

BEFORE THE TEACHER STANDARDS AND PRACTICES COMMISSION  
OF THE STATE OF OREGON

In the Matter of the Educator	)	DEFAULT ORDER OF
License of	)	PUBLIC REPRIMAND AND
CHRISTOPHER BENJAMIN	)	PROBATION

On February 27, 2025, the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (Commission) issued a Notice of Opportunity for Hearing to Christopher Benjamin (Benjamin) in which the Commission charged him with Gross Neglect of Duty. The Notice was sent via U.S. First Class Mail and U.S. Certified Mail Receipt 9589 0710 5270 0408 4722 39 to the address on file with the Commission. The Notice designated the Commission file as the record for purposes of proving a prima facie case. The certified mail was confirmed as delivered on March 4, 2025. The Notice of Opportunity of Hearing, dated February 27, 2025, and signed by Melissa Goff, Interim Executive Director, stated:

“IF A REQUEST FOR HEARING IS NOT RECEIVED WITHIN THIS 21-DAY PERIOD, YOUR RIGHT TO A HEARING SHALL BE CONSIDERED WAIVED UNLESS YOUR FAILURE TO REQUEST A HEARING WAS BEYOND YOUR REASONABLE CONTROL. IF YOU DO NOT REQUEST A HEARING, WITHDRAW YOUR REQUEST FOR HEARING, IF YOU FAIL TO APPEAR AT A HEARING, OR NOTIFY THE COMMISSION THAT YOU WILL NOT APPEAR AT HEARING, THE COMMISSION WILL ADOPT AN ORDER OF DEFAULT WHICH MAY INCLUDE THE REVOCATION OR SUSPENSION OF YOUR LICENSE OR OTHER DISCIPLINE.”

As of this writing of this order, Benjamin has not contacted TSPC. The Commission, therefore, finds Benjamin to be in default and enters the following findings of fact, conclusions of law, and final order, based on the files and records of the Commission concerning this matter.

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. The Commission has licensed Benjamin since June 15, 2016. Benjamin currently holds a Preliminary Teaching License with an endorsement for Music (PK-12) which was issued on June 30, 2022 and expired on June 29, 2025 but has a renewal application pending which was completed on June 26, 2025. During all relevant times, Benjamin was employed by the Klamath County School District (KCSD).

2. On April 17, 2023, TSPC received an Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) cross report alleging misconduct on the part of Benjamin, a choir teacher at Henley High School (HHS). The report alleged that Benjamin would strike students in class with a yard stick. Specifically, the report alleged that Benjamin struck a student on the arm, another in the face, (giving them a bloody nose) and tackled another student, pinning him to the ground, pulled his hair, and yelled at him for skipping class.

On April 28, 2023, TSPC received a School District Misconduct Report from the KCSD HR department alleging additional professional misconduct on the part of Benjamin. The report alleged that Benjamin “verbally and physically abuse and bully” students. The report specifically alleged that Benjamin held students to the ground by laying on top of them, talked badly about students in other classes, used belts and yard sticks to hit students, and used vulgar language.

On October 4, 2023, TSPC received a School District Misconduct Report from the Human Resources (HR) department of the KCSD alleging additional professional misconduct on the part of Benjamin. The report alleged that Benjamin was “popping students’ backs.”

3. An investigation into this matter by the Commission, DHS and the KCSD determined the following:
  - Benjamin was placed on administrative leave by the KCSD on April 14, 2023 based on the complaint listed above while the district investigated this matter.
  - District investigation determined that Benjamin used a yard stick to hit students in a playful or joking manner. The “hit” with the yard stick was described as a “tap” or a “smack.”
  - There were no reports of anyone seeing Benjamin hit a student in a hurtful manner.
  - The district concluded that Benjamin did pinch a student’s nose, however it was not done in a malicious manner, and no bloody nose resulted.

- The rest of the allegations made in April 2023, (listed above) were unsubstantiated.
- As a result of the district's findings, the KCSD issued Benjamin a letter of reprimand and he returned to work on June 1, 2023.
- In October of 2023, the KCSD investigated the October 4, 2023 allegation that Benjamin had "popped" students' backs.
- District investigation determined that Benjamin had engaged in back popping with students when they would ask him to do so.
- Benjamin reported that he would place your arms around students, under their arms, and squeeze the student until their back popped.
- Benjamin reported that he never did this while alone with a student, and only performed the back "popping" for students who requested it.
- As a result of this matter, the KCSD issued Benjamin a letter of reprimand and a three (3) day unpaid suspension. Additionally, the district required Benjamin to read and summarize an online article on teacher-student boundaries.

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

*The conduct described above constitutes gross neglect of duty in violation of ORS 342.175(1)(b); OAR 584-020-0040(4)(n) as it incorporates OAR 584-020-0010(5) (Use professional judgment), OAR 584-020-0020(2)(d) (Skill in the supervision of students), OAR 584-020-0025(2)(e) (Using district lawful and reasonable rules and regulations), and 584-020-0040(4)(d)(Unreasonable physical force against students, fellow employees, or visitors to the school, except as permitted under ORS 339.250).*

The Commission's authority to impose discipline in this matter is based upon ORS 342.175.

## FINAL ORDER

The Commission hereby issues a public reprimand and two (2) years' probation upon Benjamin's Oregon educator license. The period of probation will become effective on the date of adoption of this order. The period of probation is subject to the following conditions:

1. Benjamin shall comply with the Standards for Competent and Ethical Performance of Oregon Educators under Oregon Administrative Rules Chapter 584, Division 020.
2. Benjamin will complete a Commission-approved boundaries course and provide evidence to the Commission of such training within the first year of probation.

IT IS SO ORDERED THIS 29 day of July, 2025.

TEACHER STANDARDS AND PRACTICES COMMISSION

By:   
Rachel Alpert, Executive Director

## NOTICE OF APPEAL OR RIGHTS

YOU ARE ENTITLED TO JUDICIAL REVIEW OF THIS ORDER. JUDICIAL REVIEW MAY BE OBTAINED BY FILING A PETITION FOR REVIEW WITHIN 60 DAYS FROM THE SERVICE OF THIS ORDER. JUDICIAL REVIEW IS PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF ORS 183.482 TO THE OREGON COURT OF APPEALS.