



ALBERTA
EDUCATION

Office of the Minister

Ms. Tanya Cairney
[REDACTED]

Dear Ms. Cairney:

The decision and recommendation of the hearing committee of the Professional Conduct Committee of the Alberta Teachers' Association, dated January 3, 2022, respecting allegations of unprofessional conduct against you, has been referred to me, pursuant to the *Teaching Profession Act*. A copy of the decision is enclosed for your reference.

As you are aware, the hearing committee found you guilty of unprofessional conduct for sending Instagram messages to a student that dealt with inappropriate topics, including "sexually explicit discussions, criticisms of students and a teacher, reference to alcohol consumption, discussion about physical attacks on other students, manipulation of relationships between students, offer of dog walking [REDACTED] and sharing of family events," as summarized by the hearing committee. The hearing committee found your conduct to be "disrespectful and dishonourable and clearly [in breach of] Section 23(1) of the *Teaching Profession Act*" and "detrimental to students, the public and the teaching profession."

While the hearing committee recommended I suspend your teaching certificate for one year, after reviewing the decision, I have decided the recommended penalty from the hearing committee is not sufficient.

The hearing committee provided reasons for the recommendation for a one-year suspension of your teaching certificate, including the following factors that may be considered justification for a lesser penalty:

- You were seeking [REDACTED] at the time of unprofessional conduct, including recent changes to your [REDACTED]
- You have no previous unprofessional conduct convictions.
- You accepted responsibility after the fact and co-operated with the investigation and hearing.

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- You resigned from your teaching position.
- At the hearing, you were remorseful and provided positive character references.

In my view, these factors are not sufficient to overcome the serious nature of the conduct and the harm caused to the student, the public and the teaching profession as a whole. Teachers are in a position of power and trust over students and are expected to maintain appropriate boundaries. At the relevant time, the student was [REDACTED] years old and in Grade [REDACTED]. As an experienced teacher, you were, or should have been, aware that the relationship and your communications with the student was unacceptable, unprofessional and wholly inappropriate for a teaching professional.

The hearing committee noted that you told the student not to share the full context of your communications with the student's parents. The hearing committee was of the view that this demonstrated you were aware of the inappropriate nature of your communications with the student. I agree, and I am of the view that remorse after the fact and co-operation with the investigation and hearing is not sufficient to reduce the penalty for this serious unprofessional conduct.

It is recognized that you have no previous convictions for unprofessional conduct, and that you resigned from your teaching position. I also acknowledge that you were receiving treatment for [REDACTED] at the time of the unprofessional conduct. However, these factors do not lessen the seriousness of the conduct.

In my opinion, a one-year suspension in these circumstances is contrary to the public interest. I am of the view that the seriousness of the charges and the circumstances presented in the hearing committee's decision warrant cancellation of your Permanent Professional Certificate.

I hereby cancel your Alberta Permanent Professional Certificate [REDACTED], effective immediately, pursuant to Sections 31 and 32 of the Certification of Teachers and Teacher Leaders Regulation. A copy of the regulation is enclosed for your reference.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Adriana LaGrange
Minister

Enclosures:

1. Certification of Teachers and Teacher Leaders Regulation
2. Decision of the hearing committee of the Professional Conduct Committee dated January 3, 2022.