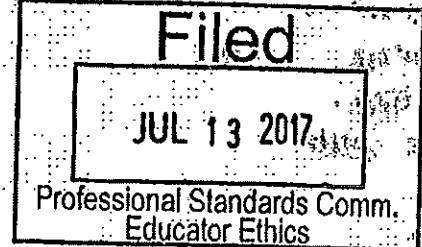


BEFORE THE GEORGIA PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COMMISSION
STATE OF GEORGIA

IN THE MATTER OF:

Nathan L. Dawson,
Certificate 1033610
Respondent.

PSC No. 16-9-477



CONSENT ORDER

By agreement of the Georgia Professional Standards Commission and Nathan Dawson, Respondent, the following disposition of this matter is entered pursuant to the provisions of the Georgia Administrative Procedure Act, codified as O.C.G.A. § 50-13-13(a)(4).

FINDINGS OF FACT

1.

The Respondent holds a certificate to teach in the State of Georgia and held said certificate at all times relevant to the matters asserted herein.

2.

Respondent and a student exchanged over 61 text messages with a student in a one hour period. There were no inappropriate texts sent to the student other than being overly familiar.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Under Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission has authority to take action against Respondent's certificate. The parties agree to waive any further conclusions of law.

ORDER

The Georgia Professional Standards Commission, having considered the particular facts and circumstances of this case, hereby Orders, and Respondent hereby agrees, to the following terms:

1.

This Consent Order and the dissemination thereof shall constitute a Reprimand to Respondent for Respondent's conduct. In the future, any allegations concerning violations of the Rules of the Professional Standards Commission will be thoroughly investigated and may result in the suspension or revocation of Respondent's educator certificate.

2.

Approval of this Consent Order by the Commission shall in no way be construed as condoning the Respondent's conduct and shall not be construed as a waiver of any of the lawful rights possessed by the Commission.

3.
This Consent Order shall not become effective unless and until approved by the Commission.

4.
Respondent acknowledges that he has read this Consent Order, and understands the terms and sanctions described herein. Respondent understands that he has the right to a hearing in this matter, and waives such right by freely, voluntarily, and knowingly entering into this Consent Order. Respondent understands and agrees that the Commission shall have the authority to review the investigative file and all relevant evidence in considering this Consent Order. Respondent further understands that this Consent Order, once approved, shall constitute a public record that may be disseminated as a disciplinary action of the Commission. If this Consent Order is not approved, it shall not constitute an admission against interest in this proceeding, or prejudice the ability of the Commission to adjudicate this matter. Respondent hereby consents to the terms and sanctions contained herein.

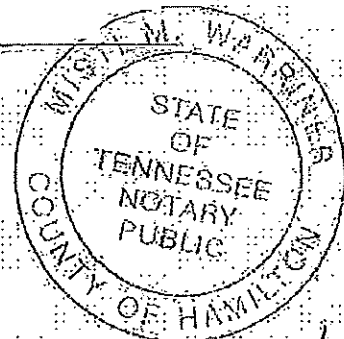
This 12th day of June, 2017.

CONSENTED TO:

Nathan L. Dawson
Respondent

Sworn to and subscribed
before me this 12th day
of June, 2017.

Misti M. Warriner
NOTARY PUBLIC



Approved by the Commission this 13th day of July, 2017.

APPROVED:

GEORGIA PROFESSIONAL
STANDARDS COMMISSION

BY:

Kamila Luigs
KAMILA LUIGS
Chairperson

ATTEST:

Kelly C. Henson
KELLY C. HENSON, Ph.D.
Executive Secretary

Case Number: PCE 16-9-477
Investigator: David Pumphrey
Position Held: High School Teacher / Coach
Employment Status: Non-renewal
Complaint Origin: Local Board

Complaint: The educator allegedly made inappropriate comments to a student via text messages. The complainant school system also alleges that the educator was dishonest during the local investigation.

Findings of Fact: The educator contacted a student on 9/15/16 to obtain contact information for the student that was to replace her as team manager for an upcoming football game. The text communication between the educator and student became an extended conversation consisting of 61 text messages exchanged between 6:18 and 7:07 P.M. During the conversation, the educator commented that the student should learn from her mistakes and move on, which "probably involves not texting with an old man like me all night." The student felt uncomfortable with the discussion and told her counselor about it the next day. The educator showed administrators his phone, but the texts were not there purportedly because messages disappear if they are not associated with a contact stored in his phone. The messages were obtained from the student's phone, and they did not contain any inappropriate language nor any sexual references or innuendos. There also were no expressions of inappropriate feelings by either party. The educator did not mention the pictures that had been shown to other students.

Standard, Rules or Laws in Complaint:

PSC Rule 505-6-.01 (3b) - The educator failed to maintain a professional relationship with students by soliciting, encouraging, or consummating an inappropriate written, verbal, electronic or physical relationship with a student.

PSC Rule 505-6-.01 (3j) - The educator failed to demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards and preserves the dignity and integrity of the teaching profession by demonstrating conduct that impairs and/or diminishes the certificate holder's ability to function professionally in his or her employment position, or behavior or conduct that is detrimental to the health, welfare, discipline, or morals of students.

PSC Rule 505-6-.01 (3d) - The educator failed to exemplify honesty and integrity in the course of professional practice by falsifying, misrepresenting or omitting information submitted to federal, state, local school districts and other governmental agencies; information submitted in the course of an official inquiry/investigation; and information submitted in the course of professional practice.

Investigative Findings:

- The complaint currently before the Commission was submitted by the Chief Human Resources Officer for the complainant school system. The educator in this matter is a high school teacher and football coach. The Chief Human Resources Officer reported a complaint received from a female student (Student 1). Student 1 is in the ninth grade and served as a team manager for the football team. Student 1 reported that she was made to feel uncomfortable after receiving a series of text messages from the educator on or about 9/15/16. Based on Student 1's complaint and the investigation that followed, the Chief Human Resources Officer alleged that the educator

- violated the ethical standards for Conduct with Students, Honesty, and Professional Conduct.
- The educator's principal (Principal 1) summarized his investigation of this matter in a written statement. A copy of his written statement was provided to the PSC. The school system also provided the PSC with a supplemental statement prepared by Principal 1.
 - According to Principal 1's statements, Student 1 was involved in an incident with a male student earlier in the month. Student 1 reportedly exchanged inappropriate personal photos with her boyfriend (the other student). Student 1 and her boyfriend subsequently showed the inappropriate photos to their friends. As a disciplinary measure, Student 1 was removed from her position as a manager for the football team and her boyfriend was suspended from the team.
 - On or about 9/16/16, Student 1 spoke with her counselor (Counselor 1) and complained about text messages the educator sent to her on the evening of 9/15/16. The educator sent Student 1 a message requesting a phone number of another team manager so he could ensure preparations were made for a football game on 9/16/16. Student 1 was upset because of the content of the messages. Principal 1 took photographs of the messages on Student 1's phone.
 - The school system provided the PSC with copies of the photos of the text messages. Based on the content of the first message, the photographs do not appear to reflect the entire conversation. Student 1 told Principal 1 that the educator asked her for a phone number of another team manager. That portion of the conversation is not documented by the photographs. One of the messages sent by the educator asked Student 1 to let the other manager know that he had her number and would be contacting her. The majority of the conversation appears to be a discussion of how Student 1 was dealing with the situation with her boyfriend and being dismissed from the team manager position. The educator asked Student 1 to stop by his room the following day. He indicated that he was trying to get her restored to her position, but they needed to discuss what would be expected of her. The educator complimented Student 1 on the way she was dealing with the situation and noted that he felt she was the type of person that would learn from her mistakes. At one point, the educator also noted that Student 1 should move on. He also commented that moving on "probably involves not texting with an old man like me all night." Student 1 complained to the educator that she didn't have much to do after school without football. The educator told Student 1 that he would try to find something new for her to do.
 - The educator's conversation with Student 1 did not contain any inappropriate language. There were no sexual references or innuendos in the messages. There were no expressions of inappropriate feelings by either party. The educator did not mention the images of Student 1 that had been shown to other students.
 - Principal 1 spoke with the educator about his communications with Student 1. The educator told Principal 1 that he had not intended to make Student 1 feel uncomfortable. He told Principal 1 that he had tried to comfort Student 1 and give her advice about making mistakes and working through them. The educator allowed Principal 1 to examine his phone, but nothing of relevance was discovered. When Principal 1 asked the educator why the messages to Student 1 were not in the phone, the educator said that sometimes messages disappear if they are not associated with a contact stored in his phone.
 - The Commission's investigator interviewed Student 1's grandfather. Student 1 lived with her grandparents at the time of this incident. Student 1's grandfather stated that he and his wife viewed the text messages on Student 1's phone. He did not interpret any of the educator's comments as being inappropriate. Student 1's grandfather felt that the educator was trying to help Student 1 move on from the problems that developed after the inappropriate images of her were

shown to other students. Student 1's grandfather indicated that Student 1 has a tendency to exaggerate the significance of some situations. He also stated that Student 1 had disciplinary problems and had to be sent to live with her mother in Michigan.

- The Commission's investigator interviewed the educator. The educator denied making any inappropriate comments to Student 1. He confirmed that he exchanged messages with Student 1 on 9/15/16. He stated that he sent Student 1 a message to get contact information for another student. The educator said that he attempted to make Student 1 feel better about her situation. He also confirmed that he offered to attempt to find another extracurricular activity for her to take part in after school. He stated that he had only contacted Student 1 for football-related purposes prior to 9/15/16. The educator agreed to provide the PSC with his phone records. The educator stated that he was informed his contract would not be renewed for the upcoming school-year.
- The phone records provided by the educator included voice and data communications during the time period beginning on 7/31/16 and continuing through 9/19/16. A review of the records revealed one voice call on 8/26/16. The call originated from Student 1's phone at 6:13 P.M. The call was not answered by the educator's phone. There were no additional calls between the educator and Student 1.
- The educator's phone records indicate that he received one text message from Student 1 on 8/4/16 at 6:52 P.M. The educator did not respond. On 8/8/16 the educator and Student 1 exchanged three text messages between 6:28 and 7:21 P.M. On 8/10/16 the educator and Student 1 exchanged four text messages between 5:21 and 6:24 P.M. The educator received three text messages from Student 1 at 10:15 P.M. on 8/11/16. The educator and Student 1 exchanged seven text messages on 8/22/16 between 8:32 and 8:37 A.M. The educator and Student 1 exchanged five messages on 9/5/16 between 1:15 and 6:59 P.M. One of the five messages originated from the educator's phone.
- The remaining communications between the educator and Student 1 took place on 9/15/16. The educator's phone records reflect that they exchanged sixty-one text messages between 6:18 and 7:07 P.M.

Evidence in the Case File supporting the Findings of Fact:

1. Copies of images of the text message conversation.
2. Copies of the educator's phone records.
3. Copies of Principal 1 written statements.