

Lindsey Lee Smith Bell
Formal Reprimand

The Background:

Prior History: N/A

Facts: On or about August 31, 2022, Ms. Bell was reported by Bradley County Schools for allegations of disclosing private student information and engaging in inappropriate conversations on a school social media account.

Ms. Bell admitted that her actions were not appropriate, and she stepped down from managing the social media platforms.

Ms. Bell was issued a one (1) day suspension without pay by the district.

Applicable Law

/Rule: T.C.A. § 49-1-302(a)(5)(A)(iv) provides that the Board has the power to adopt rules and policies governing the discipline of licensed personnel for misconduct by formal reprimand or by the suspension and revocation of licenses and certificates.

T.C.A. § 49-5-1003(b)(8) provides that in fulfillment of this obligation to the student, 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 in fulfillment of this obligation to the student, an educator shall not intentionally expose the student to embarrassment or disparagement.

T.C.A. § 49-5-1003(b)(12) provides that in fulfillment of this obligation to the student, an educator shall not disclose information about the student obtained in the course of the educator's professional service, unless disclosure of the information is permitted, serves a compelling professional purpose, or is required by law.

T.C.A. § 49-5-1003(b)(14) provides that in fulfillment of this obligation to the student, an educator shall ensure interactions with the student take place in transparent and appropriate settings.

T.C.A. § 49-5-1003(b)(17) provides that in fulfillment of this obligation to the student, an educator shall strive to prevent the use of alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs by the student when the student is under the educator's supervision on school or LEA premises, during school activities, or in any private setting.

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

T.C.A. § 49-5-1004(c)(2) provides that in fulfillment of this obligation to the profession, educators shall conduct themselves in a manner that preserves the dignity and integrity of the education profession.

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(3)(i) provides that 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 that 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)(8) provides that 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.

0520-02-03-.09(5)(a)(8) provides that 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.

Status:

Respondent was notified by certified mail of the Board's intent to formally reprimand Respondent's educator license based upon these findings. Respondent received said notice. Respondent agreed to the formal reprimand of Respondent's license.

Board Action Consistency Considerations:

N/A

The Recommendation:

The Board staff recommends that the Board approve the signed Consent Order submitted by Respondent for the formal reprimand of Respondent's license based upon the facts and applicable rule noted above.