

# SOUTHINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS - COALITION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

SCOPE OF SERVICES



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# STATE EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTER

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## PROPOSAL FOR DISTRICTWIDE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SERVICES Year I

**Date:** March 2019 to June 2020

<b>Organization Name &amp; Address:</b>  State Education Resource Center 100 Roscommon Drive-Suite 110 Middletown, CT 06457-1520	<b>Project Title:</b> <i>Social Justice and Equity in Education: A Systemic Approach</i>
<b>Organization Type:</b>  Quasi-Public	<b>Initial Project Period:</b> March 2019 to June 2020
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## ABOUT SERC

The **State Education Resource Center (SERC)** is an educational agency first established in Connecticut General Statute under section 10-4q over 45 years ago. Formerly known as the Special Education Resource Center, SERC became the State Education Resource Center under Connecticut General Statute section 10-76n in July 2005. SERC became a quasi-public agency in 2014, when the Governor enacted P. A. 14-212. P. A. 14-212 requires that SERC be governed by a board of thirteen members. Board members include the Commissioner of Education or the Commissioner's designee and twelve appointments divided between the Legislature and the Governor. Through the years, SERC has been primarily funded by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and is seeking to diversify its funding sources in order to best serve the educational community of Connecticut.

SERC's sole purpose is to assist with the provision of professional learning opportunities that promote educational equity and excellence in schools and districts across the state. SERC provides various training programs, technical assistance, resources, and other related continuing education activities dedicated to closing the opportunity gaps between groups of students in order to raise student achievement. SERC also has also maintained a comprehensive and centralized Library.

Established in 1969, SERC's primary role was to support Connecticut's pioneering efforts in providing special education programs. This was before a number of other states had made a serious commitment to offer all children with disabilities an education, and five years before federal legislation mandated a "free appropriate public education" for all children. Although the original intent for SERC continues to form the core of the agency's activities, the interrelationship between special education and all other educational improvement efforts is vital, growing in significance, and inextricable. Efforts involving early childhood education, family engagement, English language learners, assessment, positive behavior supports, and other areas have a direct relationship with outcomes for students with disabilities. As a result, SERC plays an enhanced role in these and other related areas as it continues to seamlessly integrate general and special education programs and services with the support and expertise of SERC professionals and partners. All of the agency's efforts are designed to address Connecticut's opportunity gaps by building the capacity of educators, service providers, and families to meet the diverse needs of our student population.

Changes at SERC have focused on the need for the integration of all education services; these changes are directly reflected in SERC's professional development offerings. Even though SERC continues to have special education as its foundation, SERC's initiatives and programs have expanded from being a leading resource for special educators and families to serving all Connecticut educators, human services professionals, families, and community members. In recent years, SERC's district, school, and program-based activities have been strengthened, providing more and more on-site training, technical assistance, consultation, and group facilitation to school and program personnel working diligently to provide a quality education for Connecticut's children and youth. These professional development partnerships best reflect SERC's evolution of service and its integral role in Connecticut's educational community.

SERC is an agency committed to its vision and mission of equity, excellence, and education.

## **Equity, Excellence, Education: SERC's Role and Influence in Connecticut**

Connecticut public schools have a huge task. They must meet federal, state, and district mandates while building the capacity of their administrators and educators to identify and provide effective instruction and supports for students with special education needs, students of color, and students acquiring English (i.e., Connecticut's lowest performing subgroups). SERC not only supports individual schools and districts in creating more equitable learning environments for these students, it coordinates this effort on a statewide level—transforming systems in a way that helps ensure an excellent education for *all* students. This statewide role makes SERC's involvement essential when Connecticut policy makers pursue equitable outcomes and develop and implement any future consequential changes in the delivery of special education services.

**Inclusion** - SERC was explicitly created as the entity that helps the state meet its responsibilities to students with disabilities, most recently under the legal obligations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). As it evolved, SERC led the integration of special and general education, historically divided systems, into a unified approach to education that promotes equitable policies, culturally relevant practices, and accessible structures that develop achieving learning communities within schools.

**Equity** - SERC's longstanding commitment to equity has provided a unique perspective on addressing the current opportunity gaps. Its blueprint, outlined in "Equity in Education: A Transformational Approach" and demonstrated in work with schools and districts, reflects five critical elements to transformational change and capacity building in education. SERC and its partners work to ensure that equity and excellence are at the forefront of decisions made on behalf of *all* children.

**Collaboration** - SERC recognizes that to be effective in facilitating change that is systemic, effective, and enduring, all stakeholders must be included in the change process. Through collaborative partnerships with SERC, education systems shape their own transformation while SERC guides the process and customizes application of research and new thinking. SERC maintains ongoing relationships built among partners and offers continued support to foster and sustain systemic change.

**Scope** - SERC services a broad range of constituents, including state-level policy makers, educators, families, and community members through a variety of venues and mediums. SERC's three major functions—creation and provision of resources, operation of a centralized library, and facilitation of professional learning experiences and programming—are organized across several units and job positions covering a wide range of supports and services for the state.

SERC's decades of work on behalf of *all* students has made a significant impact on the schools and families that serve them.

## The SERC Difference

SERC's mission is to **provide** resources, professional development, and a centralized library to educators, families, and community members in collaboration with the Connecticut State Department of Education and other partners. Through this mission, SERC **seeks equity and excellence in education for ALL** of Connecticut's children.

- SERC's **distinction** is rooted in the legislative mandate to support the State Board of Education in the provision of programs and activities that promote **equity and excellence** (C.G.S. §10-357b(a)).
- SERC is the living embodiment of a **racially conscious** organization. SERC challenges bias, raises hard questions rooted in core values about student ability, and interrupts thinking and interactions that perpetuate inequities for Connecticut's children.
- SERC believes that **all students have the right** to access opportunities and experiences that reflect and respect their differences and abilities.
- SERC **provides services** to a broad range of constituents, including not only educators but also state-level policy makers, families, and community members through a variety of venues and mediums.
- Districts can and have **depended on SERC** for **neutral facilitation, training, and technical assistance** in areas of need ranging from maintaining a continuum of supports for all students to making decisions about placements for students in special education.

## SCOPE OF SERVICES

**Goal:** To provide districtwide professional learning that advances cultural responsiveness and racial equity as leverage points for action driven outcomes through community engagement and support.

Using the district's identified 3 structures and/ or levels of organizational support (Steering Committee, District Equity Leadership Team, and the Southington Public Schools Coalition for Social Justice) school leaders, educators, students, and community members will embark in intentional and actionable professional learning that would guide and support equitable reflection, problem solving, and decision-making.

An in depth examination of the scope, sequence, and implementation of district's philosophies, policies, structures, and practices with the objective of creating an alignment of such organizational mechanisms to the operationalization of the school's vision and mission will be the focus of the first year of this partnership.

As part of this partnership, a collaboratively developed professional learning program will be designed to provide all participants with an opportunity to explore the historical underpinnings that have led to institutionalized practices that perpetuate injustice, discrimination, and inequalities for targeted individual groups based on their race, disability, economic and social hardship, gender, sexual orientation, age, language and religious creed. As part of the learning opportunity, participants would take a personal in-depth look at their own values, beliefs, biases, and how they impact their interactions with members of the community.

As technical advisors, SERC will facilitate conversations among participants that will explore the following:

1. History of race and racism
2. Common elements of oppression
3. Understanding the dynamics of systemic and structural racism
4. The impact of internalized racist oppression in the community
5. Personal beliefs and values the impact the development of culturally responsive relationships between and amongst racial groups
6. A working definition of equity and its impact on the community
7. Key components of shared leadership and shared accountability within an equitable framework of action
8. Individual commitment to eliminate the barriers that preclude staff, students and community for being full and equal contributors to the collective wellbeing of the community.

Depending on the needs of participants and the collaboratively developed structure of the program, participants will be able to:

1. Delineate key historical and local events that have led to the development of institutionalized practices that perpetuate oppressive outcomes for individual groups in the community.
2. Develop a working definition of equity.
3. Explore and outline how personal beliefs, values, and experiences impact their interactions with members of their learning community.
4. Identify key learning components to design an equitable framework of action, including the role of the members of the community as agents for social change.

SERC will work with the Southington Public Schools to design this learning program, including an evaluative component in order to assess its impact (i.e. Results-Based Accountability).

### **Program Outcomes:**

- ✓ Encourage networking for collegial interactions
- ✓ Develop intentional professional supports systems
- ✓ Application of knowledge to critically review current policies and procedures
- ✓ Outline sustainability and capacity building across all sectors of the community
- ✓ Build capacity of school leaders to monitor, support, and sustain fidelity of implementation of new learning
- ✓ Build capacity of student leaders to support, and sustain fidelity of implementation of new learning
- ✓ Build capacity of community leaders to support, and sustain fidelity of implementation of new learning

### **Content Outcomes:**

- ✓ Develop institutionalized knowledge and systemic consensus of the application of Culturally Responsive practices and procedures across every school within the district.
- ✓ Introduce Critical Race Theory as the foundation to understanding structural racism.
- ✓ Explore the impact of structural racism in decision-making.
- ✓ Analyze and reflect how personal beliefs and values support or perpetuate injustice practices that hinder student growth.
- ✓ Analyze school strategies for changing policies, practices, and cultural representations to promote racial equity as an aspect of complex change.

### **Critical Content Areas:**

**COURAGEOUS CONVERSATION™:** Protocol for effectively engaging, sustaining and deepening interracial dialogue.

**Critical Race Theory as the Foundation to Understand Structural Racism:** This theory strives to advance a social justice framework. Unlike traditional scholarly research that investigates and/or explains how race and racism are organized and operate, critical race theory also aims to redress social inequalities. This is what makes it “critical.” Critical race theory is typically interdisciplinary and embraces multifaceted disciplines and/or research methods. Critical race theory tends to be organized around core questions that reach into several disciplines and that require multiple strategies. Critical race theory draws upon paradigms of intersectionality; it recognizing that race and racism work with and through gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality and/or nation as systems of power.

**The Impact of Oppression on Our School Community:** As part of this component, participants will be exposed to current societal trends that impact the lives of children and families. Participants will delve into topics such as stereotype threat, prejudice, discrimination, whiteness, and social stratification.

**Personal Beliefs and Values that Impact the Development of Culturally Responsive Practices and Programs:** Participants will engage in self-reflective discourse about their own racial narratives and how their personal narratives impact their cultural environments and their social connections.

**The Role of the Leaders as an Agent of Equity and Social Justice:** Participants will explore the concepts of change and resilience as drivers of equity and social justice advocacy. Daryl Conner identifies resilience as the most important factor that affects one's speed of change. Highly resilient individuals are able to operate at a higher speed of change. Becoming consciously competent about their own resilience is critical for leaders in order to impact complex messaging during critical changing educational landscapes.

**SERC will:**

- Provide technical assistance the district's identified 3 structures and/ or levels of organizational support ( Steering Committee, District Equity Leadership Team, and the Southington Public Schools Coalition for Social Justice ) to ensure alignment of district's anticipated outcome with their vision and mission
- Provide monthly technical assistance to the Steering Committee as outlined by the scope of this proposal
- Provide quarterly technical assistance to the district's DELT as outlined by the scope of this proposal.
- Provide quarterly technical assistance to the Southington Public Schools Coalition for Social Justice as outlined by the scope of this proposal
- Provide an End of Year report summarizing the year's outcomes and suggestions for sustainability

**Southington Public School will:**

- Assist in scheduling and coordination of all on site SERC visits
- Provide release time for staff as needed, light refreshments, and comfortable meeting space with room for movement and availability of projector and screen.

**Scope of Service:**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Number of Days</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>
Facilitate strategic planning meeting (s) with Steering Committee	4 half days	March/June	➤ Planning Agendas ➤ Meeting Goals ➤ Meeting Outcomes
Facilitate monthly technical assistance/training with DELT	4 full days	March/June	➤ Summary of evaluations
Facilitate quarterly technical assistance/training for the Southington Public Schools Coalition for Social Justice	4 half days	March/June/October/January	➤ Summary of evaluations
Support the Development of Southington's Racial Equity Strategic Plan	4 full days	September/May	➤ Summary of meetings and goal tracker
Facilitation of Leadership Retreat	1 full day	July/June	➤ Final Report