

Paul Rouse
Suspension, 3 Months

The Background:

Prior History: N/A

Facts: On February 7, 2025, Mr. Rouse was arrested on misdemeanor charges and placed on administrative leave. On February 18, 2025, while on leave, school administration discovered a gym bag in Mr. Rouse's office which contained needles and unauthorized steroids. Mr. Rouse's criminal charges were resolved by a guilty plea to DUI 1st offense and possession of drug paraphernalia. Mr. Rouse was placed on probation with his criminal charges set to be dismissed on January 21, 2027.

Mr. Rouse is not currently teaching. He sought treatment and completed a 30-day inpatient program at Cornerstone and continued with an intensive outpatient program for 3 months. Cornerstone hired Mr. Rouse as a substance abuse counselor, and he was promoted to Lead Counselor within 2 months. He is now in a director role overseeing drug counselors.

Applicable Law

/Rule: 0520-02-03-.09(1)(h) defines Negligence as, "Failure to exercise the care toward others that a reasonable or prudent person would exercise under the circumstances or taking action that a reasonable person would not. Examples of such negligence include, but are not limited to, situations that expose students to mental or physical harm or the potential for mental or physical harm such as leaving dangerous items in the classroom or in areas easily accessible to students and leaving students unattended."

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(1)(p) defines Suspension as, "With regard to licensure action by the State Board, suspension means the nullification of an educator's license for a predetermined term, after which the license may be reinstated. Reinstatement shall be subject to the completion of any terms and conditions contained in the order of suspension. With regard to employment action taken by a public or non-public school or school district, suspension means the temporary removal of an educator from his or her regular duties with or without pay. Suspension also includes the placement of an educator on administrative leave pending investigation into allegations of misconduct."

0520-02-03-.09(3)(c) provides, “The State Board of Education may revoke, suspend, formally reprimand, or refuse to issue or renew an educator’s license for . . . being on school premises, school property, at a school-related activity involving students, or on official school business, while possessing, consuming, or under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.”

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)(3)(i) provides, “An individual holding an educator’s license who is found to be in possession of, consuming, or under the influence of alcohol, or illegal substances while on school premises or property when children are present shall be subject to a disciplinary action within the range of suspension for not less than one (1) year up to and including revocation.”

0520-02-03-.09(5)(a)(4)(i) provides, “An individual holding an educator’s license who is found to be negligent in his or her commission of duties as an educator in such a manner that does not result in harm to a child, but presented the potential for physical or mental harm, shall be subject to a disciplinary action within the range of a letter of formal reprimand up to and including a two (2) year suspension.”

0520-02-03-.09(5)(a)(9)(i) 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. § 49-5-1004(c)(2) provides that educators shall, “Conduct themselves in a manner that preserves the dignity and integrity of the education profession.”

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

Board Action Consistency Considerations:

October 2021 – Board approved the six-month retroactive suspension of an educator’s license after a random search by the school’s resource officer K9 unit alerted on the educator’s bag. A field test, or drug wipe, of the bag’s contents yielded positive results for THC. Educator admitted to using a THC gummy a few days prior.

The Recommendation:

Board counsel recommends the Board approve the signed Consent Order submitted by the Respondent for the three (3) month suspension of Respondent’s license based upon the facts and applicable rule noted above.