**Pitfalls for New Superintendents: Avoid the Top 10 Errors**

Atty. Michael J. Long

Long & DiPietro, LLP

175 Derby St. Unit 17

Hingham, MA 02043

1-781-749-0021

mlong@long-law.com

1. Disputes over “roles”
	* It’s improvisational jazz, not a symphony. Feel the rhythm.
2. Honor the “no surprises” rule
	* Always provide the “heads up”- even if others don’t
	* Disclose early that which must be disclosed eventually---if your not sure, disclose
3. Budget issues
	* Woe betide you if you don’t regularly update on status
4. Accurately read the political environment
	* Focus on the impact the decision will have on kids
	* Dissenters who disagree are not always treacherous or traitorous

* + - Use the concept of a loyal opposition
		- Focus on areas of agreement
1. Don’t be arrogant
	* We all know you’re the boss and you were selected after an intergalactic search
2. Be media smart
	* Introduce yourself to editors and reporters
	* Know their deadlines and stick to them if at all possible
	* Don’t be afraid to ask for a correction based on facts
	* “No comment” doesn’t fly– get the talking points set in advance
3. Parents need to be heard
	* Psych 101: you matter, I heard you, and I will consider your views…then get back to them
4. Teachers need to be valued
	* They are the most important people in the system, after the kids, and you need to say that
	* Psych 101: See above
	* Be fair and consistent with discipline
5. Be discrete
	* Personal habits and behaviors matter
	* Professionally
		+ At the beginning apply the Jim Rice Rule: Co-workers are not automatically friends, they’re business associates.
			- You knew who your friends were before you took the job.
			- If you want a new friend, get a dog
		+ So, be careful what you say and do in the office as you may not get a mulligan
		+ BUT, this can change over time with the accumulation of personal and professional capital
6. Ask for help when you don’t know
	* + You don’t know everything
		+ You’ll learn who is capable and willing
		+ You’ll learn who possesses institutional memory
		+ You’ll earn credibility

**A Bonus**:

1. Accept responsibility for personal and systemic errors/mistakes
	* + The cover up is always worse than the mistake
		+ Explain what happened, why and what you’ve learned going forward
		+ Understand not everyone will be satisfied