

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
MICHAEL B. COWAN)	

On February 24, 2025, the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (Commission) issued a Notice of Opportunity for Hearing to Michael B. Cowan (Cowan) 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 4721 23 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 first-class mail was not returned to the Commission and was assumed delivered. The Notice of Opportunity of Hearing, dated February 24, 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, Cowan has not contacted TSPC. The Commission, therefore, finds Cowan 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 Cowan since January 10, 2013. Cowan holds a Professional Teaching License, with endorsements in Physical Education (PK-12) valid from May 30, 2022 to May 29, 2025. During all relevant times, Cowan was employed by the Salem-Keizer School District (SKSD).
2. On November 22, 2022, TSPC received a School District Misconduct Report from the Prevention and Protection Coordinator of the SKSD, Debbie Joa. The report alleged that

Cowan engaged in unprofessional conduct. Specifically, the report alleged that on October 11, 2022 at Swegle Elementary School (SEM) in the SKSD, Cowan engaged in inappropriate physical contact with a seven (7) year-old male student (DS) by pulling DS by the arms and then carrying DS off of a school bus by his waist.

3. According to SKSD documents, recorded video footage and the TSPC investigation, the following events related to the above allegations were substantiated:
 - On October 11, 2022 recorded video footage shows student DS seated in the first row seat on the passenger side of the bus, closest to the door.
 - At the beginning of the video, student DS is seen repeatedly kicking another student seated directly across from him.
 - Cowan witnessed DS kicking the student and came and sat next to him and redirected him for his behavior.
 - Video footage reveals that shortly after Cowan did this, DS begins stomping his feet out of anger and then slides off his seat to sit on the floor of the bus in the footwell.
 - DS remains seated on the floor for several minutes, while the bus continues on its route.
 - Cowan was seen on video asking DS to sit back in his seat multiple times.
 - At the first bus stop after DS sat on the floor, Cowan again asked DS to return to his seat, and DS responded by laying down on the bus floor still in the footwell.
 - Video footage shows Cowan reach down and pull DS up off the floor by his arms.
 - Cowan attempt to DS to stand on his feet but he refuses.
 - Video footage then shows Cowan placing his arm around student DS's waist and carrying him off the bus where Cowan hands him to his mother, who was waiting.
 - On November 10, 2022, Cowan was notified that the SKSD was investigating this incident and Cowan was placed on administrative leave.
 - The SKSD administration discussed this incident with Cowan, talked about other ways it could have been handled, but did not issue any discipline and allowed Cowan to return to work.
 - On December 16, 2022 Cowan resigned his position with the SKSD, accepting

another job outside of the education system.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The conduct described in sections two (2) and three (3) above constitute 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 upon Michael B. Cowan's Oregon educator license.

IT IS SO ORDERED THIS 1 day of May, 2025.

TEACHER STANDARDS AND PRACTICES COMMISSION

By: 
Melissa Goff, Interim 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.