

THE ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

IN RE THE MATTER OF:
JAMES BRUCE STRAIGHT
OCTOBER 10, 2019

PLSB CASE NO. 18-153
PLSB CASE NO. 19-075

FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND ORDER

At its regular meeting on October 10, 2019, 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 James Bruce Straight (Educator Straight). Based upon Educator Straight'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 Straight a standard five-year teaching license on January 1, 2015, valid until December 31, 2019.
- b. The Ethics Subcommittee received two allegations that Educator Straight 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 June 1, 2018 (18-153) and December 7, 2018 (19-075), the Ethics Subcommittee authorized an investigation into allegations that Educator Straight 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 skills, knowledge, dispositions, and responsibilities relating to his or her organizational position.

- d. Educator Straight was notified on June 1, 2018 (18-153), and December 7, 2018 (19-075), of the Ethics Subcommittee's authorization to investigate these allegations.
- e. After considering the investigator's reports and evidence on February 4, 2019 (18-153), and May 3, 2019 (19-075), the Ethics Subcommittee unanimously found that a preponderance of evidence existed to substantiate violations of Standards 1 and 2 in that Educator Straight:

- Engaged in inappropriate interactions with students.
- Made inappropriate physical contact 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. Suspension of license for 3 years;
2. Assess a \$500 fine (due within 90 days of the State Board Order);
3. Require Educator to complete the following coursework/readings:
 - ERC19048: Professional Licensure Standards Board (PLSB): The Code of Ethics Training Video (2018): Credit Hours 1
 - PIA14006: Guiding Children Successfully, Episode 1: Effective Motivation for Children
 - LAG17029: Success Favors Well-Prepared Adults: Unpacking your Personality Package
 - Title: Addressing Appropriate and Inappropriate Teacher-Student Relationships: A Secondary Education Professional Development Model; Author: Ernest J. Zarra, III, Kem High School District; Publication: CLEARvoz Journal Vol. 3, No. 2 (2016); Length: 15 Pages; Link: <http://journals.sfu.ca/cvj/index.php/cvj/article/viewFile/26/29>
 - Title: The Growth Mindset Playbook: A Teacher's Guide to Promoting Student Success (224p); Author: Annie Brock, Heather Hundley; ISBN 10: 1612436870; ISBN 13: 978-1612436876

4. Require Educator to prepare written reflection: that explains how trainings will impact his professional practices with students both inside and outside the classroom (due within 90 days of the State Board Order); and
 5. Require Educator to pay all associated costs.
- g. On February 4, 2019 (18-153) and May 3, 2019 (19-075), Educator Straight, was notified of the Ethics Subcommittee's reasonable belief determination and recommendations by first class and certified mail. Educator Straight accepted both of the Ethics Subcommittee's recommendations thereby waiving his right to any further notice, hearing, or any other rights he may have under the Administrative Procedure Act, including those rights set forth in Ark. Code Ann. §§ 25-15-211 and 25-15-212.
- h. At today's meeting, the Ethics Subcommittee's recommendations 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 James Bruce Straight for her violation of the Code of Ethics.
- b. Educator Straight is cautioned that his non-payment of the assessed fine of \$500 may result in the suspension of his license until the fine is paid in full.
- c. Educator Straight is cautioned that further violations of the Code of Ethics or failure to pay the fine within ninety (90) days from the date of this order may result in more severe discipline including permanent revocation of his license.

- d. This order shall remain permanently in Educator Straight's professional licensure file and the confidential files of the Professional Licensure Standards Board.

IT IS SO ORDERED.


Diane Zook, Chair
Arkansas State Board of Education