

Illinois school district superintendents say they count on Shelli L. Anderson for her guidance and counsel on the most complex personnel issues. Her education and employment law know-how and her compassionate nature seem to be just the right combination of attributes to handle the difficult and sensitive situations which arise in her practice.

Anderson, a 37-year-old partner at Franczek Radelet, is an expert on employment and education law. She is the lead attorney on personnel matters for several of the firm's large school district clients and overwhelmingly she has become the attorney her colleagues call when their clients are confronted with difficult employee discrimination cases, often of a sexual nature, whether it is sexual harassment or student-teacher relations.

Anderson's practice is devoted to advising public employers, primarily school districts, in all aspects of labor and employment law. She also counsels and litigates on behalf of private employers on employee discrimination matters. In her short 13 years of practice, she has already dealt with some very difficult employee discipline cases. Her success on behalf of her clients is due in large part to her unique ability to gain the confidence of victims and prepare them to testify effectively in extraordinarily complicated proceedings.

"Ms. Anderson is a brilliant litigator, a stout supporter of public education, and unsurpassed advocate for those individuals who deliver and receive this education," comments John Harper, Superintendent of Plainfield Community Consolidated School District 202, which Anderson has been advising for the past eight years.

"Ms. Anderson is professional, committed, and tenacious in her advocacy for clients. She knows the difference between right and wrong, and she relies upon her internal, ethical compass to direct her and her client's case."

In a contentious case, Harper recalls, "Ms. Anderson spent countless hours listening to the female staff members; responding to their questions and concerns; and preparing them all to give testimony at the hearing," he says. "In my opinion, had it not been for Ms. Anderson's personal involvement with these teachers, and the trust she built with them, I strongly doubt they would have mustered the confidence to testify."

"Its one thing for an attorney to guide and direct administrators and Board members though the complexities associated with procedural due process and other legal safeguards, but it's nothing short of remarkable for this same attorney to extend the patience and compassion which Ms. Anderson tendered to these . . . staff members," Harper says.

Since 2002, Anderson has also advised Leyden Community High School District 212. One of her first tasks for Leyden District 212 was handling the dismissal of a tenured teacher. Since then, Anderson has successfully handled several other dismissal hearings for tenured teachers for District 212 as well as other school districts around the State. She also recently helped District 212 prepare for an anticipated teachers' strike.

"Shelli sees the big picture yet never misses the minute details," says Kathryn Robbins, Superintendent of District 212. "She has the unique ability to quickly analyze complex situations and to anticipate problems."

At the young age of 32, Anderson was promoted to equity partner and quickly began serving various leadership roles at Franczek Radelet, including serving as a member of the firm's Partner Compensation Committee, a significant reflection of her maturity and stature in the firm. As former hiring partner, Shelli furthered the firm's commitment to diversity—more than half of those lawyers hired during her leadership were women. She also currently chairs the firm's Associate and Paralegal Development Committee, and was instrumental in leading progressive modifications to the firm's associate compensation process.

Anderson, a member of the Illinois School Attorneys Counsel, is a sought after speaker on topics such as disciplining school employees, misuse of technology, investigating sexual misconduct in schools, social networking and teacher-student boundaries.

"Extremely intelligent and articulate, Shelli is respectful, professional, and composed even when the other parties are not," Robbins says. "We're glad she's on our side."



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