

## Technical High School Teachers and the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS)

By: John D. Moran, Principal Analyst  
December 19, 2017 | 2017-R-0352

### Issue

Explain whether teachers employed in the Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS) become members of the TRS or the State Employee Retirement System (SERS). Include whether non-teaching employees at the CTHSS are TRS members.

### Technical High School Teachers and the TRS

Teachers who work for CTHSS can choose between joining either (1) TRS, in which members build a defined-benefit pension that does not include Social Security, or (2) SERS, in which members build a defined-benefit pension and pay into Social Security ([CGS § 5-160\(g\)](#)). (For more on the history of the TRS and Social Security see OLR report [2017-R-0212](#).) Teachers and professional staff employed by the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) also have this choice.

By law, a teacher is given one month to make the choice between the retirement systems. If a teacher has not made the choice within one month of employment, then the person is deemed to have chosen SERS ([CGS § 5-160\(g\)](#)).

In one common scenario, the technical high school system hires a teacher who has already worked for a local board of education and therefore is in the TRS. Since the teacher wants to continue building a TRS pension, he or she opts to stay in the TRS even though the teacher could join SERS and therefore also pay into Social Security.

As for non-teaching technical high school employees, anyone who holds a State Board of Education (SBE) certificate or permit, such as guidance counselors or school psychologists, is considered a teacher under the law and therefore can either join TRS or SERS. This definition includes anyone who is part of (1) the professional staff of SBE, the Office of Early Childhood, the BOR, or any higher education constituent unit or (2) the professional staff of the State Education Resource Center, who hold a SBE certificate or permit ([CGS § 10-183b\(26\)](#)). Non-certified technical high school staff are members of SERS and do not have the choice to join TRS.

At the local or regional board of education level, professional staff who are SBE certified, such as guidance counselors or school psychologists, are also members of the TRS. Non-certified staff are not members of TRS.

JM:cmg