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Puerto Rico's Education Department Embarks on Major Decentralization Process

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In a bold move to transform Puerto Rico's education system, the island's Education Department is set to undergo a major decentralization process, as declared by officials on Monday. The move aims to enhance the efficacy of service delivery to students and comes as a direct response to ongoing criticisms regarding the department's performance.

Long regarded as a bureaucratic giant, the department has faced allegations of inefficiency and corruption, and has been struggling to curtail rising dropout rates. With the decentralization, officials hope to address these issues by shifting decision-making power and resource allocation closer to the students.

Puerto Rico Governor Pedro Pierluisi, who supports the change, stated, "We want the day-to-day decisions to be made at the regional level and the resources to reach our children directly."

The decentralization announcement was backed by U.S. Education Secretary Miguel Cardona, who joined Gov. Pierluisi for the statement. Cardona believes this reformation could be the necessary step to tackle the systemic challenges the department currently faces.

Over the next three months, Puerto Rican officials will work on drafting a detailed plan for decentralization. Once complete, the plan will be presented to both Gov. Pierluisi and the island's Education Secretary. This shift aims to expedite the delivery of federal resources where they are most needed, allowing schools and regions greater autonomy.

Puerto Rico's school district is the sixth largest in a U.S. jurisdiction, with 850 schools serving the needs of 225,000 students. It employs 25,000 teachers and caters to the educational needs of the island's population of 3.2 million. This proposed shift towards a more localized and responsive education system is a significant step for the island's vast school district.