



## Clarification on Membership Determination for Preschool Teachers

In January, employers received a joint communication from STRS Ohio and School Employees Retirement System of Ohio (SERS) regarding membership determination for positions of mutual interest. A list of common positions as well as the appropriate retirement system was also provided. Included in the list was the position of preschool teacher. The intent of the communication was to outline membership for regular preschool programs.

Both retirement systems would like to clarify the membership requirement for preschool teachers. School districts can offer regular and/or special education preschool programs. Preschool teachers in regular preschool programs are not required to have a professional educator license from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). The determining factor for preschool teachers and retirement system membership is the ODE licensing requirement regardless of what license an individual may hold or the school district requirements for preschool positions. Therefore, SERS membership is required for **all** teachers and aides in regular preschool programs.

However, a head teacher in a special education preschool program should contribute to STRS Ohio. "Head Teacher" is defined in Ohio Administrative Code 3301-37-01 as a person hired to guide and instruct a class of preschool children enrolled in the program and who may supervise the program. ODE requires head teachers in special education preschool programs to have a professional teacher license pursuant to Sections 3319.22 to 3391.31, Revised Code. Other teachers and aides in special education preschool programs should contribute to SERS.

Directors of either special education or regular preschool programs should contribute to STRS Ohio. If a principal is hired to direct your preschool program, then STRS Ohio membership is already a requirement.

Please review your current membership for preschool teachers and adhere to the guidelines as set forth in this notice. Any individuals currently holding these positions who are not currently contributing to the correct retirement system must have their membership changed to meet these requirements beginning July 1, 2014. These membership changes will not be retroactive. Consequently, employers will not be required to transfer contributions from past years to the correct retirement system. Questions should be directed to the STRS Ohio Employer Reporting Department toll-free at 1-888-535-4050 or SERS Employer Outreach at 1-877-213-0861.

### STRS Ohio

- Preschool directors
- Special education preschool head teachers

### SERS

- Regular preschool teachers (including head teachers) and aides
- Special education preschool teachers and aides (not including head teachers)