

IN THE MATTER OF THE EDUCATION )  
CERTIFICATE OF )  
Peggy Cozza )  
Certificate No. 273020H )  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

OPP No. D03-09-088

AGREED ORDER OF  
SUSPENSION

The Office of Professional Practices (OPP), Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), under the authority granted by the laws of the state of Washington, and having reviewed the file of the above-referenced case and considered the entire evidence contained therein, hereby stipulates to this Agreed Order of Suspension by and between OSPI, the Office of Professional Practices (OPP), and Peggy Cozza. OSPI and Cozza hereby agree that the Washington Education Certificate No. 273020H of Peggy Cozza shall be suspended for nine (9) months based on the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law set forth below.

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. Peggy Cozza was issued a Washington Education Certificate, No. 273020H, on July 1, 1986. That certificate currently remains valid.
2. Peggy Cozza was employed by North Thurston Public Schools (NTPS) as a deaf education teacher.
3. On September 23, 2003, the Office of Professional Practices, within OSPI, received a complaint letter from NTPS alleging a lack of good moral character or personal fitness, or a violation of the Code of Professional Conduct, Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 180-87, by Peggy Cozza.

4. On February 12, 1997, Peggy Cozza received a letter of direction from Dr. James Rydland, Assistant Superintendent, regarding: yelling at students; making negative statements about students with other staff; failing to encourage students in caring and nurturing ways; and other issues.

5. On April 29, 1997, Peggy Cozza received a letter of reprimand for: inappropriate conduct, verbal and physical, with students; inappropriate conduct with school staff; and unprofessional conduct at MDT meetings.

6. At various times during the period 1997 to 2001, Peggy Cozza made derogatory remarks regarding certain staff members to other staff members.

7. At various times during the period between 1999 through June 2002, Peggy Cozza used derogatory phrases and negative comments towards deaf education students, ranging from pre-school age to 6<sup>th</sup> grade age.

8. At various times during the period 1997 through June of 2002, Peggy Cozza would become angry and yell at students when attempting to discipline them for improper behavior in the classroom. Peggy Cozza would tell deaf students that she was disciplining them "because I love you". Peggy Cozza would tell students that she was "the only one that can communicate with you", "don't forget that I'm all you have", and "your parents don't sign, so we at school are like your family". When Peggy Cozza became angry over classroom behavior, students would begin to frantically sign "I love you".

9. At various times from 1999 through June of 2002, Peggy Cozza would move chairs out from under deaf education students who misbehaved in the classroom, so that the children fell to the floor. Peggy Cozza would hold disruptive children by the arms and push them into chairs or onto the floor.

10. During the 2000-2001 school year, Peggy Cozza picked up a 6- or 7-year old deaf education student who was misbehaving, by putting her hands under the child's armpits. The child was held off the floor and away from Peggy Cozza's body. Peggy Cozza walked the student to the corner of the school gymnasium and physically placed the student in the corner. Her action caused the student to scrape her back on the door hinges as the student slid to the floor. During the same school year, Peggy Cozza picked up the same student by the arms and sides of the child's body, removing the student from the cafeteria because of disruptive behavior.

11. In May of 2002, Peggy Cozza pulled three 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students down a school bus aisle and pushed them into seats due to improper behavior. Peggy Cozza grabbed one female deaf education student's sweatshirt hood and pulled the student backwards.

12. In May or June of 2002, Peggy Cozza explained to Christine Sheafe, deaf education interpreter at Mountain View Elementary School, that "this is how you have to do things my room. This is how we handle students in this room." Peggy Cozza grabbed a student by the arm and pushed the student to the ground or into a chair as she made this statement.

13. In the fall of 2001, Peggy Cozza approached a misbehaving 1<sup>st</sup> grade male deaf education student from behind. She grabbed his arm, pulled him out of the seat, held him with both hands on his arms, and yelled at him for behaving improperly.

14. At various times during the period 1997 to 2002, Peggy Cozza was late with Individualized Education Programs (IEP's) for special education students in her classroom. Peggy Cozza sometimes would wait until an IEP meeting to prepare an IEP with parents and the resulting IEP's had typographical errors.

15. On December 14, 2000, Peggy Cozza received a letter directing Peggy Cozza to send out Notification and Invitation to parents for IEP meetings; and counseling Peggy Cozza on Past Due IEP's. The letter was from Sharon Baird, Director of Special Education.

16. On August 5, 2002, Peggy Cozza was placed on administrative leave by NTPS and ordered to undergo a psychological evaluation.

17. In August of 2002, Peggy Cozza underwent a psychological evaluation with Jeff Bremer, Ph. D. As a result of the psychological evaluation, Jeff Bremer states that Peggy Cozza is psychologically able to perform her duties.

18. On December 2, 2003, NTPS issued a letter providing Notice of Probable Cause for Discharge to Peggy Cozza

19. On March 16, 2004, Peggy Cozza voluntarily resigned from her employment at NTPS as part of a settlement. The effective date of her resignation was June 30, 2004. After the settlement, NTPS dismissed proceedings relating to the Notice of Probable Cause.

20. Peggy Cozza does not agree with, and vigorously denies, the statements and conclusions set forth in the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law set forth below. Peggy Cozza stipulates to the nine (9) month suspension provided for in this Agreed Order without making any admission as to fact or law, in order to resolve pending disputes regarding her teaching certificate without incurring the expenses and delays associated with an appeal.

21. Good moral character and personal fitness is a continuing requirement to maintain a Washington Education Certificate.

**CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

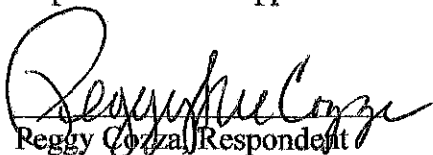
1. OSPI has jurisdiction over Peggy Cozza and over the subject matter of this action.
2. OSPI has shown by clear and convincing evidence that the Washington Education Certificate, No. 273020H, of Peggy Cozza, should be suspended as provided for in WAC 180-86-070.
3. Peggy Cozza has violated WAC 180-87-060, RCW 28A.150.300, RCW 28A.410.090, WAC 180-86-013, WAC 180 86-014, and/or WAC 180-40-235.

**ORDER**

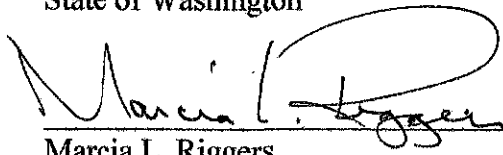
THEREFORE, it is hereby ordered that the Washington Education Certificate, No. 273020H, of Peggy Cozza be suspended for nine (9) months commencing on June 30, 2004 and ending on March 30, 2005.

DATED This 30 day of November, 2004.

Notice of Representation waived and  
Stipulated to and approved for entry:

  
Peggy Cozza, Respondent

DR. TERRY BERGESON  
Superintendent of Public Instruction  
State of Washington

  
Marcia L. Riggers  
Assistant Superintendent  
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction