

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

RECEIVED
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Teacher Standards & Practices Commission

3 In the Matter of the) STIPULATION OF FACTS AND
4 Educator License of) FINAL ORDER OF SUSPENSION
5 STEPHEN P. CONNELLY) AND PROBATION

6 On August 15, 2018, the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (Commission) received
7 a misconduct report from the Eugene School District (ESD) alleging that Stephen Connelly (Connelly)
8 had violated Professional Standards and Practices.

9 After review of the matters alleged, Connelly and the Commission agree that their respective
10 interests, together with the public interest, are best served by a stipulation to certain facts and the
11 imposition of a ninety (90) day suspension of Connelly’s Oregon educator license, followed by a period
12 of probation.

13 This document sets forth the facts upon which the parties have agreed and the stipulated
14 sanction to be imposed. Connelly stipulates that there is sufficient evidence in the Commission’s files
15 and records to support the findings of fact, conclusions of law, and order set forth below.

16 By signing below, Connelly acknowledges, understands, stipulates, and agrees to the following:

- 17 (i) he has been fully advised of his rights to notice and a hearing to contest the findings of fact,
18 conclusions of law, and order set forth below, and fully and finally waives all such rights and any rights
19 to appeal or otherwise challenge this Stipulation of Facts and Final Order of Suspension and
20 Probation (Stipulation and Final Order); (ii) this Stipulation and Final Order is a public document and
21 disclosed to the public upon request by the Commission; (iii) this Stipulation and Final Order is
22 contingent upon and subject to approval and adoption by the Commission. If the Commission does
23 not approve and adopt this Stipulation and Final Order, then neither Connelly nor the Commission
24 are bound by the terms herein; (iv) he has fully read this Stipulation and Final Order, and understands
25 it completely; (v) he voluntarily, without any force or duress, enters into this Stipulation and Final
26 Order and consents to issuance and entry of the Stipulated Final Order below; (vi) he states that no
27 promises or representation has been made to induce him to sign this Stipulation and Final Order; and
28 (vii) he has consulted with an attorney regarding this Stipulation and Final Order and has been fully

1 advised with regard to his rights thereto, or waives any and all rights to consult with an attorney prior
2 to entering into this Stipulation and Final Order and issuance and entry of the Stipulated Final Order
3 below.

4 **STIPULATION OF FACTS**


- 5 1) Connelly has been licensed as an educator in Oregon since April 19, 2001. Connelly holds a
6 Professional Teaching License, with endorsements in Legacy Middle Level (Pk-12) and Social
7 Studies (PK-12), valid from March 19, 2018 through March 18, 2023. During all relevant times,
8 Connelly was employed by the Eugene School District (ESD) teaching at the Early College and
9 Career Options (ECCO) School.
- 10 2) On August 15, 2018, the Commission received a school district misconduct report from the Eugene
11 School District reporting that Connelly may have violated professional standards. Specifically, that
12 Connelly made poor decisions and violated district policy during an overnight whitewater rafting
13 field trip for alternative high school students in an outdoor recreation CTE program, which
14 contributed to students being endangered. Connelly was the most experienced educator on the
15 trip, and he and another teacher (Cole) were jointly responsible for the planning and execution of
16 the event. Investigation determined the following:
- 17 a) On June 14, 2018, during the rafting portion of the trip, a student tipped her kayak and
18 became pinned under a log, nearly drowning. Connelly, a whitewater expert, and other
19 professional raft guides, rescued the student. Connelly failed to immediately notify school
20 administrators, parents or medical providers of the accident as required by policy, even after
21 reaching reliable cellular coverage, though wilderness first responders present on the trip
22 ensured that the student was not in need of medical attention. After the rafting accident, one
23 student elected not to continue with the rafting portion of the trip. While the rest of the group
24 rafted to the campground, Connelly remained with the student who would not continue on;
25 waiting until someone returned in a vehicle to pick them up and take them to the campground.
- 26 b) When Connelly arrived at the camp site, he found that the students, other teacher and
27 chaperones had already set up camp in three adjacent sites. Because the trip was co-ed and

1 included at-risk students, including one student (CS) under the care of the Oregon Youth
2 Authority (OYA), special plans had been made to ensure everyone's safety. These plans
3 included organizing the locations where students would sleep, and conducting regular
4 nighttime bed checks. Connelly was in charge of closely monitoring CS because it had been
5 determined CS required extra attention. Connelly went to bed at 9:00 pm, earlier than
6 planned, due to physical and emotional exhaustion from participating in the whitewater
7 rescue. At that time, student CS was with the rest of the group around the campfire. Cole went
8 to bed at 9:30. Student CS, as well as other students, were known to be visiting in a tent
9 occupied by female students (AA) and (AE) when Cole retired. Though some bed checks
10 occurred, the safety plans regarding student sleeping arrangements and bed checks were not
11 properly followed and CS did not receive the extra scrutiny required and planned for.

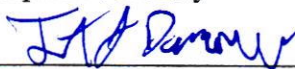
12 c) At approximately 5:30 am, student AA reported that she was inappropriately (sexually)
13 touched by CS during the night in her tent. It was decided that AA should be taken home and
14 Cole provided her a ride back to her vehicle. Connelly instructed Cole to also contact school
15 officials while driving AA home and brief them on the situation. Cole failed to do so and
16 Administration first learned of the incidents shortly thereafter when contacted by returning
17 student AA. Meanwhile, staff decided to cancel the remainder of the trip. While Connelly
18 escorted CS to his guardian, he communicated with Administration about what had occurred.

19 d) As a result of Connelly's policy violations, school district officials sought Connelly's
20 termination. Connelly resigned his employment with the district on March 18, 2019. CS's
21 conduct was subsequently reported to law enforcement, and no criminal charges were filed.

22
23 IT IS SO STIPULATED:

24 
25 _____
Stephen Connelly

_____ July 31, 2019
Date

26 
27 _____
Trent Danowski, Deputy Director
28 Teacher Standards and Practices Commission

_____ 8/5/2019
Date

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2
3
4 **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

5 Stephen Connelly's conduct described in sections two (2) (a-d), above constitutes gross neglect
6 of duty in violation of ORS 342.175(1)(b); OAR 584-020-0040(4)(n) as it incorporates OAR 584-020-
7 0010(5) (*Use professional judgment*), OAR 584-020-0020(2)(d) (*Skill in the supervision of*
8 *students*); OAR 584-020-0025(2)(e) (*Using district lawful and reasonable rules and regulations*).

9
10 The Commission's authority to impose discipline in this matter is based upon ORS
11 342.175.
12

13 **ORDER**

14 The Commission hereby adopts and incorporates herein the above stipulation of facts,
15 conclusions of law, and based thereon hereby imposes a ninety (90) day suspension of Connelly's
16 Oregon educator license following the adoption of this order.

17 Furthermore, the Commission imposes a period of two (2) years of probation upon Connelly's
18 licensure to commence from the date of any reinstatement of licensure and subject to the following
19 conditions:

- 20 1. Connelly shall comply with the Standards for Competent and Ethical Performance of Oregon
21 Educators under Oregon Administrative Rules Chapter 584, Division 020.

22
23 IT IS SO ORDERED this 12 day of August, 2019.

24 TEACHER STANDARDS AND PRACTICES COMMISSION

25
26 By: 
27 Dr. Anthony Rosilez, Executive Director