
Robert Ring
Revocation, Automatic, Permanent

The Background:

Prior History: N/A

Facts: Mr. Ring, a sixth-grade social studies teacher with Sumner County Schools, was suspended in May 2019 for allegations of showing explicit/inappropriate content to students on his cell phone. The matter was reported to local law enforcement, and Mr. Ring was arrested in June 2019 for instances including, but not limited to, having a student sit near him in a desk, touching a student on the thigh, threatening to touch a student's crotch, threatening to rip or eat a student's private area, and bashing a student's head into Mr. Ring's crotch. Mr. Ring was indicted in September 2019 for two (2) counts of aggravated sexual battery and two (2) counts of assault with physical contact. On September 17, 2020, an Order of Deferral was entered in the Criminal/Circuit of Sumner County, Tennessee, pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-13-102, after Mr. Ring pleaded guilty to one count of aggravated assault (felony). He was ordered to serve three (3) years of supervised probation from September 17, 2020 to September 17, 2023. As a result of the agreement, all other charges were not prosecuted. Mr. Ring was also substantiated by DCS and was offered his due process rights in January 2020, but the matter was stayed pending the criminal matter. As the criminal matter resolved against Mr. Ring, the order to stay the DCS appeal suggests the substantiation will stand.

Applicable Rule: 0520-02-03-.09(1)(d) defines explicit inappropriate communication as any communication between an educator and a student that describes, represents, or alludes to sexual activity or any other illegal activity.

0520-02-03-.09(1)(f) 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)(g) defines inappropriate physical contact with harm as inappropriate physical contact as described in subparagraph (f) that results in physical or mental harm.

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, 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)(l) defines permanent revocation as the nullification of an educator's license without eligibility for future restoration.

0520-02-03-.09(3)(a) provides that the Board may revoke, suspend, formally reprimand, or refuse to issue or renew an educator's license for conviction of a felony.

0520-02-03-.09(3)(e) provides that the Board 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)(i) provides that the Board 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 Board may revoke, suspend, formally reprimand, or refuse to issue or renew an educator's license for any offense contained in paragraph (5) of this rule.

0520-02-03-.09(4)(a)(1) provides that the Board shall automatically revoke or automatically permanently revoke, without the right to a hearing, the license of an educator upon receiving verification of the identity of the licensed educator together with a certified copy of a criminal record showing that the licensed educator has been convicted of any offense listed in Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-13-532, § 39-17-417, or § 40-35-501(i)(2).

0520-02-03-.09(5)(a)(1)(i) provides that upon receiving notification that an individual has been convicted of a felony, the educator shall be subject to a disciplinary action within the range of a suspension of not less than two (2) years up to and including permanent revocation of the convicted individuals educator license.

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

Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-5-417(a)(1)(l) provides that Board shall automatically revoke the license of educator without an hearing upon receiving verification of the identity of the

teacher together with a certified copy of the criminal record showing the teacher convicted of a felony offense in title 39, chapter 13.

Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-5-1003 provides that educators shall make reasonable effort to protect students from conditions harmful to learning or to health and safety; emotional well-being of student, embarrassment/disparagement, ensure actions are transparent, not engage in sexual related behavior with student.

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

Board Action Consistency Considerations:

N/A

The Recommendation:

The Board staff recommends the automatic, permanent revocation of Respondent's Tennessee educator license.