



# SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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|                                |   |                    |
|--------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| IN THE MATTER OF THE EDUCATION | ) |                    |
| CERTIFICATE OF                 | ) | OPP No. D23-03-020 |
|                                | ) |                    |
| STEVEN OLSON                   | ) | FINAL ORDER        |
| Certificate No. 400137F        | ) | OF SUSPENSION      |
|                                | ) |                    |

After receiving and investigating a complaint from Nine Mile Falls School District (“School District”) regarding the above referenced educator, and based upon the facts available as of the date of this Proposed Order, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, through his undersigned designee, institutes this proceeding and finds, as described below, that STEVEN OLSON (“Educator”) engaged in acts of unprofessional conduct to include Washington Administrative Code (“WAC”) 181-87-060, and does hereby SUSPEND the Educator’s Washington Education Certificate No. 400137F for not less than thirty (30) days with conditions enumerated below, based on the following Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law:

## I. FINDINGS OF FACT

1. On August 1, 2002, the Educator was issued Washington Education Certificate No. 400137F. The Educator’s certificate will expire on June 30, 2027.
2. During the 2022-2023 school year, the Educator was employed by the School District at Lakeside High School as a Physical Science/Chemistry teacher.

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3. On March 20, 2023, the Office of Professional Practices (“OPP”) within the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (“OSPI”) received a complaint from Jeff Baerwald, the Superintendent of the School District, alleging the Educator committed unprofessional conduct pursuant to WAC 181-87 for using a small propane torch to wake up sleeping or inattentive students.
4. On September 19, 2016, the Educator received a Letter of Reprimand for attendance concerns.
5. On October 23, 2019, the Educator, in his position as the high school cross-country coach, forcibly pushed a standing student down onto a bus seat and called the student “stupid”.
6. On November 21, 2019, the Educator received a Letter of Reprimand for the events of October 23, 2019.
7. During the 2020–21 school year, the Educator would lay on the classroom floor and take naps of up to 45 minutes at a time while students were present. Students were left unattended during these times.
8. On February 17, 2021, the Educator received a 5-day suspension for a pattern of taking naps during classes and leaving students unattended.
9. On February 10, 2022, the Educator lit a small fire on a desk/table in his classroom. Soon after the class period ended, the Educator left his classroom, leaving the flame unattended.
10. On February 22, 2022, the Educator received a 10-day suspension for leaving an unattended fire in his classroom.
11. In or about January and February 2023, the Educator used a small propane torch to wake up students who were either sleeping or not paying attention. The Educator would place the propane torch within 12-20 inches of the student and ignite the gas.
12. On February 17, 2023, the Educator was placed on administrative leave.

13. On February 27, 2023, the Educator signed a Separation Agreement with the School District. Per the agreement, the Educator would remain on administrative leave until his resignation.

14. On July 11, 2023, the Educator participated in an interview with OPP. During the interview, the Educator, among other comments, said that he ignited the flame of a small propane torch to get students' attention but stated that the students were not in danger at any time. The Educator also forgot numerous times during the interview that the interview was being recorded.

15. On May 16, 2024, OPP contacted the Educator to discuss his case. During the phone conversation, the Educator expressed concern that he had not yet been contacted by OPP to provide a response.

## **II. CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

1. Chapter 28A.410 Revised Code of Washington ("RCW") gives the Professional Educator Standards Board the authority to develop regulations determining eligibility for and certification of personnel employed in the common schools of the state of Washington. OSPI acts as the administrator of those statutes and regulations and has the authority to issue, reprimand, suspend, and revoke education certificates. RCW 28A.410.010; RCW 28A.410.090. Chapters 181-86 and 181-87 of the WAC further implement OSPI's authority.

2. OSPI has jurisdiction over the Educator and the subject matter of this action.

3. The Educator committed acts of unprofessional conduct pursuant to WAC 181-87-060 for a pattern of behaviors that endangered students.

4. There is clear and convincing evidence that the Educator committed acts of unprofessional conduct pursuant to WAC 181-86-170.

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5. Pursuant to WAC 181-86-080, eleven factors, at a minimum, are to be considered to determine the appropriate level and range of educator discipline:

- (1) The seriousness of the act(s) and the actual or potential harm to persons or property;
- (2) The person's criminal history including the seriousness and amount of activity;
- (3) The age and maturity level of participant(s) at the time of the activity;
- (4) The proximity or remoteness of time in which the acts occurred;
- (5) Any activity that demonstrates a disregard for health, safety or welfare;
- (6) Any activity that demonstrates a behavioral problem;
- (7) Any activity that demonstrates a lack of fitness;
- (8) Any information submitted regarding discipline imposed by any governmental or private entity as a result of acts or omissions;
- (9) Any information submitted that demonstrates aggravating or mitigating circumstances;
- (10) Any information submitted to support character and fitness; and
- (11) Any other relevant information submitted.

6. Pursuant to WAC 181-86-070, a suspension is appropriate discipline when:

(1)(b) The education practitioner has committed an act of unprofessional conduct or lacks good moral character but the superintendent of public instruction has determined that a suspension as applied to the particular education practitioner will probably deter subsequent unprofessional or other conduct which evidences lack of good moral character or personal fitness by such education practitioner, and believes the interest of the state in protecting the health, safety, and general welfare of students, colleagues, and other affected persons is adequately served by a suspension. Such order may contain a requirement that the education practitioner fulfill certain conditions before requesting reinstatement of the suspended certificate, and certain conditions after the reinstatement of the suspended certificate.

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(1)(c) The education practitioner lacks personal fitness but the superintendent of public instruction has determined the deficiency is correctable through remedial action and believes the interest of the state in protecting the health, safety, and general welfare of students, colleagues, and other affected persons is adequately served by a suspension which states the education practitioner fulfill certain conditions before requesting reinstatement of the suspended certificate, and certain conditions after the reinstatement of the suspended certificate.

7. Based on the foregoing facts and considering them in light of the eleven factors enumerated in WAC 181-86-080, and in light of WAC 181-86-070, WAC 181-87-060, the Educator's education certificate should be suspended for unprofessional conduct and/or a behavioral problem which endangers the educational welfare or personal safety of students, teachers, or other colleagues within the educational setting.

### **III. ORDER**

THEREFORE, it is hereby ordered that the Washington Education Certificate No. 400137F of STEVEN OLSON is **SUSPENDED**. The Educator may not request reinstatement of his education certificate for at least thirty (30) days from the effective date of this ORDER.

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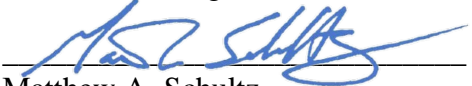
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**REINSTATEMENT** of Steven Olson’s education certificate shall require:

- (1) The Educator must successfully complete a **COGNITIVE NEUROLOGICAL EVALUATION** which validates his ability to have unsupervised access to students in a school environment by a licensed medical doctor preapproved by OSPI;
- (2) The Educator shall provide written consent for OPP to release documents to the provider for purposes of completing the evaluation;
- (3) The Educator, if treatment is recommended as a result of the evaluation, shall complete any and all recommended treatment and provide evidence of successful completion or, if continuing treatment is recommended, provide proof of continued compliance in the program to OPP;
- (4) The Educator shall sign a consent allowing the examining medical provider to provide OPP a summary of the Educator’s treatment and the results of his/her evaluation;
- (5) The Educator must submit a new application, including Character and Fitness Supplement, provided by OPP;
- (6) The Educator must complete a fingerprint-based criminal background check through both the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Washington State Patrol;
- (7) The Educator’s fingerprint background check must return with no criminal convictions, occurring after the date of issuance of a Final Order of Suspension, that are listed in WAC 181-86-013, RCW 28A.410.090, or any felony convictions; AND
- (8) The Educator shall assume all costs of complying with the requirements of this Order.

DATED this \_\_\_\_\_ 8th \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ August \_\_\_\_\_, 2024.

CHRIS REYKDAL  
Superintendent of Public Instruction  
State of Washington

  
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Matthew A. Schultz  
Chief Legal and Civil Rights Officer