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:
   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.
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 IFAR-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

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

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

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. IFFA-R: Instructional Resources Selectin and Acquisitions
   b. IKB-R: Controversial Issues
   c. JRB-R Parents’ Bill of Rights

   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

   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 not caused the School District to reasonably lose confidence in her ability to continue as an educator in the District. Agree / Disagree

39. Ms. Rinderle’s actions have not adversely impacted her ability to be effective as a teacher in the Cobb County School District to have concerns in her ability to continue as an educator in the District. Agree / Disagree

40. Ms. Rinderle’s actions have not violated School District policies and administrative rules:

   a. IFAR-R: Instructional Resources Selection and Acquisitions
   b. IKB-R: Controversial Issues
   c. JRE-R: Parents’ Bill of Rights
   d. GACC-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  
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-940(a)(8): Other Good and Sufficient Cause

WHEREFORE, the Hearing Tribunal affirms the recommendation of the Superintendent to terminate Ms. Rinderle’s employment contract.

This 14 day of August, 2023.

APPROVED BY:

Cheryl Davis
Fiona Keener

HEARING OFFICER:
(as to form of process only)