

Board Members' Homework Assignment: Making Sure Your District's Website Is Legally Compliant

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With the start of a new school year, students are not the only ones who have homework. To the contrary, school board members and their respective districts' central office administrators have their own assignment -- ensuring that their school district websites comply with Connecticut law. This is because among the many laws that Connecticut has crafted in the area of education, a number of them set forth notices that school districts -- and in some cases, charter schools -- *must* post on their websites. In fact, apparently not content with the preexisting posting requirements, during its last session the General Assembly devised a few more.

Therefore, to help board members and administrators keep track of what your websites should include, what follows is an iteration of some of the more notable mandatory website posting requirements that can be found in the Connecticut General Statutes:

Existing Website Posting Requirements

- **Notices of Special Meetings:** Section 1-225 of the Connecticut General Statutes, which is a provision of the Freedom of Information Act, requires all public agencies -- including boards of education, board subcommittees, regional education service centers, and charter schools -- to post notices of special meetings on their websites not less than twenty-four hours before the meeting is to be held (except in the rare case of emergency meetings).
- **Life-Threatening Food Allergies and Glycogen Storage Disease Plans:** Now, the first reaction of many people to this statute might understandably be to ask what *is* a Glycogen Storage Disease? Nonetheless, Section 10-212c requires local and regional boards of education to make their mandated, life-threatening-food-allergies and glycogen-storage-disease plans available on either the board's website or the website of each school under the board's jurisdiction.
- **Indoor Air Quality Program Notice:** Section 10-220 requires local and regional boards of education to ensure that the results of their school indoor-air-quality inspection reports are available on either the board's website or on each individual school's website.
- **Student Recruitment by Specialized Schools:** Section 10-220d requires local and regional boards of education to "provide information relating to technical high schools, regional agricultural science and technology education centers, interdistrict magnet schools, charter schools, alternative high schools and interdistrict student attendance programs" on their websites, a mandate that would seem to be the same as requiring businesses to urge potential customers to consider their competitors.

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- **Safe School Climate Plans:** Section 10-222d requires local and regional boards of education to make their safe school climate plans available on the board's *and* each individual school's website within thirty calendar days of the plan's approval by the State Department of Education.
- **Information Regarding Aggregate Spending for Education:** Section 10-220o requires local and regional boards of education, regional educational service centers and state charter school governing authorities to make available on their websites the aggregate spending on salaries, employee benefits, instructional supplies, educational media supplies, instructional equipment, regular education tuition, special education tuition, purchased services and all other expenditure items, excluding debt service, for each school under their jurisdiction.
- **Green Cleaning Program Notice:** Section 10-231g requires local and regional boards of education to post the school district's green cleaning program notices and reports on the district website and on each school's individual website if such individual school websites exist.

New Website Posting Requirements for the 2015-16 School Year

- **Innovation Waivers:** A provision in this year's budget implementer bill, specifically, Section 301 of Public Act 15-5, requires local and regional boards of education that have been granted an innovation waiver or innovation waiver renewal by the State Board of Education to post on their websites a report on the results of such waiver.
- **Use of Pesticides:** The implementer, specifically Section 436 of Public Act 15-5, also amends existing statutes on the use of pesticides (Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 10-231c & 10-231d). These statutes now require local and regional boards of education to e-mail notice of the impending use of pesticides at a given school to parents who have requested such notice. The amended statutes further require that this notice be posted on the individual school's website, or the board's website if an individual school website does not exist. Finally, to ensure that there will be more gilding than there is lily, the statutes *also* require that districts post this notice of imminent pesticide use on the school's or, in the alternative, the board's primary social media account.
- **Alternative Education:** Public Act 15-133, which became effective July 1, 2015, requires each local and regional board of education to make available on its website information relating to alternative education "including, but not limited to, the purpose, location, contact information, staff directory and enrollment criteria for such alternative education."
- **Restraint and Seclusion Policies and Procedures:** Public Act 15-141, which also became effective July 1, 2015, requires local and regional boards of education to post restraint and seclusion policies and procedures on the board's website.

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As exhausting as this list is, it is not necessarily exhaustive of all of the website notices Connecticut requires of its school districts or charter schools. This list is instead a study aid, designed to assist board members and their administrators complete their homework of ensuring that their websites pass legal muster.

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