



SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Chris Reykdal Old Capitol Building · PO BOX 47200 · Olympia, WA 98504-7200 · <http://www.k12.wa.us>

IN THE MATTER OF THE EDUCATION)	
CERTIFICATE OF)	OPP No. D24-03-012
)	
SOPHIA JOHNSTON)	AGREED ORDER
Certificate No. 560136D)	OF SUSPENSION
)	

After receiving and investigating a complaint from Mercer Island School District (“School District”) regarding the above referenced educator, and based upon the facts available as of the date of this Agreed Order, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, through his undersigned designee, does hereby stipulate, by and between, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Office of Professional Practices and SOPHIA JOHNSTON (“Educator”) that SOPHIA JOHNSTON engaged in acts of unprofessional conduct to include Washington Administrative Code (“WAC”) 181-86-013 and that the Educator’s Washington Education Certificate No. 560136D shall be SUSPENDED for not less than ninety (90) days with conditions enumerated below, based on the following Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law:

I. FINDINGS OF FACT

1. On May 26, 2021, the Educator was issued Washington Education Certificate No. 560136D. The Educator’s certificate will expire on June 30, 2029.
2. During the 2022–23 and 2023–24 school years, the Educator was employed by the School District at Lakeridge Elementary School as a Special Education teacher.
3. On March 1, 2024, the Office of Professional Practices (“OPP”) within the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (“OSPI”) received a complaint from Dr. Fred Rundle, the Superintendent of the School District, alleging the Educator lacked the Good Moral Character or SOPHIA JOHNSTON

Personal Fitness required of certificated educators, per WAC 181-86-013 and 181-86-014, for theft of over \$1200 cash from colleagues.

4. Between approximately March 1, 2023, to December 14, 2023, it was alleged the Educator took over \$1200 from approximately ten colleagues without their knowledge and permission. The Educator would enter unattended classrooms and remove cash from colleagues' belongings.

5. On or about December 13, 2023, the Educator admitted to two school staff members that she had taken money from them without their knowledge or permission.

6. On December 13, 2023, the Educator was placed on administrative leave.

7. On December 15, 2023, the Educator brought \$439 to Lakeridge Elementary School as restitution.

8. On December 19, 2023, the Educator electronically sent \$100 to one of the staff members she had taken money from.

9. The Educator resigned her employment with the School District on or around February 5, 2024.

10. During an interview with OPP on September 29, 2025, the Educator, among other comments, stated that since leaving the School District they have been in therapy to address better handling of emotions, stressors, and financial decisions.

II. CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. Revised Code of Washington ("RCW") Chapter 28A.410 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 181-86-013 and WAC 181-86-014.
4. There is clear and convincing evidence that the Educator lacks the good moral character and/or personal fitness required of certificated educators per WAC 181-86-013 and 181-86-014.
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.

(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 181-86-013, and -014, the Educator's education certificate should be suspended for 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 and agreed that the Washington Education Certificate, No. 560136D of SOPHIA JOHNSTON is **SUSPENDED**. The Educator may not request reinstatement of her education certificate for not less than ninety (90) days from the effective date of this ORDER.

REINSTATEMENT of SOPHIA JOHNSTON's education certificate shall require:

- (1) The Educator must submit a new application, including Character and Fitness Supplement, provided by OPP;
- (2) The Educator must complete a fingerprint-based criminal background check through both the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Washington State Patrol;

- (3) 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
- (4) The Educator shall assume all costs of complying with the requirements of this Order.

WAIVER OF RIGHT TO APPEAL

The Educator is aware that RCW 28A.410.090(3) and WAC 181-86-140 afford him/her the right to appeal a denial or discipline order issued by OSPI. Acknowledging this, the Educator knowingly and voluntarily waives his/her right to appeal by entering into this Agreed Order of Suspension.

DATED this 9th day of January, 2026

CHRIS REYKDAL
Superintendent of Public Instruction
State of Washington

Darryl E Colman
Darryl E Colman
Chief Legal and Civil Rights Officer

Stipulated to and approved
For entry:

Sophia Johnston

Sophia Johnston, Respondent