

1 attorney prior to entering into this Stipulation and Final Order and issuance and entry of
2 the Stipulated Final Order below.

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STIPULATION OF FACTS

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1. The Commission has licensed Bell since February 19, 2016. Bell holds a Preliminary Teaching License with endorsements in English Language Arts (PK-12), valid from December 13, 2022, through December 25, 2025. During all relevant times, Bell was employed by the Willamette Education Service District (WESD).
2. On April 10, 2023, the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC) received a School District Misconduct Report from the Superintendent of WESD, Dave Novotney, alleging misconduct by Bell, a former WESD educator. Specifically, the report alleges that on March 13, 2023, the Salem Police Department (SPD) contacted the Marion County Juvenile Detention Facility (MCJDF) where Bell had previously been assigned by the WESD as an educator for incarcerated youth. SPD relayed to WESD staff that Bell might have engaged in “boundary violating” behavior with a juvenile youth who was formerly one of Bell’s students.
3. According to the WESD and TSPC investigations, the following events related to the above allegations were substantiated:
 - On November 17, 2022, Bell “accepted treats” (food) from a male student who requested that she give the treats to a female student in another class, in a different section of the facility.
 - During the WESD investigation into this matter, Bell admitted that the students who were passing treats to one another were boyfriend-girlfriend.
 - During the WESD investigation, Bell admitted that food was highly regulated inside MCJDF. She also told WESD investigators that while she did not understand the food regulations at the time, she acknowledged that she had violated facility rules by transferring snacks from one student to another.
 - On January 3, 2023, Gretchen Brunner, Executive Director for the School

1 of Improvement Services for the WESD received information that Bell had
2 visited her in-custody students on her personal time on December 25,
3 2022 at MCJDF without obtaining the proper clearance from WESD.

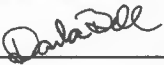
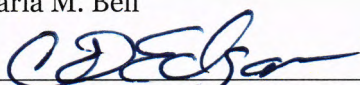
- 4 • It was further noted in the WESD investigation that during the same visit
5 to MCJDF on December 25, 2022, Bell brought in several printed books
6 for students without prior authorization from WESD, gave students hugs,
7 and visited with students in two different units.
8 During the WESD investigation, Bell also admitted that on December 25,
9 2022 she met with a male student (SS-M) for approximately 30 minutes
10 in the presence of a guard and three other students. Bell indicated that
11 she spoke to SS-M about several personal topics such as coping with a
12 family member with cancer and going through a divorce.
- 13 • Per WESD records, Bell entered into a resignation agreement with the
14 district on February 13, 2023 which was effective immediately.
- 15 • On March 13, 2023, the WESD received correspondence from MCJDF
16 Director Chuck Sybrandt that contained approximately fifteen (15) pages
17 of photocopies of handwritten letters that Bell had exchanged, after her
18 resignation from WESD, with two in-custody students identified as JN
19 and RM. Some of the letters were written between JN and RM but Bell
20 relayed the letters between them. Some of the letters were written by Bell
21 and provided to JN or RM and discussed topics of a personal nature,
22 including Bell's WESD employment investigation and resignation.

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24 4. On September 19, 2023, Bell was interviewed by TSPC investigative staff in the
25 presence of her attorney, Elizabeth Joffe. During the interview Bell admitted to
26 engaging in the majority of the conducted listed above. The conduct Bell admitted
27 to included sharing commissary between students, bringing in personal books for
28 students, hugging students, and visiting student SS-M on personal time on
29 Christmas (December 25, 2022). Bell admitted to TSPC investigative staff that
30 she had spoken to SS-M about personal topics such as one of her family members
31 having cancer, and about her divorce. Bell reported that she spoke to SS-M about
32 these things because she knew him better than the other students as he had been
33 there longer. Bell also told TSPC investigators that WESD was aware that she had
34 previously ordered books many times for her students had been reimbursed by

1 the WESD for them and was never told they had to be reviewed or approved by
2 anyone else. Bell had ordered the books she brought on December 25, 2022
3 intending to give them to the students before Winter Break so they had reading
4 material during break, but reported that they did not arrive until after the break
5 began, so she delivered them during Winter Break. She admitted that she had not
6 received specific authorization to deliver them to students during Winter Break.
7 Bell reported that the investigation did not reveal that any of the books contained
8 improper content. Bell also reported that prior to giving any hugs to students, she
9 asked the guards on duty and each student if she could give hugs. Bell concluded
10 her interview by denying having any romantic interest in any of her students.
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12 IT IS SO STIPULATED:

13		<u>06 / 03 / 2024</u>
14	Darla M. Bell	Date
15		<u>6/6/24</u>
16		Date
17	Cristina Edgar, Director of Professional Practices	
18	Teacher Standards and Practices Commission	

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20 **CONCLUSION OF LAW**

21 The conduct described above constitutes gross neglect of duty in violation of ORS
22 342.175(1)(b); OAR 584-020-0040(4)(n) as it incorporates OAR 584-020-0010(5) (*Use*
23 *professional judgment*), (OAR 584-020-0025(2)(e) (*Using district lawful and*
24 *reasonable rules and regulations*), and OAR 584-020-0040(4)(o) as it incorporates
25 OAR 584-020-0035(1)(c)(D) (*Honoring appropriate adult boundaries with students in*
26 *conduct and conversations at all times*).
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28 The Commission's authority to impose discipline in this matter is based upon
29 ORS 342.175.

30 **ORDER**

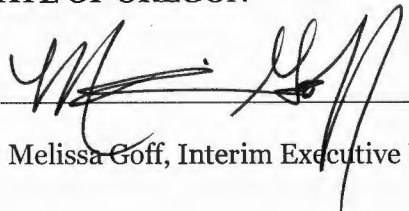
31 The Commission adopts and incorporates herein the above findings of fact and
32 conclusions of law, and based thereon, imposes a one (1) year suspension and four (4) years
33 of probation on Darla M. Bell's Oregon educator license. The period of probation is
34 subject to the following conditions:
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- 1 1. Bell shall comply with the Standards for Competent and Ethical
2 Performance of Oregon Educators under Oregon Administrative Rules
3 Chapter 584, Division 020.
4
5 2. Bell will successfully complete a Commission approved training course on
6 Boundaries (and provide proof that the course was completed to TSPC)
7 during the first year of probation.
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10 Issued and dated this 21st day of June, 2024.

11 **TEACHER STANDARDS AND PRACTICES COMMISSION**
12 **STATE OF OREGON**

13
14 By _____



15 Melissa Goff, Interim Executive Director