

David Helton
Suspension, Three (3) Months Retroactive with Professional Development

The Background:

Prior History: N/A

Facts: Mr. Helton is an 8th grade PE teacher who facilitated a class discussion on sexual topics and the effects of puberty on the human body. These topics were beyond the scope of the class and not part of the curriculum.

*Applicable Rule
/Law:*

0520-02-03-.09(1)(d) defines Inappropriate Communication (Explicit) as any communication between an educator and a student that describes, represents, or alludes to sexual activity or any other illegal activity. This includes, but is not limited to, communication defined as sexual misconduct under T.C.A. § 49-5-417, communication defined as sexually related behavior under T.C.A. § 49-5-1003(b)(15), and communication that would encourage illegal activity such as encouraging the use or purchase of illegal substances. This shall not be construed to prevent an educator from communication regarding sexual or illegal activities for educational purposes such as in teaching family-life curriculum pursuant to T.C.A. §§ 49-6-1307 et seq. or drug abuse resistance education pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-1-402 or to prevent an educator from upholding the educator's obligation as a mandatory reporter of child abuse, neglect, or child sexual abuse.

0520-02-03-.09(1)(e) 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 educator'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, 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 reinstated. Reinstatement may be subject to the completion of terms and conditions contained in the order of suspension.

0520-02-03-.09(3)(i) 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)(j) 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) 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)(5)(ii) An individual holding an educator's license who is found to have engaged in inappropriate communication of an explicit nature with a student shall be subject to permanent revocation.

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 contained in T.C.A. Title 49, Chapter 5, Part 10 shall be subject to a disciplinary action within the range of a formal reprimand 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 students to embarrassment or disparagement.

T.C.A. § 49-5-1003(b)(19) provides educators shall maintain a professional approach with students at all times

Status:

Respondent was notified by certified mail of the Board's intent to **suspend** Respondent's educator license based upon these findings for a period **three (3) months beginning retroactively from the date of Respondent's resignation with the district, April 19, 2022, through July 19, 2022, and require professional development.** Respondent received said notice.

Board Action Consistency Considerations:

May 2022 – Board approved the three (3) month suspension of an educator’s license with reinstatement contingent upon proof of professional development after the educator showed the class an unapproved video that discussed sexual topics.

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.