

THE ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

**IN RE THE MATTER OF:
JACOB CONRAD DE LA PAZ
JULY 11, 2019**

PLSB CASE NO. 18-011

FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND ORDER

At its regular meeting on July 11, 2019, the Arkansas State Board of Education (Board) reviewed the findings of the Professional Licensure Standards Board Ethics Hearing Subcommittee (Hearing Subcommittee) for disciplinary action against the teaching license of Jacob Conrad De La Paz (Educator De La Paz). Based upon the briefs of the parties and the evidence presented to the Board, in accordance with the Administrative Procedures Act, Ark. Code Ann. 25-15-101 et seq., the Board hereby states as follows:

I. Procedural History

- a. Educator De La Paz holds a standard Arkansas teaching license that expires December 31, 2022.
- b. The Professional Licensure Standards Board Ethics Subcommittee (Ethics Subcommittee) received an allegation that Educator De La Paz 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 August 4, 2017, the Ethics Subcommittee authorized an investigation into allegations that Educator De La Paz violated Standard 1 and Standard 2.

- d. Educator De La Paz was notified on August 4, 2017, of the Ethics Subcommittee's authorization to investigate this allegation.
- e. After considering the investigator's report and evidence on December 1, 2017, the Ethics Subcommittee unanimously found that reasonable belief existed to substantiate a violation of Standard 1 and Standard 2 in that Educator De La Paz, engaged in inappropriate communication/grooming with a female student via text messaging that included, but not limited to, messages talking about their future relationship together, and asking the student to lie about their relationship if asked in order for them to "protect each other," and that they had to be "very good actors."
- f. The Ethics Subcommittee recommended that the Board take the following actions:
 - Permanent Revocation of License.
- g. On December 11, 2017, Educator De La Paz was notified of the Ethics Subcommittee's reasonable belief determination and recommendation by certified mail.
- h. On January 9, 2018, Educator De La Paz rejected the Ethics Subcommittee's recommendation and requested an evidentiary hearing.
- i. On October 23, 2018, Educator De La Paz, along with his attorney, Joseph Giglio, appeared for an evidentiary hearing before the Hearing Subcommittee.
- j. The Hearing Subcommittee rescinded the Ethics Subcommittee's recommendation and recommended that the Board take the following action:
 - Suspension of Educator's License for 5 years and a \$500 fine.
- k. On December 11, 2018, Educator De La Paz rejected the Hearing Subcommittee's recommendation and requested an appeal of the decision to the Board.

- l. Educator De La Paz, along with his attorney, Joseph Giglio, appeared before the Board today to appeal the Hearing Subcommittee's recommendation.
- m. At today's meeting, the Hearing Subcommittee's recommendation, parties' briefs, and supporting documentation were presented to the Board as part of its action agenda.

II. Findings of Fact and 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 made the following findings, conclusions and determinations by a preponderance of the evidence:

- Educator De La Paz is a licensed educator in the state of Arkansas;
- He engaged in inappropriate communication with a student via text messaging; and
- Educator De La Paz DID violate Standard 1 and 2 of the Code of Ethics for Arkansas Educators.

- b. The Board imposes the following sanction:

- Probation of license for three (3) years;
- Two hundred and fifty dollar (\$250) Fine; (due within ninety (90) days of the Board Order);
- Complete Training Courses: TCC14435 Professional Licensure Standards Board (PLSB) Social Media Guidelines (3 hours); and ERC19048 (PLSB) Code of Ethics Training Video (1 hour);
- Read The Active/Ethical Professional: A Framework for Responsible Educators; ISBN 13: 978-1441152105;
- Provide documentation from employing principal at educator's school twice a year that educator has had no new violations; and
- All associated costs to be paid by educator.

- c. Educator De La Paz is cautioned that his non-payment of the assessed fine of two hundred and fifty dollars (\$250) could result in the suspension of his license until the fine is paid in full.
- d. Educator De La Paz 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.
- e. This order shall remain permanently in Educator De La Paz'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