

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA )  
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COUNTY OF HUGHES ) DIVISION OF THE SECRETARY  
 ) SOUTH DAKOTA DEPT. OF EDUCATION

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In re: Certification of )  
TROY ENGEL ) DSE 2025-07  
 ) ORDER REVOKING  
 ) EDUCATOR CERTIFICATE

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Pursuant to the authority granted to the Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Education by SDCL §§ 13-43-28.1, 13-42-9, and 13-42-15, following the receipt of a Complaint seeking revocation of a certificate from the South Dakota Professional Teachers Practices and Standards Commission, and after review of the entire file herein, the Secretary enters the following ORDER:

1. The Secretary affirms and adopts the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law of the Professional Teachers Practices and Standards Commission (“Commission”). These Findings and Conclusions, attached as Exhibit 1, are hereby incorporated into this Order by this reference as if set forth in full.
2. The Commission found clear and convincing evidence Engel violated the following provision of the South Dakota Code of Professional Ethics for Teachers—ARSD 24:08:03:01(5) and 24:08:03:01(7).
3. Based upon the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, the teaching certificate of Troy Engel, Certificate #64322, issued on September 20, 2023, is hereby **permanently revoked**.
4. The Order and Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law are a public record pursuant to SDCL § 13-42-17.1.
5. Notification of this revocation is to be placed on the NASDTEC registry and be placed in Engel’s permanent certification file within the South Dakota Department of Education.

This constitutes final agency action and may be appealed to circuit court.

Dated this the 22nd of July, 2025.



Dr. Joseph Graves  
Secretary  
South Dakota Department of Education  
800 Governors Drive  
Pierre, SD 57501



- a. ARSD 24:08:03:01(5) conduct professional business in such a way that they do not expose the students to unnecessary intimidation, embarrassment, or disparagement.
  - b. ARSD 24:08:03:01(7) maintain professional relationships with students without exploitation of a student for personal gain or advantage.
4. Engel filed a Response with the Commission on or about January 20, 2025.
5. A due and proper Notice of Hearing was served upon the parties setting this hearing for May 5, 2025.
6. A private hearing on this matter was held on May 5, 2025.
7. Engel admitted to the violation of ARSD 24:08:03:01(5).
8. Engel denied that he violated ARSD 24:08:03:01(7).
9. Dorman is the Senior Director of Human Resources for the Sioux Falls School District. She has been in this type of role for ten years.
10. On October 8, 2024, she received a phone call from Tim Hazlett ("Hazlett"), the principal of Roosevelt High School.
11. Hazlett informed Dorman that he had just met with the parents of a fifteen-year-old student ("Student") because they were concerned about emails they saw between Student and Engel.
12. Based on the meeting between Hazlett and Student's parents, an investigation was started.
13. Engel was not Student's teacher during the 2024-2025 school year but had been Student's math teacher the year prior. He supervised Student's lunch during 2024-2025.
14. Dorman contacted the state data center to obtain all the emails between Student and Engel.
15. After reviewing some of the emails, Hazlett contacted Engel and informed him that Engel was not to return to work the following day and that he would be suspended with pay while the investigation was ongoing.

16. Hazlett met with Student and Student's parents on October 9, 2024, to obtain more information.
17. Student confirmed Engel and Student started emailing each other in the Spring of 2024. Student stated that they did not email over the summer because Student doesn't have access to electronic communications. They then started communicating again when school started in the fall of 2024.
18. Student explained that in the fall of 2024, Engel and Student would arrange to meet at school. Engel and Student would also often walk to lunch together or Student would come to his classroom after school. Although, these meetings were limited as Student had to be home by 4:00 pm.
19. Student asked Engel if he would come to a homecoming event called Rider Fest, to meet Student and they could go somewhere to talk. Engel suggested a park, but Student informed him that Student could not leave the Roosevelt school area because Student's parents track her location. So instead, they met in Engel's classroom that evening.
20. The school cameras verify that on September 24, 2024, Engel and Student were in his classroom from 9:24 PM until 10:51 PM.
21. Student reported no physical contact or any inappropriate behavior occurred while in Engel's classroom.
22. As part of the investigation conducted by the School District, Hazlett and Dorman interviewed Engel. Engel concurred that the communication had started the previous spring and paused over the summer. Engel admitted that he and Student emailed several times a day.
23. Engel informed Hazlett and Dorman that he felt that Student was easy to talk to and a good listener. He went on to say that he feels comfortable talking with Student about life and family things. Lastly, admitting that he should have not responded to Student's emails and recognized how the situation could be misconstrued.
24. Initially, Engel denied arranging a private meeting with Student but ultimately admitted to the meet-up in his classroom.
25. Engel remained on paid suspension while the investigation continued.

26. Dorman received the file from the state data center of the recoverable emails on October 11, 2024. The file revealed 4,111 email exchanges between Engel and Student from April of 2024 to about October 8, 2024, minus the three summer months. The emails included exchanges before and after school hours, late into the evening, on both weekdays and weekends.

27. The following are a snippet of the emails Engel sent to Student:

- a. "Good, you better not! Haha! No, I don't do any talking at all. You can just sit by me while they meet. I couldn't agree with you more! Idk why, but I just want to be with you all the time! Haha!"
- b. "We'll have to try and plan out another time to hang out again, but something a little more exciting! Haha! And NO, they're a light lavender! Haha!"
- c. "It was good to talk. I didn't really know what to do either, so I'm to blame as well. Haha! I really did enjoy spending time with just you though!"
- d. "I can kid about it if it's not true! Haha! Oh yeah! A spend a good amount of every day thinking about you!"
- e. "All I know is I'd watch it anywhere are long as you are there watching with me! Haha!"
- f. "I'm sorry! It really is a pain when he comes in! I just want to spend time with you, but I can't really tell him to just leave. I was talking to [Redacted] and thought you'd like some quality time with [Redacted]! Haha!"
- g. "I don't want you to think that I don't, or don't want to hang out with you, because I MOST CERTAINLY DO (more than you know)!! I would prefer it to be something else than that."

28. Following the Rider Fest meet-up there were additional communications between Engel and Student centering on arranging more private meetings.

29. At the conclusion of the investigation, it was found that Engel engaged in inappropriate communication with Student, made efforts to arrange private meeting with Student outside of school, and that he failed to recognize that for a teacher, these were grossly unethical and a serious breach of the district's code of conduct policy.

30. A recommendation to terminate Engel's employment was made to the school board on October 15, 2025.
31. Engel testified before the Commission that as a teacher he had an open-door policy. That he would have several students come in before and after school to talk.
32. Engel testified that Student, of Student's own doing, started coming in after school and they would just talk about Student's day.
33. Engel testified that randomly, out of the blue, Student started emailing him. That right away it was just like "hi", basic stuff.
34. Engel testified there was no communication with Student over the summer. Once school started back up, Student started coming to his classroom after school. However, another student would be there as well, and Engel indicated that is why the emails picked up because Student didn't get to talk to him in person as much.
35. Engel testified that he had a lot in common with Student. He informed the Commission that he was not making an excuses but stated it was nice to talk to someone with similarities.
36. Engel testified that he is happily married with three kids. That he would come home from his son's soccer practices and his wife would be tired for the day and it was nice to have someone, meaning Student, to talk to about other things.
37. Engel admitted to the Commission that the emails got out of hand, but it was never his intent to negatively impact Student, to make Student feel uncomfortable or to feel any certain way. Engel indicated that he and Student built a good bond with each other, and he let it go far beyond the means that it definitely should have went to.
38. Engel testified that he wasn't trying to get Student alone on the night of Rider Fest by suggesting they meet at the park it was just so they could have a quiet place to talk.
39. Engel admits that in hindsight he should not have met with Student in his room.
40. Engel testified that he does not plan on teaching again.
41. Engel's initiated email communications with Student that were unprofessional.

42. Engel communicated with Student outside of school hours, late at night, and on the weekends.
43. Engel communicated with Student in topics unrelated to their education.
44. Engel failed to set boundaries with Student.
45. Engel failed to maintain a professional relationship with Student.
46. Engel failed to take full responsibility for his actions.
47. Engel has admitted, and the evidence presented to the Commission and all reasonable inferences therefrom demonstrate that Engel violated ARSD 24:08:03:01(5).
48. The evidence presented to the Commission and all reasonable inferences therefrom demonstrate that Engel violated ARSD 24:08:03:01(7).
49. Any findings of fact improperly denoted as a conclusion of law is hereby incorporated as a finding of fact.

Based upon the foregoing Findings of Fact, the Commission hereby makes the following Conclusions of Law:

#### CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

50. The Commission has jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to SDCL §§ 13-43-28, 13-43-28.1, SDCL Ch. 1-26, and the Administrative Rules of South Dakota, Chapters 24:08:03 and 24:08:04:01.
51. The burden of proof in this matter as a contested case hearing is clear and convincing. *In Re: Setliff*, 2002 SD 58, 245 N.W.2d 601, 605.
52. The South Dakota Code of Professional Ethics for Teachers provides at ARSD 24:08:03:01 that in fulfilling their obligation to students, educators shall act as follows:
  - (5) conduct professional business in such a way that they do not expose the students to unnecessary intimidation, embarrassment, or disparagement.
53. Clear and convincing evidence exists that Engel violated ARSD 24:08:03:01(5).
54. The South Dakota Code of Professional Ethics for Teachers provides at ARSD 24:08:03:01 that in fulfilling their obligation to students, educators shall act as follows:

(7) maintain professional relationships with students without exploitation of a student for personal gain or advantage.

55. Clear and convincing evidence exists that Loken violated ARSD 24:08:03:01(7).

56. Any conclusions of law improperly denoted as a finding of fact is hereby incorporated as a conclusion of law.

Based upon the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, the Commission hereby issues the following Order:

**ORDER**

ORDERED that this matter be referred to the Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Education for proceedings to permanently revoke the teaching certificate of Troy Engel as provided for in SDCL § 13-43-28.1. It is further

ORDERED that a copy of the Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and Order be provided to the Secretary of South Dakota Department of Education for placement on the National Association of the State of Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) clearinghouse and that it remains with the Department's permanent certification file. It is further

ORDERED that a copy of the Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and Order be sent to the parties herein. It is further

ORDERED that the Department may release the Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and Order to the certificate office of any state in which Engel holds or applies for the certificate.

Dated this 26<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2025.

PROFESSIONAL TEACHERS PRACTICES  
AND STANDARDS COMMISSION

By: Joy Robbins  
Joy Robbins, Chair