

**COBB COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
TERMINATION HEARING**

In re: Katherine Rinderle

)
)
)

**FINDINGS OF FACT AND RECOMMENDATIONS
TO THE COBB COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION**

COMES NOW, the Hearing Tribunal, convened pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-940(f) to conduct matters and to submit findings and recommendations to the local board for its decision thereon, makes the following Findings of Fact and Recommendations:

1. Katherine Rinderle is employed by Cobb County School District ("CCSD") under a contract of employment as a teacher.
2. The Superintendent recommended Ms. Rinderle's contract of employment be terminated and sent her a Charge Letter, first issued on June 6, 2023, and subsequently amended as to date and time of the hearing via a first amended Charge Letter on June 14, 2023, and via a second amended Charge Letter on July 18, 2023.
3. Ms. Rinderle was charged with violating:
 - a. O.C.G.A. § 20-2-940(a)(2): Insubordination;
 - b. O.C.G.A. § 20-2-940(a)(3): Willful Neglect of Duties; and
 - c. O.C.G.A. § 20-2-940(a)(8): Other Good and Sufficient Cause.
4. A Fair Dismissal hearing was held on August 10, 2023 and August 11, 2023, with Tom Cable, Esq. presiding as Hearing Officer pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-940(e) and Hearing Tribunal members: Linda Keeney, John Kelly, and Cheryl Davis.
5. Ms. Rinderle was represented by Craig Goodmark and Michael Tafelski. Sherry Culves appeared on behalf of CCSD.
6. On March 8, 2023, Ms. Rinderle read *My Shadow is Purple* to her 5th Grade Target Class.
Agree / Disagree
7. The book *My Shadow is Purple* addresses the topic of gender identity and gender fluidity. Agree / Disagree *with other concepts along*

8. The book *My Shadow is Purple* considers gender beyond binary. Agree / Disagree
9. On March 8, 2023, Ms. Rinderle implemented a lesson using *My Shadow is Purple* to her 5th Grade Target Class which involved the topic of gender identity or gender fluidity. Agree / Disagree *Once use of pronouns They/Them was introduced*
10. Ms. Rinderle was knowingly untruthful in her statements to investigators when she denied that the book and her lesson on *My Shadow is Purple* addressed the topic of gender identity and gender fluidity. Agree / Disagree
11. Ms. Rinderle was knowingly untruthful when she denied understanding that the topic of gender identity or gender fluidity was a sensitive or controversial topic in this community. Agree / Disagree
12. Ms. Rinderle exhibited poor judgment when she failed to recognize that the book and her lesson on *My Shadow is Purple* addressed the topic of gender identity. Agree / Disagree
13. The content of *My Shadow is Purple* involves a sensitive and controversial topic as covered by CCSD Administrative Rules IFAA-R: Instructional Resources Selection and Acquisition and IKB-R: Controversial Issues. Agree / Disagree
14. The content of *My Shadow is Purple* involves a topic that ~~is~~ not appropriate for a teacher to introduce to elementary students in a CCSD classroom. Agree / Disagree *may be deemed topics of a sensitive nature should be reviewed with admin.*
15. ~~The book *My Shadow is Purple* does not present a balanced view of the differing viewpoints on gender identity and gender fluidity.~~ Agree / Disagree
16. ~~The content of *My Shadow is Purpose* involves a topic that should be left for parents to address with their children at home, as discussed in CCSD Administrative Rule JRB-R.~~ Agree / Disagree
17. During the lesson, the students engaged in a debate about the gender of the character, with some of the students expressing that the character was a boy. Agree / Disagree *ed confusion on how to address the main character.*
18. Ms. Rinderle directed students to refer to the character of the book as "the character" or "they" and not as a boy or "he/him." Agree / Disagree *According to two students statement, ms. Rinderle*
19. ~~Ms. Rinderle told students that their opinion that the character was a boy was due to their own biases or stereotypes.~~ Agree / Disagree
20. Ms. Rinderle instructed students to conduct an activity that involved them reflecting on the book by drawing their own shadows and writing a poem. Agree / Disagree

21. Ms. Rinderle encouraged the students not to use the colors pink or blue in their drawings and poems. ~~Agree / Disagree~~
22. Ms. Rinderle read *My Shadow is Purple* and implemented this lesson without informing school administration or families ahead of time. Agree / Disagree
23. Ms. Rinderle read *My Shadow is Purple* and implemented this lesson without completing Form IFFA-1 or complying with District policies and rules surrounding supplemental resources. Agree / Disagree
24. Ms. Rinderle did not provide families an opportunity to opt out of the lesson or address the topic of gender identity or gender fluidity with their children first. Agree / Disagree
25. For some families, the topic of gender identity or gender fluidity invokes a moral or religious belief. ~~Agree / Disagree~~
26. Ms. Rinderle has a pattern of making students feel uncomfortable in her class. ~~Agree / Disagree~~
27. Ms. Rinderle's actions have caused multiple parents to complain over time regarding her lack of communication with them and making students feel uncomfortable. ~~Agree / Disagree~~
28. Ms. Rinderle's actions have caused the parents of at least eleven students to request that their children not be assigned to Ms. Rinderle's classroom. ~~Agree / Disagree~~
29. Ms. Rinderle's e-mailed response to the parent complaint about her lesson on *My Shadow is Purple* was inappropriate and adversely impacted her professional relationship with her student's family. ~~Agree / Disagree~~
30. Ms. Rinderle was trained on the District's policies, rules, and procedures on:
 - a. IFAA-R: Instructional Resources Selectin and Acquisitions
 - b. IKB-R: Controversial Issues
 - c. JRB-R Parents' Bill of Rights

agree

The committee believes that

31. A reasonable educator exercising good professional judgment should have known that reading *My Shadow is Purple* to a 5th grade class in CCSD ~~without notifying~~ administration ahead of time and following the requisite steps to obtain permission and approval was a violation of CCSD policies. Agree / Disagree
 is not appropriate, and should have communicated with local school admin. for approval.

32. In January 2022, Ms. Rinderle ~~read her class a children's book authored by a current political candidate and tagged the candidate on social media, causing some of her students' parents to complain.~~ Agree / Disagree
33. As a result of the January 2022 incident, Ms. Rinderle was warned about the perception of political bias in her class and cautioned to follow the District's policies when selecting supplementary materials and conducting lessons that could appear to be political or controversial. Agree / Disagree
34. Ms. Rinderle failed to follow this directive to follow District policies when selecting supplemental materials and conducting lessons on controversial issues. Agree / Disagree
35. Ms. Rinderle's actions have demonstrated a lack of coachability. Agree / Disagree
36. Ms. Rinderle's actions have demonstrated a lack of judgment. Agree / Disagree
37. Ms. Rinderle's actions have demonstrated a lack of willingness to acknowledge the inappropriateness of her actions. Agree / Disagree
38. Ms. Rinderle's actions have / have not caused the School District to reasonably lose confidence in her ability to continue as an educator in the District. within the Due West Community
39. Ms. Rinderle's actions have / have not caused the school district adversely impacted her ability to be effective as a teacher in the Cobb County School District. to have concerns in her ability
40. Ms. Rinderle's actions have / have not violated School District policies and administrative rules:
- a. IFAA-R: Instructional Resources Selection and Acquisitions
 - b. IKB-R: Controversial Issues
 - c. JRB-R Parents' Bill of Rights
 - d. GAGC-R: Employee Ethics
 - e. Form GAGC-1: Professional Conduct by Educators
 - f. ~~PSC Code of Ethics, Standard 4: Honesty~~
 - g. PSC Code of Ethics, Standard 9: Professional Conduct
41. Ms. Rinderle knowingly and intentionally violated District policies and administrative rules. Agree / Disagree
42. Ms. Rinderle ~~willfully~~ disobeyed the instructions of her supervisor to avoid sensitive and controversial topics in the selection of supplemental resources, and to follow District policies and procedures for approval of such supplemental resources. Agree / Disagree

43. The Hearing Tribunal considered all the testimonial and documentary evidence presented by both parties and admitted into evidence. The Hearing Tribunal finds the following violations by a preponderance of the evidence:

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-940(a)(2): Insubordination	<u> </u> yes	<u> X </u> no
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-940(a)(3): Willful Neglect of Duties	<u> X </u> yes	<u> </u> no
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-940(a)(8): Other Good and Sufficient Cause	<u> X </u> yes	<u> </u> no

WHEREFORE, the Hearing Tribunal *affirms* / denies the recommendation of the Superintendent to terminate Ms. Rinderle's employment contract.

This 14 day of August, 2023.

APPROVED BY:

Cheryl Davis
Jinda Keeney
[Signature]

HEARING OFFICER:

(as to form of process only)

W. [Signature]