

SERC Legislative Review



A General Historical Overview

Road Map

Three main stops:

- I. Historical Perspective/Mission & Vision
- II. What are the responsibilities of SERC under P.A. 14-212?
- III. What are the responsibilities of the SERC Board under P.A. 14-212?

Historical Perspective

- The Special Education Resource Center (SERC) was established in 1969 under a contract between St. Joseph College (West Hartford) and the SDE Bureau of Special Education Services.
- SERC was designed as a focal point of action and communication for special education professionals throughout the state.
- CT desired a “deeper impact on programs for handicapped children.”



Historical Perspective (continued)

- SERC was established as an educational center under C.G.S. section 10-76n in 1975 -- primarily maintained by SBE and funded by the SDE.
- SERC became the **State Education Resource Center** under C.G.S. section 10-4q in July, 2005.
- The Rensselaer Hartford Graduate Center presently serves as the fiscal agent for the administration of SERC.
- The SERC Library, open since SERC's inception, serves all of Connecticut's residents and regularly disseminates published materials to educators and families.

Historical Perspective (continued)

- SERC supported exceptional children with progressive special education programs in 1969 -- well before most other states offered all children with disabilities an education *and* five years before federal legislation mandated a "Free Appropriate Public Education" (FAPE) for all children.
- SERC programs have a nexus with special education: early childhood education, family involvement, English language learners, assessment, and positive behavior supports.
- All of these activities are designed to address Connecticut's achievement gaps by meeting the needs of our diverse populations.

Historical Perspective (continued)

- Recently, SERC's district and program-based activities have expanded, providing more on-site training, technical assistance, consultation, and group facilitation to school and program personnel. These professional development partnerships best reflect SERC's evolution and its current role in Connecticut's education community.

Mission & Vision

Our Mission:

SERC provides resources, professional development, and a centralized library to educators, families, and community members in collaboration with SDE and other partners.

Mission & Vision (continued)

Our Vision:

- **Equity. Excellence. Education.**
- SERC believes that all students have the right to access opportunities and experiences that reflect and respect their differences and abilities.
- In Connecticut, educational outcomes for students of color, students who are English Language Learners, and students with disabilities continue to lag behind outcomes for other students.
- To help eliminate these achievement gaps, SERC addresses institutionalized racism and promotes social justice in schools and districts.

P.A. 14-212: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTER (aka, "The Act")

Quick Facts:

- Formerly Senate Bill 425
- Acting Committees -- Education Committee;
Government Administration and Elections
Committee
- Effective June 2014

SERC Responsibilities

Sections 1 and 2 of the Act:

- Reconstitute SERC as a quasi-public agency created to assist the SBE with programming and activities;
- Define SERC as a separate and distinct entity from the SDE; and
- Transfer most of the responsibilities of the former Center to the newly reconstituted one.

SERC Responsibilities (continued)

The Act, Section 2: The purposes of SERC shall be to assist the State Board of Education in the provision of programs and activities that will **promote educational equity and excellence**.

Such activities shall be limited to:

- **Training, technical assistance and professional development** for local and regional boards of education, school leaders, teachers, families and community partners;
- Maintaining a **library**;
- Publication of **technical materials**;
- **Research and evaluation**;

SERC Responsibilities (continued)

- Writing, managing, administering and coordinating **grants**; and
- Any other related activities directly related to the purposes described in the Act.

SERC may also support programs and activities concerning early childhood education in collaboration with the Office of Early Childhood.

SERC Responsibilities (continued)

Section 2 highlights -- SERC is authorized and empowered to:

- **Establish all necessary or appropriate personnel practices and policies**, including those relating to hiring, promotion, compensation, and retirement;
- **Receive and accept aid or contributions** from any source of money, property, labor or other things of value...to carry out the purposes...of the Act;
- **Make and enter into all contracts and agreements necessary** or incidental to the performance of its duties...including contracts and agreements for such professional services as SERC deems necessary, including...services provided by financial consultants, underwriters and technical specialists;

SERC Responsibilities (continued)

- **Procure insurance** against any liability or loss in connection with its property and other assets;
- **Account for and audit funds** of SERC;
- **Establish advisory committees** to assist in accomplishing its duties...which may include one or more members of the Board of Directors and persons other than members; and
- **Do all acts and things necessary or convenient to carry out the purposes of the Act.**

SERC Responsibilities (continued)

SERC shall establish a **Connecticut School Reform Resource Center** within SERC.

The Connecticut School Reform Resource Center shall operate year-round and shall focus on serving the needs of all public schools.

SERC Responsibilities (continued)

The **Connecticut School Reform Resource Center** shall:

- (1) Publish and distribute **reports** on the most effective practices for improving student achievement;
- (2) Provide a program of **professional development activities** for (a) school leaders, and (b) teachers;
- (3) Provide information on successful models for **evaluating student performance** and **managing student data**;
- (4) Develop **strategies for assisting students** who are in danger of failing;
- (5) Develop **culturally-relevant methods** for educating students whose primary language is not English; *and*
- (6) Provide other programs and materials to assist in the improvement of public schools.

SERC Responsibilities (continued)

SERC shall be subject to:

- (1) Rules, regulations and restrictions on purchasing, procurement, personal service agreements and the disposition of assets generally applicable to Connecticut state agencies; and
- (2) Audit by the Auditors of Public Accounts under section 2-90 of the general statutes.

SERC Responsibilities (continued)

SERC shall maintain the **Special Education Resource Center** with federal funds granted to the state for the maintenance of said center under the provisions of the federal Education for the Handicapped Act.

The Commissioner of Education is authorized to accept any federal funds allotted to the state for such purposes and shall administer such funds in accordance with federal law.

SERC Responsibilities (continued)

Fiscal Duties:

For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2015 and each fiscal year thereafter -- SERC shall annually submit a **yearly budget, projected revenue statement, and financial audit** to the SBE and the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education.

SERC Board Responsibilities

The members of the SERC Board **shall adopt written procedures** for:

- (1) Adopting an annual budget and plan of operations**, including a requirement of board approval before the budget or plan may take effect;
- (2) Hiring, dismissing, promoting, and compensating SERC employees**, including an affirmative action policy and a requirement of board approval before a position may be created or a vacancy filled;

SERC Board Responsibilities (continued)

- (3) Acquiring real and personal property and personal services**, including a requirement of board approval for any non-budgeted expenditure in excess of an amount to be determined by the board; and
- (4) Contracting for financial, legal, consulting, and other professional services**, including a requirement that the center solicit proposals at least once every three years for each such service which it uses.

SERC Board Responsibilities (continued)

Executive Director

- The Chairperson shall, with the approval of the members of the Board, appoint an Executive Director of SERC who shall be a SERC employee and be paid a salary prescribed by the Board.
- The Executive Director shall supervise the administrative affairs and technical activities of SERC in accordance with the directives of the Board.

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