
James Sensabaugh
Formal Reprimand

The Background:

Prior History: N/A

Facts: Mr. Sensabaugh engaged in inappropriate communication with a student by using the n-word when addressing the student. Mr. Sensabaugh was reprimanded and suspended for one (1) day.

Applicable Law

/Rule: 0520-02-03-.09(1)(c) defines Formal Reprimand as, "A less harsh licensing action than the suspension, revocation, or denial of a license, which admonishes an educator for certain conduct under this Rule. An educator who has been reprimanded by the State Board of Education ("State Board") under this Rule shall receive a letter from the State Board, which shall become part of the educator's state record and may become part of the educator's local record, indicating that the inappropriate conduct is discouraged and shall be subject to further disciplinary action if repeated."

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 Other 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, "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(5)(a)(6)(i) provides "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)(9) 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)(19) provides “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 **formally reprimand** Respondent’s educator license based upon these findings. Respondent received said notice and agreed to the formal reprimand of Respondent’s license.

Board Action Consistency Considerations:

February 2025 - Board approved the formal reprimand of an educator’s license for repeating profanity while addressing students.

August 2023 – Board approved the formal reprimand of an educator’s license for using profanity with students.

July 2022 – Board approved the formal reprimand of an educator’s license for using profanity with students.

The Recommendation:

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