

**Travis Holland
Suspension, 18 Months**

The Background:

Prior History: N/A

Facts: Mr. Holland, a high school world history teacher and baseball coach with Rutherford County Schools was suspended in May 2019 pending investigation after allegations of inappropriate physical contact were made against him. After an investigation into the matter, the district presented charges against Mr. Holland for a 10-day suspension without pay, transfer to a smaller/heavier supervised school, removed from coaching and required to take the employee assistance program. Mr. Holland resigned instead. The charges presented to Mr. Holland included lack of instruction during class time, leaving the class unsupervised, students and students from other classes hanging out at his desk, allowing students to spend the class period outside unsupervised, , female students rubbing his shoulders and back while he sat at his desk, asking female students to clean off his desk and sit in his lap, hugging female student, rubbing female students and communicating with students via SnapChat. There is video evidence of Mr. Holland caressing a female student's back and hugging said student. Mr. Holland said he was comforting said student after a death in her family.

Applicable Rule: 0520-02-03-.09(1)(e) defines Inappropriate Physical Contact as Unlawful, unnecessary, and/or unjustified physical contact with a student. Examples of such unnecessary and unjustified contact include, but are not limited to sexual contact, physical altercations, horseplay, tickling, improper use of corporal punishment, and rough housing.

0520-02-03-.09(1)(d) defines Inappropriate Communication (Non-Explicit) as Any communication between an educator and a student that is beyond the scope of the educator's professional responsibilities. Examples of such non-explicit inappropriate communications include, but are not limited to, those communications that discuss the teaching staff member's or student's past or current romantic relationships; those that include the use of profanities or obscene language; those that are harassing, intimidating, or bullying; those that attempt to establish an inappropriate personal relationship with a student; and those that are related to personal or confidential information regarding another school staff member or student.

0520-02-03-.09(1)(k) defines Good Cause as Conduct that calls into question the fitness of an educator to hold a license including, but not limited to, noncompliance with security guidelines for Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) or successor tests pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-1-607, failure to report licensure actions as required under

paragraph (2), or violation of any provision in the Teacher Code of Ethics as contained in T.C.A. §§ 49- 5-1001, *et seq.*

0520-02-03-.09(1)(p) defines Suspension as The nullification of an educator's license for a predetermined term, after which the license is automatically reinstated. Reinstatement may be subject to the completion of terms and conditions contained in the order of suspension.

0520-02-03-.09(3)(e) provides that the State Board of Education may revoke, suspend, formally reprimand, or refuse to issue or renew an educator's license for inappropriate physical contact with a student.

0520-02-03-.09(3)(g) provides the State Board of Education may revoke, suspend, formally reprimand, or refuse to issue or renew an educator's license for other good cause as defined in subparagraph (1)(k) of this rule.

0520-02-03-.09(3)(h) provides the State Board of Education may revoke, suspend, formally reprimand, or refuse to issue or renew an educator's license for any offense contained in paragraphs (4) and/or (5) of this rule.

0520-02-03-.09(5)(a)(5)(i) provides that an individual holding an educator's license who is found to have engaged in non-explicit inappropriate communication with a student shall be subject to a disciplinary action within the range of a suspension for no less than three (3) months up to and including revocation.

0520-02-03-.09(5)(a)(6) provides that an individual holding an educator's license who is found to have engaged in inappropriate physical contact with a student that does not result in harm or potential harm to the student shall be subject to a disciplinary action within the range of a formal reprimand up to and including suspension for two (2) years.

0520-02-03-.09(5)(a)(8) provides An individual holding an educator's license who is found to have violated the teacher code of ethics shall be subject to a disciplinary action within the range of a suspension for no less than one (1) year up to and including revocation.

T.C.A. § 49-5-1003(b)(7) provides that an educator shall make reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions harmful to learning or to health and safety.

T.C.A. § 49-5-1003(b)(8) provides that an educator shall make reasonable effort to protect the emotional well-being of the student.

T.C.A. § 49-5-1003(b)(9) provides that an educator shall not intentionally expose the student to embarrassment or disparagement.

T.C.A. § 49-5-1003(b)(19) provides that an educator shall maintain a professional approach with the student at all times.

Status: Respondent was notified by certified mail of the Board's intent to **suspend** his educator license based upon these findings. Respondent received said notice.

Board Action Consistency Considerations:

November 2018 – Board suspended an educator's license for eighteen months with reinstatement contingent upon proof of professional development for being affectionate with students by holding their hands and rubbing their hair; there were also allegations that educator was laying on a couch in her classroom with a student under a blanket.

The Recommendation:

The Board staff recommends that the Board approve the signed Consent Order submitted by the Respondent based upon the facts and applicable rule noted above.