



BRITISH COLUMBIA
COMMISSIONER FOR
TEACHER REGULATION

IN THE MATTER OF THE *TEACHERS ACT*, SBC 2011 c. 19

AND

IN THE MATTER CONCERNING

KULJIT SINGH UPPAL

[REDACTED]

CONSENT RESOLUTION AGREEMENT

BETWEEN:

THE COMMISSIONER, APPOINTED UNDER THE *TEACHERS ACT*
(the "Commissioner")

AND:

KULJIT SINGH UPPAL
("Uppal")

BACKGROUND and FACTS

1. Uppal holds a valid Professional Certificate of Qualification, [REDACTED] It was issued by the B.C. College of Teachers under the *Teaching Profession Act* on September 24, 1992, is valid from September 1, 1992, and was continued under the *Teachers Act* as of January 9, 2012.
2. At all material times, Uppal was employed as a high school teacher by School District No. 36 (Surrey School District) (the "District") at a school in the District (the "School").
3. On June 20, 2022, the District made a report to the Commissioner regarding Uppal, under section 16 of the *School Act*.
4. The following events occurred in February 2022 and involved grade 11 and 12 students in Uppal's Social Justice 12 class:

- a. On Friday, February 4, 2022, Uppal introduced a “sacred cow” assignment for which the students were asked to prepare an oral presentation on something that was “untouchable” or “sacred”. Uppal led a brainstorming session with the students on various topics, including sexual orientation, race, mental health, poverty, gender equality, patriarchy, abortion, addiction, abuse, child marriage, and sexual assault.
- b. That same day, Uppal provided an example of his own “sacred cow” to the class, stating that he had been sexually abused by a family member as a child. Uppal did not provide any trigger warning before sharing this.
- c. Uppal did not set ground rules for the confidentiality of the information that the students would present, and the majority of students felt the assignment was not optional.
- d. On Monday, February 7, 2022, the students began presenting their “sacred cows”. Topics included immigration issues, family dynamics, substance abuse, body image, self-harm, bullying, and mental health. The students who presented were often crying, and many students listening to the presentations were emotional, with their heads down. Two students left the class during the presentations. Uppal did not check on, or follow-up with, these students.
- e. Despite the emotional reaction of the students on Monday, Uppal continued with the student presentations the next day, Tuesday, February 8, 2022. The students demonstrated the same emotions, if not to a greater extent, that day. Additionally, on Tuesday, at least five or six students presented on topics that gave reason to believe they had suffered physical and/or sexual abuse. Despite knowing his obligation to do so, Uppal did not report these disclosures to school administration and/or to the students’ parents.
- f. Uppal did not provide adequate follow-up resources or support to the students. While some students reported that the assignment helped them feel supported and closer to the class, other students reported experiencing panic attacks; feeling “vulnerable”, “stripped naked”, and “traumatized”; and that they did not want to participate but felt there was a “gun to [their] head”. One student went home after the assignment and self-harmed.
- g. Additionally, during the District’s investigation, Uppal said he was “completely blindsided” by the presentations and that sexual or physical abuse had never come out previously in the ten years he had conducted this assignment. However, this was untrue, as students from Uppal’s previous class gave evidence that at least two reportable presentations were made in 2020. Uppal failed to report these 2020 disclosures to school administration and/or to the students’ parents.

5. On June 17, 2022, the District disciplined Uppal by issuing him a five-day suspension. With the agreement of the District, due to personal circumstances, Uppal did not serve this suspension. The District also required Uppal to complete a Professional Boundaries course and a Trauma Informed Practice course by August 31, 2023. Uppal was not to teach Social Justice during the 2022/2023 school year and could not apply to teach it again until he completed the required coursework and received preapproval from the District. On December 2, 2022, Uppal completed a Trauma Informed Practice course. Between March 13 and 15, 2023, Uppal completed the course, *Reinforcing Respectful Professional Boundaries*, through the Justice Institute of B.C.
6. Prior to the February 2022 incidents, the District had previously issued Uppal a Letter of Expectation on November 16, 2017 and a Letter of Direction on October 18, 2018. In both letters, the District highlighted the Professional Standards requirement to ensure the emotional and physical safety of students and to treat students with dignity and respect. The 2018 letter also indicated that Uppal needed to recognize and respect the emotional reactions of students.
7. On November 9, 2022, the Commissioner ordered an investigation under section 47(1) of the *Teachers Act*.
8. On February 7, 2023, the Commissioner considered this matter and determined to propose a consent resolution agreement to Uppal, in accordance with section 53(1)(a) of the *Teachers Act*.

CONSEQUENCES

9. This Agreement is made under section 53 of the *Teachers Act*.
10. Uppal understands and acknowledges that this Agreement is not effective until executed by the Commissioner, and that the date of execution by the Commissioner will be the effective date of this Agreement (the "Effective Date").
11. Uppal admits that the facts set out in paragraphs 1 to 6 of this Agreement are true.
12. Uppal admits that the conduct described in paragraph 4 of this Agreement constitutes professional misconduct and is contrary to Standard #1 of the *Professional Standards for BC Educators*, June 2019.
13. Uppal agrees to a five-day suspension of his certificate of qualification under sections 53 and 64(b) of the *Teachers Act*. Uppal will serve his suspension from December 11, 2023 to December 15, 2023, inclusive.


14. In determining that a five-day suspension is an appropriate consequence, the Commissioner considered the following factors:
 - a. Uppal's conduct showed a lack of understanding of his role as an educator in a privileged position of power and trust, both in oversharing from his personal life, and in facilitating an assignment that resulted in students disclosing deeply personal and traumatic issues to the entire class. Uppal's conduct in fact resulted in emotional trauma and was triggering to students.
 - b. Uppal acted in a manner inconsistent with an educator's responsibility for the physical and emotional safety of students by not putting appropriate safeguards in place, not following up with students who were upset by the assignment, and not reporting disclosures of abuse.
 - c. Uppal was dishonest during the District's investigation regarding reportable disclosures in previous classes.
 - d. Uppal engaged in remedial work by completing a Trauma Informed Practice course and the Justice Institute of B.C. course, *Reinforcing Respectful Professional Boundaries*.
15. Uppal agrees not to make any statement orally or in writing which contradicts, disputes or calls into question the terms of this Agreement or the admissions made in it.

EFFECT OF THE AGREEMENT

16. The Director will record the terms of this Agreement on the Ministry of Education and Child Care's online registry under section 79(d) of the *Teachers Act*.
17. Uppal acknowledges that this Agreement will be published in accordance with section 54 of the *Teachers Act*, which includes posting the Agreement, in full, on the following website: www.teacherregulation.gov.bc.ca.
18. Notification of this Agreement will be made in accordance with section 55 of the *Teachers Act*.
19. A breach by Uppal of any term in this Agreement may constitute professional misconduct which may be the subject of separate discipline proceedings.
20. Uppal acknowledges and understands that if the Commissioner has reason to believe that he has breached any term of this Agreement:


- a. the Commissioner may initiate an investigation under section 47(1)(b) of the *Teachers Act* into his conduct; and
 - b. the conduct and matters described in the "Background and Facts" to this Agreement are admissible in that inquiry as proof that Uppal has admitted to the conduct and matters set out in this Agreement.
21. Uppal acknowledges that he has voluntarily entered into this Agreement with the benefit of independent legal advice, and that he fully understands the terms and conditions set out in this Agreement.

Signed in BURNABY, B.C.
this 18th day of NOVEMBER, 2023.



Kuljit Singh Uppal

Signed in Coquitlam, B.C.
this 22nd day of November, 2023.



Ana R. Mohammed, Commissioner