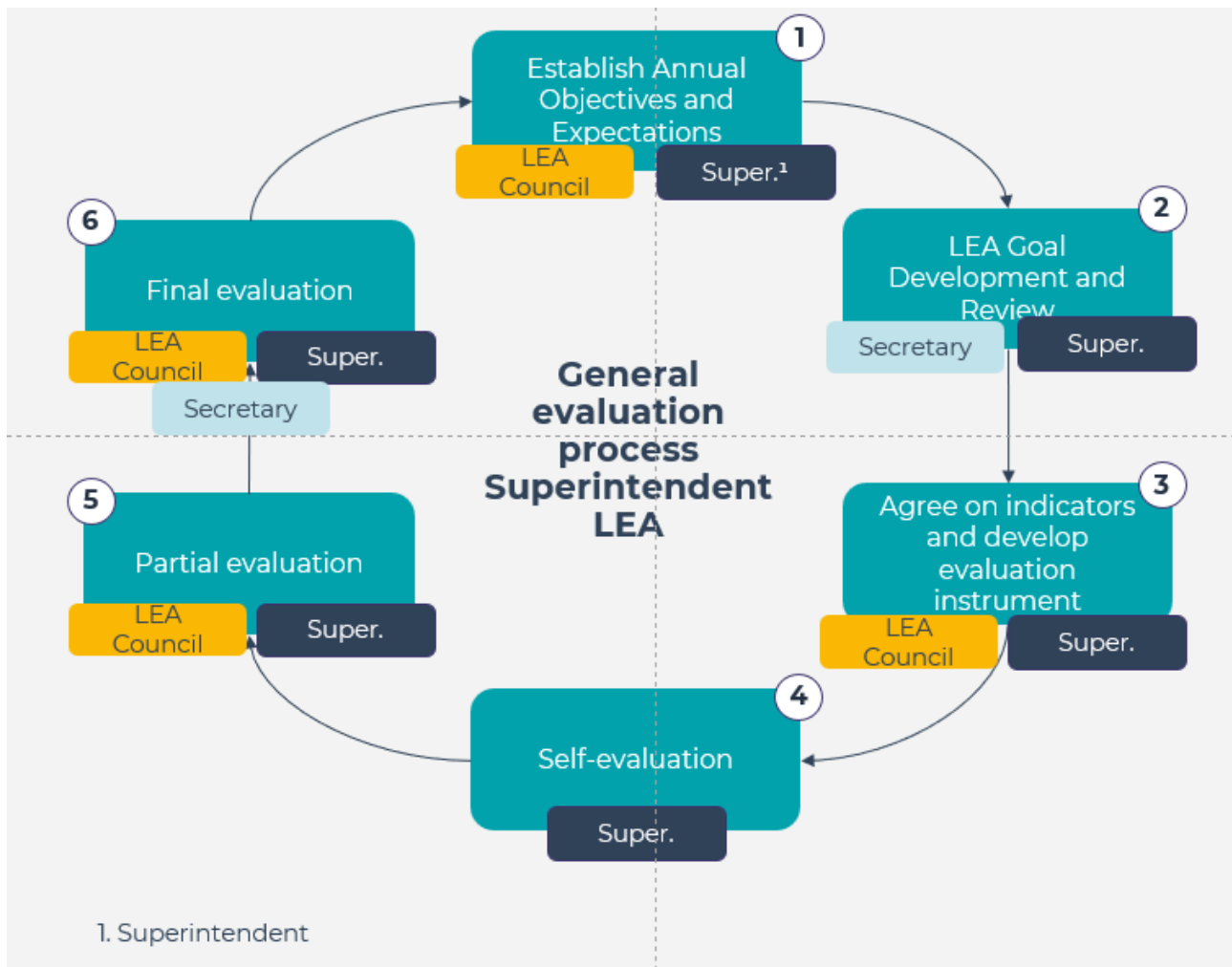
- The LEA Advisory Council evaluates the merits of the candidate's' profiles, ensuring that they align with the established requirements. With this, the interview process begins.
- Once the initial selection process is completed, the LEA Advisory Council sends a list of 2 or 3 recommended candidates to the Secretary of Education of Puerto Rico. This process will be made public to provide visibility, transparency, and accountability to the Secretary's decision.
- The Secretary of Education accepts the recommendations and selects one of the proposed candidates or rejects the recommendations if they are not duly justified, and returns them to the LEA Advisory Council, explaining his or her decision.

The profile definitions and requirements will be evaluated and agreed upon at the proposed governance working group during the implementation process.

Superintendent's evaluation process:

The Superintendents evaluation process is the method that ensures accountability, enhances professional development, and strengthens the relationship between the LEA Advisory Council and the superintendent.

Therefore, a flexible evaluation process is proposed that adapts to the needs of the LEA and integrates the Board, the Superintendent, and the Secretary of Education. It is essential to emphasize that, at the beginning of the year, the superintendent and the Board should reach a consensus regarding the expectation of goals and expected results for the LEA. In addition, they must agree on the measures that will be used to determine whether a specific objective has been achieved. The performance evaluation of each goal and expectation should be based on sufficient information and informed judgment to avoid personal bias.



Standards for evaluation will be agreed upon at the Governance table. As a starting point, the *American Association of School Administrators* publishes on its website a set of indicators that boards, and the superintendent could evaluate.

Appendix 10. 2– Mechanisms to escalate situations

Currently, and according to the current school board regulations, it is the responsibility of the council members to report any irregular actions identified in the documents provided by the schools, so that they can be analyzed, remedied, or corrected. Such situations will be channeled through the LEA and will be evaluated with the assistance of regional staff. In the case of LEA advisory councils, it will work the same way, but situations will be escalated to the SEA and evaluated by central office staff.

Mechanisms to escalate the School Board	
Examples of instances to escalate	Inputs available for review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting of findings or irregularities to the L–A - formal through PUQ (uniform complaint procedure) or informal. • Report to the LEA Governance Support Officer. • Disclosure of irregularities to the school community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEA monitoring report to school (by routine internal control or by board request). • Annual report of the school with its results vs. goals set. • Annual budget and expenditure management report. • LEA report / <i>dashboards</i> with school performance metrics.
Mechanisms to escalate the LEA Advisory Council	
Examples of mechanisms / instances to escalate	Inputs available for review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting of findings or irregularities to S–A - formal through PUQ (uniform complaint procedure) or informal. • Report to the SEA Governance Support Officer. • Disclosure of irregularities to the school community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OIG audit report to the LEA. • Audit report of the Comptroller’s Office to the LEA. • <i>Single Audit</i> report, including LEA analysis. • <i>Third Party</i> Report against LEA transactions. • SEA internal audit report to LEA. • LEA Annual Management Report. • Annual budget and expenditure management report. • SEA report / <i>dashboards</i> with LEA performance metrics.

Appendix 10.2 - Profile Governance Support Officers

To coordinate, manage and ensure the proper functioning of the governance model, 2 Governance Support Officers will be appointed (one at the SEA level and one for each LEA). Their role will be to support the school boards of their region or the LEA advisory councils, as appropriate, to set up these bodies, ensure the periodicity, support the meetings, contribute to the agenda, articulate the councils with the school or regional leaders and raise critical issues, among others. Below is a detailed description of the scope and functions of this role.

Governance Support Officer

Scope

- Ensure the correct functioning of the system (compliance with meetings, goals, risk escalation...).
- Formulate thematic agenda for governing bodies (SEA Officer for LEA Advisory Boards and LEA Officer for School Boards).
- Manage the budget for the governance system.
- Design knowledge management and training plan (Manage member certification plan - medium term).

Main Functions

- Manage capacity building at all levels.
- Leading knowledge management.
- Support agenda of election assemblies.
- Support meeting agenda.
- Attend as support for LEA Advisory Councils and School Boards (as assigned).
- Support the Superintendent and School Principal (and visit him/her) for the set-up of the system.
- Follow up on the thematic agenda.
- Manage technological platform.
- Manage member feedback.
- Submit System monitoring reports.
- Submit a semi-annual system evaluation report.
- Regularly publish the progress and achievements of the System.

Appendix 10.3 - System overview and selection of members of LEA advisory councils and school boards

It is critical to understand the differences between LEA councils and school boards. School boards are expected to serve as the "governance" roundtable of the school, with broad participation from the constituencies represented. School boards collaborate with the school principal, influencing critical executive decisions to address the needs and interests of the local school community. They have a role in participating in the selection and evaluation of the school principal and in escalating critical issues to the LEA. For their part, LEA councils are expected to operate at the service of the region's school community, ensuring that the LEA's vision and medium-term strategy is aligned with the needs of the community and promoting that schools have what they need to operate optimally.

System vision school board + LEA advisory council

		School Board	LEA Advisory Council
Recommendation		Strengthen and take advantage of existing School Boards in Puerto Rico.	Establish Citizen Advisory Council for LEAs
Purpose		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To nurture the executive decisions of the school by addressing the specific problems and interests of the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide the vision and medium-term strategy for the LEA to ensure regional participation and relevance.
Functions	Strategic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in critical decisions that allow the school to develop and meet the needs and interests based on the local reality (e.g., definition of budget and goals). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in the LEA's strategic plan in service to the community to support the development of schools according to their needs and their students.
	Inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure compliance with the school's plans, mission and goals. Follow up on school progress. Oversee the execution and management of funds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure compliance with LEA plans and budget based on those of the schools and review audit reports. Receive complaints or requests from School Boards. Promote the management of LEA services to schools.
	People or team development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in selection and evaluation School Principal. Ensure compliance with the school's staff development plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend candidates for superintendent LEA Provide recommendations for capacity building in LEAs and schools.
Profiles		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of the local school community. Specific knowledge of the school and its environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of the region and needs of schools. Expertise - education, management and capacity building.
Value of the integrated system (School Boards and LEAs)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board allows visibility and participation in the execution of results in the school (transparency). Provides feedback on the relevance of LEA plans and actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council ensures compliance with LEA's service functions to schools. Ensures consistency in regional vision and service.

Composition of the School Boards

The School Board shall include representatives of the community and school officials. In addition to the members established by the current regulations, it is proposed to add a community representative. In addition, the number of students, parents and teachers on the Board will be tested in the pilots according to the size and levels of the school. To provide governance support, also, the Transformation Support Officer will be supporting. Below are the details of the board members and the selection process to be followed for their appointment.

Member ⁽¹⁾	Type of representation	Voice / vote	Number of members		Selection method
			Alternative A	Alternative B ⁽²⁾	
School Principal	School official	Voice and vote	1	1	Executive Officer of the board
Teachers ⁽³⁾	School official	Voice and vote	2	3	Voting at teachers' assembly - by level
Non-teaching staff	School official	Voice and vote	1	1	Voting among the non-teaching school staff.
Support personnel	School official	Voice and vote	1	2	Voting among teaching support personnel
Parent	Community representative	Voice and vote	2	3	Voting in family assembly by level
Student	Community representative	Voice and vote	1	2	Voting assembly of students from fourth grade onwards
Community member	Community representative	Voice and vote	1	1	Indefinite, to be defined by the school's community
LEA Governance Support Officer	Public servant	Voice	1	1	LEA Position to support school governance
Total			9 vote + 1	13 vote + 1	

(1) Term: 2 years - 1 additional consecutive term allowed. Chairperson and Secretary are elected by a vote of the School Board members once constituted.

(2) The number of members shall be based on the size of the school; in no case shall it be an even number.

(3) The representativeness of teachers should be ensured according to the type of school and (according to relevance) at least one teacher should have special education experience/representativeness.

Composition of the LEA Advisory Councils

To ensure that the LEA Council promotes regional relevance through active and diverse participation, it is proposed that its membership be representative of the school community. In addition, there will be a governance support officer working directly with the Office of School Transformation who will oversee and support the development and evolution of the Council. In this way, it seeks to ensure equity in decision making. The following are the members of the Council and the selection process that will be followed for their appointment and their functions.

Member ⁽¹⁾	Type of representation	Voice / vote	Number of members	Selection method
School Principal	School official	Voice and vote	1	Suggested minimum profile validated by voters of School Boards
Teachers	School official	Voice and vote	2	Suggested minimum profile validated by voters of School Boards
Non-teaching staff ⁽²⁾	School official	Voice and vote	2	Suggested minimum profile validated by voters of School Boards LEA representative
Parent	Community representative	Voice and vote	2	Suggested minimum profile validated by voters of School Boards
Higher Education Representative	Community representative	Voice and vote	1	Minimum profile chosen by the school community
Business/community representative	Community representative	Voice and vote	1	Suggested minimum profile validated by voters of School Boards
Student	Community representative	Voice ⁽²⁾	1	Participant of School Councils elected by vote among the Councils.
Representative of local elected officials (Mayor or Assemblyman)	Public servant	Voice and vote	1	Mayor or representative elected by ballot from among the mayors of the region
Representative of the central administration	Public servant	Voice and vote	1	Appointed by Governor
Special Education Rep.	Public servant	Voice and vote	1	Special Education LEA Facilitator or LEA official
SEA Governance Support Officer	Public servant	Voice	1	Position in the DEPR at the central level in charge of overseeing the governance process.
Total			12 vote + 2	

(1) Term of office: 5 years. President and Secretary are elected by a vote of the members of the School Council once it is constituted. School members on the Council should not belong to the same school.

(2) As the system evolves and matures, it will be possible to consider whether the student can have a voice at a certain age or level.

Appendix 10.4 - Proposed model: budgetary and financial management

SEA	LEA	SCHOOL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides guidelines for the budget process. • Advises LEAs on the creation of participatory budgeting with their schools and the management of federal and state funds. • Develops budget management capacity in LEAs. • Reviews and consolidates school and LEA budgets. • Request budget availability from OGP. • Allocates budget to LEAs and schools based on approved and <i>per pupil</i> formula. • Monitors LEA budget implementation and issues consolidated reports. • Receives, manages, and monitors state and federal funds. • Manages and consolidates accounting. • Performs financial analysis to support decision making. • Defines and manages the budget required for its planning and support work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops LEA budget with comprehensive view of state and federal funds. • Supports schools in the identification of needs and budget development, building capacity and ensuring that the school is fully aware of the basis for budget allocation per student, per title and per fund. • It assists schools in the development of plans to access federal funds. • Manages the LEA and school budgets throughout the year, training schools on the mechanisms for transferring appropriations. • Follows up on LEA and school budget implementation. • Manages material, physical plant, and asset inventory. • Defines and manages the resources for the functioning of the organizational structure in the LEA (academic facilitators, budgeting and control areas, special education service delivery, technology...). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies the needs of the school. • Define a single budget based on allocated resources, according to an objective process (with formula when applicable), with the support of the LEA. • Identifies budget adjustment needs and manages them. • It makes action plans to access federal funds, based on the budget defined at the beginning of the school year and with the support of the LEA.

Appendix 10.5 - Model Proposal: Procurement of Materials, Equipment and Services

The proposed adjustment varies in the level of flexibility granted to LEAs and schools depending on the mode of purchase:

TYPE OF PURCHASE	DESCRIPTION	PROPOSAL
Framework contracts signed by SEA (ASG)	ASG conducts an auction in which it selects the most suitable supplier(s) and makes these agreements available to the rest of the government agencies, which access purchases directly.	We seek to strengthen this type of contract because it is the most agile alternative. SEA has a key role in promoting the expansion and relevance of these agreements, in conjunction with ASG. The community and local suppliers should be more open and educated so that they can register with ASG (schools and LEAs will be able to refer these suppliers to register with ASG).
Provision of services through municipal agreements	Applies mainly to facility maintenance: agreements between the PRDE and the municipality for the provision of low complexity maintenance services.	The LEAs have the role of promoting the development of new agreements and expanding the scope of existing ones, as long as it is considered convenient by the municipality and the maintenance area.
Direct purchases through the P-card	Purchases with payment cards made by the school principal for goods within the catalog and for vendors established by SEA.	This type of purchase offers greater agility to principals to make direct purchases. It is sought to expand the catalog of goods and suppliers. The SEA plays a key role in this broadening of goods and suppliers by receiving recommendations from both schools and LEAs.
Purchase of goods without framework contract or professional services	A formal quotation process should be carried out with potential suppliers and the most suitable one should be selected. If they are goods, the supplier must be registered in ASG.	The LEA will perform the end-to-end process, unless it exceeds a threshold transaction amount, in which case it will require central approval.

Proposed roles for SEA/LEA:

SEA	LEA	SCHOOL
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides guidance and guidelines for the procurement process in LEAs and schools. • Develops capabilities in LEA and supports it in the execution of the process. • Coordinates auctions with ASG for the development of framework agreements that meet the needs of the system. • It has a procurement catalog with characteristics of the goods to be purchased through a framework contract and makes it available to the LEAs. • Approves purchases of goods and services over a threshold amount. • Conducts P-card vendor procurement with input from LEAs and schools. • Monitors LEAs' compliance with procedures and standards and prompt and timely service to schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performs the process of procurement and purchase of goods based on the needs of the school and the LEA (following the procedures according to the type of purchase and ASG policies): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When there is a framework contract, it is subject to the one already established by ASG (according to the purchase catalog provided by the SEA, adapted by the LEA and reviewed by the school). ○ When not, it carries out the quotation, selection, and purchase process with registered suppliers (and with the participation of the school). • Conducts the selection and contracting process for professional services based on the needs of the school and the LEA (following established procedures). • Refer new suppliers to ASG. • Manages the relationship with suppliers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies the purchase need and generates requisition. • Participates in the selection of goods and services, when required. • Refer new suppliers to ASG.
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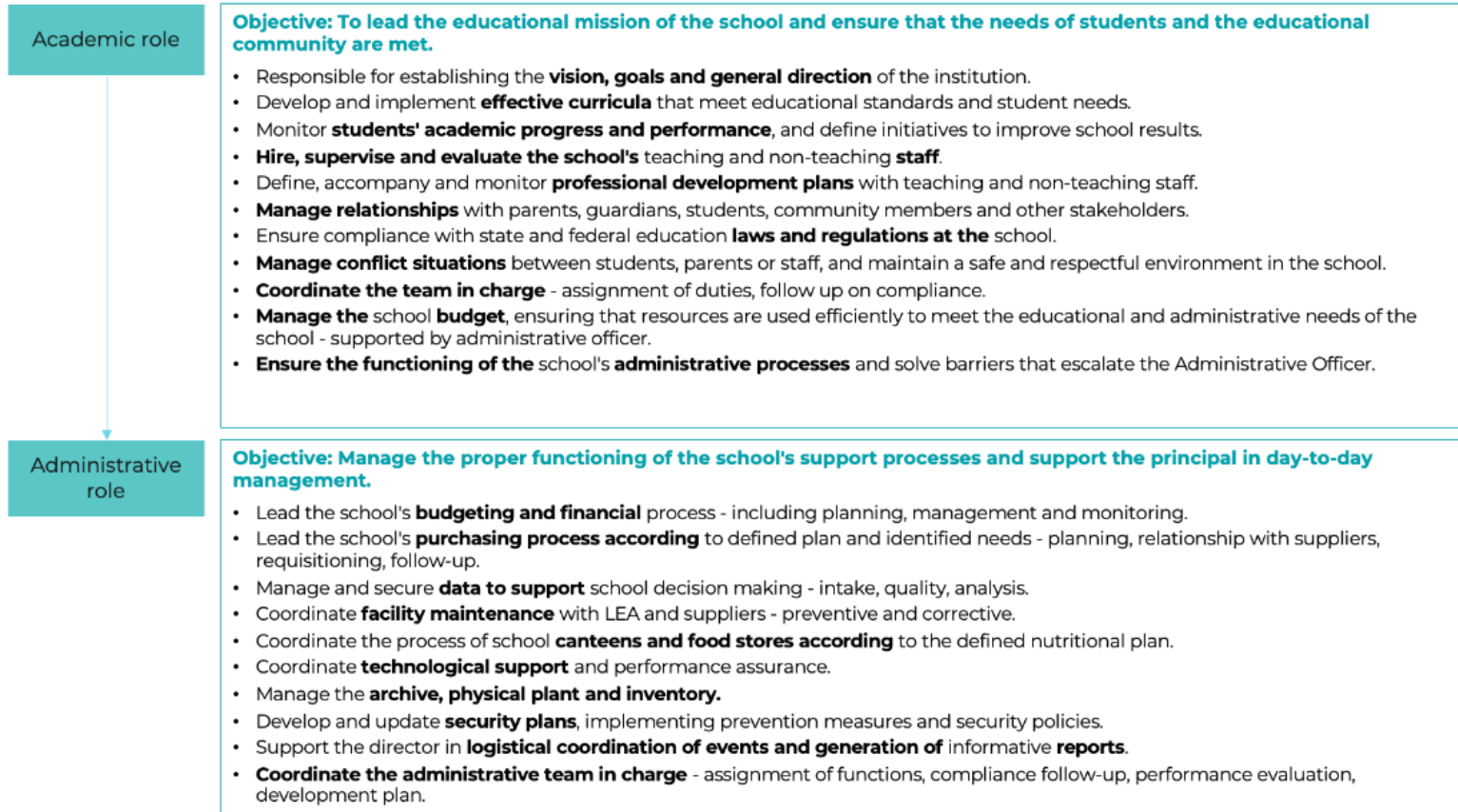
- Follow up on the execution of purchases vs. budget in the LEAs.
- Promotes disciplinary proceedings due to LEA non-compliance.

- Verifies, audits, and evaluates the provision of supplier services.
- Promotes disciplinary processes for non-compliance of schools.

Appendix 10.6 - Model proposal: legal, stakeholders, security, and infrastructure

PROCESS	SEA	LEA	SCHOOL
Legal and compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integral process management - unit. • Represents the PRDE in proceedings. • Ensures compliance with rules. • It carries out policies, regulations, circulars in the PRDE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team at LEA for receiving, investigating, and responding to complaints, but reporting to central level. • Legal advice to LEAs, schools, and the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request advice from the LEA.
Stakeholder and external [parties] management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines policy, strategy, and budget for <i>stakeholder</i> management. • Manages state and government <i>stakeholders</i>. • Develops standard MOUs. • Follow-up on agreements with <i>stakeholders</i>. • Enables spaces for feedback on public policy with leaders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies <i>stakeholder</i> management needs in the region. • Manages regional <i>stakeholders</i>. • Develops MOUs with its <i>stakeholders</i> in accordance with SEA guidelines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manages local <i>stakeholders</i>. • Escalate to the LEA the needs of MOUs with local <i>stakeholders</i>.
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with ASG the auction to select alternative suppliers. • Defines guidelines for the management and evaluation of school safety. • Monitors implementation and results, based on LEA and school reports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidates security needs and develops plans, in coordination with schools. • Selects supplier (from those provided by SEA) and contracts [them]. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify school safety needs, with LEA guidance. • Develops security plan. • Comment on the selection of the security provider.

Appendix 10.7 - Academic and administrative roles in the school



Appendix 10.8 - Model proposal: management of standards, curriculum, and methods.

Proposed roles for SEA/LEA:

SEA	LEA	SCHOOL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines the official curriculum / general standards. • Identifies alternative educational models and strategies based on best practices and makes available to schools and LEAs - provides guidance. • It makes available to LEAs alternative instructional methods and tools. • Designs standardized tests in collaboration with groups representing diverse educational models from the school community in the regions, according to the guidelines established in the State Assessment Peer Review. • Approves adjustments proposed by the LEA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures compliance with standards and adjusts targets and minimum practices according to the region. • Supports and advises the school in the selection of the educational model and/or strategies, including the selection of methods and tools. • Strengthens the schools' capacity for the selection and implementation of educational models, strategies, methods, and tools. • Provides schools with the necessary tools, materials, and requirements in a timely manner. • Performs performance follow-up by school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implements and complies with official standards and curriculum. • Chooses educational model and/or strategy through participatory processes and with the support of the LEA. • Operationalizes the educational model and/or strategies in the school, with the support and approval of the LEA, thus selecting the most pertinent instructional methods and tools from the catalog provided by SEA. • Proposes new methods or tools to the LEA. • Selects technical, vocational, extended, and extracurricular education programs that align with the school's characteristics and model. • Selects methods and tools for technical, vocational, extended, and extracurricular education programs that align with the school's characteristics and model.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Performs student support services such as psychology and nursing, which the school will promote to be aligned with the student's needs.
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Appendix 10.9 - Model Proposal: Special Education

Proposed roles of the SEA/LEA:

FUNCTION	SEA	LEA	SCHOOL
Strategy and policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines regulations, policies, and procedures. • Defines strategy with the purpose of improving statistics, service, and compliance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures compliance. • Proposes to SEA strategies and actions based on execution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implements.
Evaluation and diagnosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines evaluation and diagnostic standards. • Performs evaluations of highly complex cases in Specialized Centers with reporting to the Central level. • Follow-up on the diagnostic process based on aggregated results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinates evaluations for specialized cases, based on school needs. • Participates in the evaluation committee. • Monitors evaluation in schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluates and diagnoses students (specialist and then committee). • Follows up on student progress - determines need for continuation.
Evaluation of service contracting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines guidelines. • Identifies qualified suppliers (of equipment and services) and makes them available to the LEA. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifies and negotiates with suppliers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailors supplier catalog according to regional needs and makes available to schools. • Performs procurement process with the highest incidence (according to regulations and established procedures). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify needs and escalates to LEA. • Provide feedback to the LEA on contracted suppliers.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supports registration of suppliers in ASG. - Conducts auctions for high volume goods. - Defines general catalog - for LEA adaptation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make purchases or contract services that by specialty or scale are worth doing from the central office. 		
Provision of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manages Specialized Service Centers for highly complex cases. • Gives guidelines and manages teams in the regions around provisional remedies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides support to schools in needs arising from the provision of services: assists in the management of services and coordinates facilitators. • Manages the provision of specialized services according to school requests. • Monitors service delivery, timeliness, and curriculum accommodations on an aggregate basis. • Manages equitable services. • It has a team in the region (although not 100% dedicated) to manage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manages services at the school according to students' needs (Administrative Officer performs procedures and paperwork). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Administers school specialists. - Manages services at school and requests LEA when additional services are required.

		provisional remedies and serve the community.	- Manages curricular accommodations and defines teacher training.
Support Services		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manages regular and special transportation. 	
Budget and financial management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manages and tracks the use of state and federal funds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops the special education budget for the region based on needs. Manage the budget throughout the year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies needs for the budget.
Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes system cross-cutting training. Establishes selection and recruitment guidelines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selects and recruits Special Education personnel. Manages, hires, and conducts needs-based training for teaching and non-teaching staff on special education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies training needs for regular and special education teachers, as well as non-teaching staff (and escalates to LEA).
Community		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminates and involves the school community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate and involve the school community.
Legal and compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintains unity in the management of complaints. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures compliance with RLV case stipulations and reports to SEA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implements requirements and procedures to comply with RLV

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures compliance with commitments in the LEAs - in procedures, regulations and RLV case. • Manages relationship and reports to court. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serves the community and provides legal advice (has investigators at LEA but reports to central level). • Has a legal team assigned to the LEA, but shared with other LEAs according to capacity (and with central reporting). • Investigates complaints - with report to central level. 	<p>case regulations and stipulations.</p>
Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitors, evaluates and aggregate tracking. • Consolidates indicators for state and federal reporting, as well as the APR. • Issues observations to LEA reports and analyzes their compliance. • Analyzes data in an aggregated manner and reports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitors the operation and results of each center, school, and student to identify opportunities for improvement. • Consolidates special education figures and analyzes to support decision making. • Issues reports based on compliance in the region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collects relevant special education data.

Appendix 10.10 - Model proposal: selection and development of teaching and non-teaching staff.

Adjustment proposal:

ONGOING ISSUE	PROPOSAL FOR CHANGE	KEY ACTIONS
<p>Personnel selection is centralized for non-teaching staff, which can delay the process and reduces the flexibility of schools to decide on the profiles that best fit their needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEA selects and recruits non-teaching staff, following SEA guidelines and in coordination with schools. The school participates in the recommendation and selection of non-teaching staff for its school. • The LEA also selects and recruits teachers in cases of special recruitment, following SEA guidelines and in coordination with schools. Schools participate in the selection of hard-to-recruit or special recruitment personnel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train LEA staff on the procedures and requirements for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Selection, recruitment, management, and development of personnel, ○ Contracting of training services. • Evolve SEA's control structure from upstream transaction-based control to downstream statistical monitoring. • Define guidelines and procedures for community participation (LEA Council and School Boards) in the selection and evaluation of superintendents and school principals.
<p>Training is centralized through standardized initiatives that do not always respond to the needs of each school's staff and are not always tied to the results of evaluations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LEA assumes a key role in consolidating training needs in a regional development plan and in the management and implementation of training (in alignment with the results of the evaluations). • The LEA can consolidate the needs of schools that have issues of common interest at the regional level (in alignment with assessment results). 	
<p>Personnel evaluations are not carried out on all employees and rarely result in the development of an action plan to close gaps or promote the employee's development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LEA takes on a monitoring role to ensure that the training and professional development plan responds to the needs that emerge from the evaluations and the analysis of evaluation data. 	

Proposed roles for SEA/LEA:

SEA	LEA	SCHOOL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes selection and recruitment guidelines based on the merit system. Establishes parameters in the salary scale. Approves new teachers in the single registry. Certifies teachers. Performs selection and recruitment process for SEA personnel. Approves personnel transfers between LEAs. Identifies training providers and makes available to LEAs. Promotes and implements system cross-cutting training. Establishes parameters and provides personnel evaluation alternatives. Monitors LEAs' compliance with guidelines and procedures. Consolidates the employee and contractors' payroll of the PRDE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selects and recruits non-teaching staff and teaching staff in special recruitment, in coordination with schools (who participate in staff interviews). Manages the teacher recruitment process according to the Teacher's Single Registry. supports the community in its participation in the selection process of the school principal and superintendent. Request budget availability from OGP to fill regional vacancies. Ensures personnel evaluation process in schools, as well as the development of action plans. Monitors compliance with action plans for each staff member. Collects training and capacity development needs and defines the teaching and non-teaching development plan - in coordination with the schools. Selects and contracts training providers. Manages the implementation of regional and in-school training based on the needs established by the schools. Manages in a timely manner the payroll procedures of school and LEA personnel (leaves and retirements). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify staffing needs at the school and escalates to LEA. Participates in the selection of the School Principal, non-teaching staff and teachers in special recruitment (attends interview). Evaluates school staff and makes development plans, with the support of the LEA. Identifies training needs and requests them from the LEA.