



SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

DR. TERRY BERGESON OLD CAPITOL BUILDING • PO BOX 47200 • OLYMPIA WA 98504-7200 • <http://www.k12.wa.us>

IN THE MATTER OF THE EDUCATION)
APPLICATION OF)
DONALD STRAWN)
DOB: [REDACTED]/1940)

OPP No. A02-10-0572
DENIAL ORDER
FOR CERTIFICATION

COMES NOW the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), under the authority granted by the laws of the state of Washington, having reviewed the file of the above-referenced case, and having considered the entire evidence contained therein, does hereby deny the education application of DONALD STRAWN based on the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law set forth below:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Donald Strawn applied for a Washington education certificate on May 30, 2002.
2. On the Character and Fitness Supplement, a part of the application process, Mr. Strawn answered "yes" to question 4, Section II (Professional Fitness). Mr. Strawn provided a statement that in 1994 he was asked to voluntarily surrender a teaching certificate that was issued by the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Mr. Strawn indicated that in 1991-93 he was teaching Jr. High English classes at Calexico Mission School. He said that he

DONALD STRAWN
DENIAL ORDER FOR CERTIFICATION

had a high school girl working for him part-time and that their working relationship got closer than the principal deemed appropriate. Mr. Strawn indicated he and the high school girl went on outings, picnics, etc. usually in the company of one or more of her friends. Mr. Strawn quit teaching at Calexico Mission School and was asked to surrender his certificate nearly a year later. Mr. Strawn indicated that no legal action ever transpired.

3. Mr. Strawn signed a consent form for the Office of Professional Practices to discuss his former employment with Calexico Mission School and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In a letter dated December 4, 2002 the Superintendent, Charles McKinstry, of Seventh-day Adventist Church provided information in relation to Mr. Strawn's employment. Mr. McKinstry stated that the Principal of Calexico Mission School subsequently came into possession of a letter Mr. Strawn had written to a student who was about 16 years old. Upon investigation, it was determined that Mr. Strawn had developed a romantic relationship with the girl. Mr. McKinstry indicated he met with Mr. Strawn and that Mr. Strawn admitted to romantic feelings for the girl but denied having a physically sexual relationship. Mr. McKinstry discussed with him about the inappropriateness of what he had done and forbade him from being present on the school campus while students were present.

4. The following was derived from a letter typed by Mr. Strawn to a person by the name of Ron:

At a meeting, Mr. McKinstry gave Mr. Strawn a book (*Sex in the Forbidden Zone*) which Mr. Strawn indicated was a "real eye opener" for him. Mr. Strawn indicated it had shown him the

direction that his activities with the girl were taking, before he let it all happen. Mr. Strawn stated "It has made it all too clear to me that even the small amount of romantic involvement that we have had may have already had a destructive work in her life." and "There were at least two times when both of us wanted a sexual experience between us, the time was ripe, the opportunity clear, and that urge was a very real, driving force." Mr. Straw then stated "The possibilities of the relationship were discussed, acknowledged and relinquished."

5. The following was derived from a letter typed by Mr. Strawn to the girl:

Mr. Strawn stated "I am not to call you at school at any time, nor try to contact you in any way." and "I have loved you anyway and I gave you myself...to have someone to trust totally, to believe in, to be an adult that you could learn about God's love from." and "I have betrayed that trust, and let our relationship get romantically involved."

Mr. Strawn included words to a card that the girl sent to him indicating to the girl that the card expressed his feelings about their relationship too. The words were as follows:

Your soul
has become part
part of my soul,
your heart part of my heart,
your life joined with mine...
...I love you.

Mr. Strawn indicated that he promised the counselor and his wife that he wouldn't write the girl anymore and that he had not kept that promise. He indicated he had written her several times

anyway when he sent her money and that he had talked to her on the phone at least twice.

Mr. Strawn stated "My motives have wavered between good and bad and I have stepped over the line." "I have made indecent proposals to you while you are a minor." "We have been much too affectionate for a student/teacher relationship or a parent/daughter relationship." "You have trusted me as a teacher and I took advantage of that trust and treated you as a lover." "I will never, ever be trusted as a teacher again, because I am old enough to know better, and I did these things anyway."

6. Good moral character and personal fitness is a requirement to attain a Washington education certificate.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. OSPI has jurisdiction over Donald Strawn and over the subject matter of this action.
2. Donald Strawn has failed to provide clear and convincing evidence of good moral character or personal fitness to receive a Washington education certificate, Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 180-86-170.

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ORDER

THEREFORE, it is hereby ordered that the application for certification of Donald Strawn is denied.

This order may be appealed within thirty (30) calendar days from the date of receipt, pursuant to Chapter 180-86 WAC, copy enclosed.

DATED this 10th day of March, 2003.

DR. TERRY BERGESON
Superintendent of Public Instruction
State of Washington

By: Michael L. Bigelow
Michael L. Bigelow
Associate Superintendent
Budget and School Business Services