

**THE ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**IN RE THE MATTER OF:**

**KURT ZEN-RUFFINEN**

**APRIL 9, 2020**

**PLSB CASE NO. 20-058**

**FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND ORDER**

At its regular meeting on April 9, 2020, the Arkansas State Board of Education (Board) accepted the recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board Ethics Subcommittee (Ethics Subcommittee) for disciplinary action against the teaching license of Kurt Zen-Ruffinen (Educator Zen-Ruffinen). Based upon Educator Zen-Ruffinen's acceptance of the Ethics Subcommittee's recommendation and the evidence presented, in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, Ark. Code Ann. 25-15-101 et seq., the Board hereby states as follows:

**I. Findings of Fact**

- a. The Arkansas Department of Education issued Educator Zen-Ruffinen a standard five-year teaching license on January 1, 2018, valid until December 31, 2022.
- b. The Ethics Subcommittee received an allegation that Educator Zen-Ruffinen violated the Arkansas Department of Education Rules Governing the Code of Ethics for Arkansas Educators promulgated pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-17-422 and 6-17-428.
- c. On October 4, 2019, the Ethics Subcommittee authorized an investigation into allegations that Educator Zen-Ruffinen violated Standard 1: an educator maintains a professional relationship with each student, both in and outside the classroom, and Standard 2: an educator maintains competence regarding his or her professional

- practice, inclusive of professional and ethical behavior, skills, knowledge, dispositions, and responsibilities relating to his or her organizational position.
- d. Educator Zen-Ruffinen was notified on October 8, 2019, of the Ethics Subcommittee's authorization to investigate this allegation.
- e. After considering the investigator's report and evidence on January 17, 2020, the Ethics Subcommittee unanimously found that a preponderance of evidence existed to substantiate violations of Standards 1 and 2 in that Educator Zen-Ruffinen:
- Engaged in inappropriate interactions with a student.
  - Exhibited an inappropriate disposition inclusive of professional and ethical behavior.
- f. The Ethics Subcommittee recommended that the State Board take the following actions:
1. Written reprimand
  2. Assess a \$100 fine (due within 90 days of State Board order);
  3. Recommend training, coursework or rehab treatment, with monitored progress:
    - (i) ERC19048: Professional Licensure Standards Board (PLSB): The Code of Ethics Training Video (2018); Credit Hours: 1
    - (ii) Title: What Great Teachers Do Differently: 17 Things that Matter Most 2nd Edition; Author: Todd Whitaker; ISBN 10: 9781596671997; ISBN 13: 978-1596671997
  4. A written reflection indicating on how this reading will affect the educator's interactions with students in the future. All costs paid by the Educator.
- g. On January 17, 2020, Educator Zen-Ruffinen was notified of the Ethics Subcommittee's initial determination and recommendation by certified and regular

- mail. Educator Zen-Ruffinen did not respond to the Ethics Subcommittee's recommendation within thirty calendar days.
- h. Per Rule 12.03 of Arkansas Department of Education Rules Governing the Code of Ethics for Arkansas Educators, if an educator fails to respond to notification of the initial recommendation of the Ethics Subcommittee within thirty calendar days, the initial recommendation will become a final recommendation without an evidentiary hearing and will be forwarded to the State Board for a final decision.
  - i. At today's meeting, the Ethics Subcommittee's recommendation and supporting documentation were presented to the Board as part of its consent agenda.

## **II. Conclusions of Law**

- a. Upon consideration of the evidence presented at the meeting, Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-11-105, 6-17-401, 6-17-422, 6-17-428 and 25-15-201 et seq., and the Arkansas Department of Education Rules Governing the Code of Ethics for Arkansas Educators, the Board adopts the Ethics Subcommittee's recommendations, and enacts the sanctions accordingly. The Board admonishes Educator Kurt Zen-Ruffinen for his violation of the Code of Ethics.
- b. Educator Zen-Ruffinen is cautioned that his non-payment of the assessed fine of \$100 may result in the suspension of his license until the fine is paid in full.
- c. Educator Zen-Ruffinen is cautioned that further violations of the Code of Ethics or failure to pay the fine within ninety (90) days of the State Board order may result in more severe discipline including permanent revocation of his license.
- d. This order shall remain permanently in Educator Zen-Ruffinen's professional licensure file and the confidential files of the Professional Licensure Standards Board.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

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Diane Zook, Chair  
Arkansas State Board of Education