

Jessica Richman Smith

Partner

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Jessica Richman Smith represents sophisticated educational institutions in a variety of education, labor relations, and employment law matters, such as collective bargaining, employment counseling, policy drafting and review, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Connecticut Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the First Amendment, Title IX, data privacy, social media, student and employee discipline, investigations, business contracts, background checks, and mandated reporting.

Jessica is highly respected in her field, bringing her experience as a former business litigator in New York City and as a Deputy Executive Director with the New York City Department of Education to her work with the firm's education clients. A true thought-partner, Jessica has a talent for understanding the unique and often sensitive issues faced by the school districts she represents. She is especially aware of how such issues affect a district's relationship with its students, parents, staff, and the wider school community, and this awareness motivates her commitment to her clients and informs her advice.

A member of the firm's School Law Practice Group, Jessica applies her extensive knowledge of education law and practice to assist boards of education and school administrators interpret the law, understand their legal obligations, and solve difficult problems creatively within the applicable legal framework. Whether she is advising boards of education on labor negotiations, personnel matters, student issues, or board policies, Jessica maintains her clients' best interests and takes care to ensure her advice accounts for school districts' operational needs. The nature of Jessica's practice requires her to be an attentive listener, effective communicator, and insightful advisor. She has the ability to view situations from multiple perspectives, identifying the impact of different approaches

and offering thoughtful solutions to complex problems. In times of crisis, Jessica acts quickly to inform clients of their options and help them respond promptly and effectively to the matter at hand.

Jessica is a seasoned professional at the bargaining table, negotiating certified and non-certified collective bargaining agreements on behalf of boards of education. She also drafts employment contracts for staff members and negotiates separation agreements when necessary. She represents school districts in various contested proceedings, such as arbitrations over collective bargaining agreements and grievances, teacher tenure proceedings, FOIA hearings, and expulsion hearings. Jessica also provides guidance on labor and employment disputes, business contract matters, student disciplinary matters, election law matters, and other legal proceedings arising in the education context. When disputes arise, Jessica is a facile litigator and is prepared to bring arbitration proceedings before bodies such as the American Arbitration Association, the State Board of Mediation and Arbitration, and the Freedom of Information Commission.

Jessica is committed to continually expanding her knowledge and applying all aspects of her experience to provide the legal guidance that best meets her clients' needs. She is a frequent speaker on school law topics at professional seminars and conferences, and she regularly provides professional development to school district employees on topics such as FERPA, FOIA, and best practices for conducting investigations. Jessica is also a former adjunct professor at the University of Connecticut's Neag School of Education.

Distinctions

- *Journal on Legislation*, Article Editor
- Chancellor's Fellow, New York City Department of Education
- Connecticut Legal Services, Board of Directors

Teaching Positions

- University of Connecticut, Neag School of Education: Adjunct Professor (2015-2016)
- Solomon Schechter Day School of Nassau County: English Teacher (2001-2002)

Professional Affiliations

- American Bar Association
- Connecticut Bar Association
- Fairfield County Bar Association

Credentials

Education

- Harvard College, A.B., *summa cum laude*, 2001
- Harvard Law School, J.D., 2005

Bar Admissions

- Connecticut, 2015
- New York, 2006

Court Admissions

- U.S. District Court, Southern District of NY
- U.S. District Court, Eastern District of NY