



SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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IN THE MATTER OF THE EDUCATION)	
CERTIFICATE OF)	OPP No. D23-06-047
)	
STUART SODERQUIST)	FINAL ORDER
Certificate No. 278139A)	OF SUSPENSION
)	

After receiving and investigating a complaint from Bellingham 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 STUART SODERQUIST (“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. 278139A 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 31, 1987, the Educator was issued Washington Education Certificate No. 278139A. The Educator’s certificate will expire on June 30, 2026.
2. During the 2022–23 school year, the Educator was employed by the School District at Bellingham School District as a Traffic Safety Instructor.
3. On May 26, 2023, the Office of Professional Practices (“OPP”) within the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (“OSPI”), received a complaint from Greg Baker, the

Superintendent of the School District, alleging the Educator committed unprofessional conduct pursuant to WAC 181-87 for inappropriate communications with students.

4. In August 2020, parents of students reported the Educator had, among other actions: commented upon the physical appearance and personality of a female student; likened that student to his spouse; touched students on their legs when not necessary for safety of vehicle occupants during a Traffic Safety drive; and made a racially based comment to a student of color.

5. On September 28, 2020, the Educator was issued a Letter of Direction after an investigation into allegations of improper touching of students during Traffic Safety drives. The Educator was directed to cease touching students during drives as a means to gain attention.

6. On March 25, 2022, the Educator was issued a letter from the Bellingham High School Principal after an investigation of improper conduct towards a colleague. The Educator was instructed to refrain from continued unwanted behavior, including hugging and touching, towards the staff member. The Educator was also instructed to review School District policies.

7. On May 8, 2023, the Educator approached three male students in the school building. The Educator placed his leg/foot on one student's leg, kneaded the shoulders of a 2nd student, and made inappropriate comments to all three students. The comments made to students included sexual connotations.

8. On May 12, 2023, the Educator was placed on administrative leave pending investigation into the actions of May 8, 2023.

9. On May 26, 2023, the Educator was issued a Notice of Probable Cause for Discharge. The Educator filed a timely appeal.

10. On November 22, 2023, the Educator signed a Separation Agreement with the School District, resigning his employment effective November 30, 2023.

11. On September 24, 2025, the Educator participated in an interview with OPP. During the interview, among other comments, the Educator denied making sexually connotative comments to students on May 8, 2023, and stated that he believed touching students on their thigh was an appropriate area to make physical contact.

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 inappropriate comments and physical contact with students.

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

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.

REINSTATEMENT of Stuart Soderquist’s education certificate shall require:

- (1) In addition to any mandatory continuing education, the Educator must successfully complete a MAINTAINING BOUNDARIES course, preapproved by OSPI. The Educator will provide OSPI proof of completion of the course prior to requesting reinstatement;
- (2) The Educator must submit a new application, including Character and Fitness Supplement, provided by OPP;
- (3) The Educator must complete a fingerprint-based criminal background check through both the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Washington State Patrol;
- (4) 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
- (5) The Educator shall assume all costs of complying with the requirements of this Order.

DATED this 21st day of April, 2026.

CHRIS REYKDAL
Superintendent of Public Instruction
State of Washington



Monique Malson
Deputy Chief Legal Officer