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Cedar Hill fired a teacher after an investigation. D-FW schools continued to hire him.

Rodney Ingram was previously fired and reprimanded after an investigation concluded his interactions with a female student violated the Educator's Code of Conduct

By [Lauren Nutall](#)

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North Crowley Panthers defensive coordinator Rodney Ingram puts his unit through drills during their first practice of the 2025 season on Thursday, Aug. 7, 2025, in Fort Worth.

BOB BOOTH / VIA FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM

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In 2020, a North Texas high school teacher and football coach was terminated from Cedar Hill High School for violating the Educator’s Code of Conduct, resulting in a public sanction on his teaching certificate. He has since worked at three different schools.

His hiring — and termination — raises questions about how school administrators vet educators, particularly those with documented past disciplinary incidents.

Rodney Ingram, 51, is a longtime educator and football coach in the Dallas-Fort Worth area who has helped guide two schools to state championships, most recently the North Crowley Panthers, who went undefeated last season with Ingram as assistant coach.

He’s been described by state officials as a “dedicated” social studies teacher, and has taught world geography, world history and U.S. history for over the past 20 years.

The Education Lab

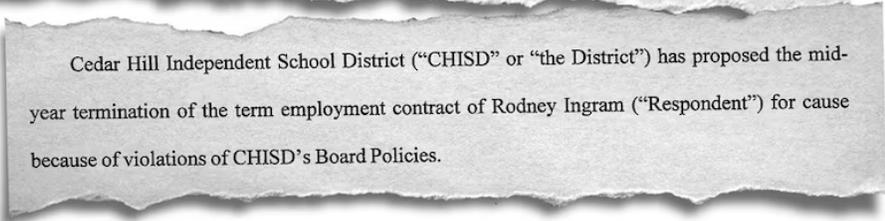
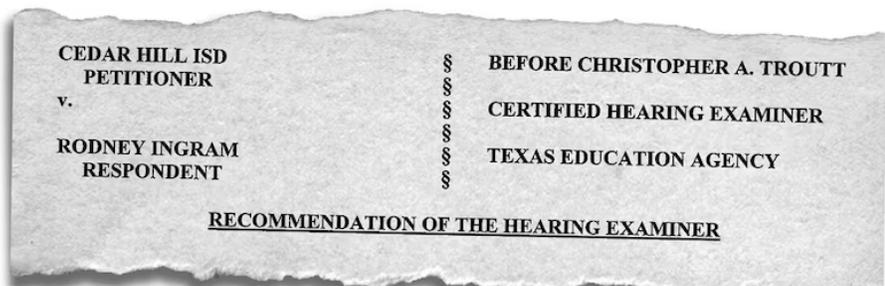
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State investigative records show he was fired from his position at Cedar Hill in 2020 after an investigation by the district uncovered private messages he exchanged from 2014-2016 with a female student -- beginning when she was a junior -- that violated the Educator’s Code of Conduct.



Excerpts from Texas Education Agency hearing examiner’s report
MICHAEL HOGUE

The messages were brought to light after the girl, who graduated in 2016, reported him to the district in June 2019, alleging the two began a sexual relationship roughly three months after she graduated.

The district did not cite the alleged sexual relationship, which Ingram denies, as a reason for his termination, according to records, because she was 18 years old by that time and no longer a student.

In an interview with *The Dallas Morning News*, Ingram acknowledged he could have handled certain things better, but said some accusations were overstated or unfounded. He described a positive relationship with his former students at Cedar Hill, including the girl who reported him. She is not identified in public documents.

“I taught her in social studies, you know, and had a good relationship with all of my students,” he said. “They always viewed me as somewhat of a father figure.”

A subsequent investigation by state education officials – requested by Ingram – affirmed his termination and he received a reprimand on his teaching certificate.

Details of Ingram’s alleged actions and his termination from Cedar Hill are drawn from the public independent hearing examiner’s report from the Texas Education Agency as well as public information requests and interviews.

This state disciplinary report, which described the allegations that led to his termination and reprimand, is readily available for anyone, including employers to examine and use to question an applicant such as Ingram.

Ingram was hired for the next school year (2020) by Texans Can Academy’s Dallas Grant East campus, then in 2021 by Uplift Hampton Preparatory and in

2022, by North Crowley.

His time at North Crowley

The News began reporting on the situation after it was made aware Ingram was the subject of another investigation – this time at North Crowley. District officials would not disclose the nature of the allegation but did acknowledge Ingram was placed on administrative leave before being cleared to return to duty.

The allegation, Ingram told *The News*, stemmed from a video that circulated around campus of a bald man engaged in a sexual act with a minor.

“There was a completely false, unsubstantiated claim,” said Ingram, who is bald. “I was fine with being placed on leave because, again, I feel very confident that this was completely false and erroneous.”

The district investigated and cleared Ingram to return to duty. *The News* asked district officials for a copy of any complaint that alleged Ingram had engaged in sexual contact with a student. The district forwarded the request to the state attorney general. The request is still before the AG.

In mid-August, a few weeks after he was cleared for duty, Ingram resigned, citing “personal reasons.”

“I had a great relationship with the coaches as well as the students,” he told *The News*. “I mean I had just received the campus Teacher of the Year honor for the 2024-2025 school year. I’ve always had a very positive interaction with coaches and students. We were in good standing, football team wise. I started there three years ago, and under the head coach Ray Gates, we were able to build a program to winning the state championship last year. And again, my status as both an educator and a coach was unblemished, no issues whatsoever.”

Gates and Ingram were both previously employed at Cedar Hill. Ingram learned of the position at Crowley through Gates, according to Ingram’s personnel files.

Ingram said the complaint was submitted by a security guard at the school who overheard a student say the person in the video looked like him. The district told *The News* it was an anonymous complaint.

The district did not respond to questions about the circumstances of his departure but did confirm Ingram is no longer employed by Crowley ISD.

His time at Cedar Hill

The incident at Cedar Hill High School began in 2014.

Ingram was employed as an AP World History teacher and assistant varsity coach at Cedar Hill, where he taught the girl as a sophomore.

Many of their messages, according to the state investigation, were outside of Ingram's scope of responsibilities and their communication continued even as she moved grades.

In one conversation, she confided in Ingram about her history with self-harm, an interaction he never reported to the district.

Excerpts from Texas Education Agency hearing examiner's report

MICHAEL HOGUE

She told Ingram she had stopped self-harming – the fulfillment of a promise she said she had made to him.

“I am so proud of you,” he messaged. “Love you!”

“Love you too!” she responded. “And don't forget to wish me a happy birthday next month!”

“When is ur birthday,” he asked. “Mine is the 12th.”

Excerpts from Texas Education Agency hearing examiner's report

MICHAEL HOGUE

"I never knew," she replied. "And 22nd!"

Ingram spoke to *The News* about the messages and his failure to report the girl's comments concerning self-injury.

"I acknowledge that I probably should have taken a different course of action," Ingram said, "but I was afraid that this young lady who had attempted self-harm before on some other levels would actually follow through with her claim" if he contacted a counselor and her parents were informed.

In another private message that was discovered during the district's investigation, he called the girl "baby."

Ingram told *The News* the comments were taken out of context and his comments were intended in a supportive manner.

"I was raised by my grandmother so those were terms of endearment that I heard growing up," he said. "I was kind of old school in the way I talk. It was nothing sexual about that, right? I told all of my students, male and female, because my classroom was like a family."

In the state investigative report, Ingram acknowledged more messages existed between the two that did not appear in the proceedings.

The report also said Ingram "admitted that his relationship with Student A when she was a CHISD student went beyond the boundaries of an appropriate professional educator-student relationship."

Excerpts from Texas Education Agency hearing examiner's report

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“I acknowledge that my role as an educator, I didn’t follow that and, and I was wrong in that, but it was coming from a good place, from a pure place of heart that I was truly trying to help her and not cause harm if you would,” he told *The News*. “And so it was a bad judgment on that and I acknowledged that during the hearing.”

The student graduated from high school in June 2016 and reported she and Ingram began exchanging sexually explicit messages approximately 45 days later, in August.

By September, she said, they had begun a sexual relationship.

The state investigator’s report said the student provided text messages to the district, “along with other evidence that indicated that Student A and Respondent had a sexual relationship, albeit a contentious one, that lasted several years.”

That evidence included not only the text messages but also emails and photos.

Ingram told *The News* the messages were fabricated and the evidence that was presented in the hearing was “false.”

He also said the victim alleged a sexual relationship because he rebuffed her advances after she graduated. He noted that she later told state investigators that texts and emails messages were fabricated, which is acknowledged in the agency’s report.

State investigators determined the student’s testimony and evidence were

substantial, and the suggestion the material presented was fabricated was “far-fetched.” That said, they acknowledged the student provided differing testimony that ultimately could not be “given any real credibility, either to prove or disprove that there was a sexual relationship.”

When the student came forward in 2019, three years after she graduated, the district began its internal investigation and placed Ingram on administrative leave.

The district’s Acting Superintendent of Schools Kellie Spencer reported the accusations against Ingram to the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC), the office within the TEA that oversees the professional standards of public school educators.

While suspended, Ingram was barred from all district campuses and properties and ordered to not communicate with anybody from his campus without permission. He was also prohibited from contacting the girl who reported him.

The district said Ingram violated each of these directives, in some cases multiple times, over the course of its investigation, earning two reprimand letters from the district.

Ingram acknowledged to *The News* that he violated directives but said in each instance he had a legitimate reason. For example, he said he was reprimanded for watching a football practice where his son, a student at Cedar Hill, was participating.

By the end of the investigation, the Board of Trustees unanimously voted to terminate the district’s contract with Ingram, effectively ending his tenure at Cedar Hill ISD after almost 20 years.

Upon termination, Ingram continued to be subject to a criminal trespass warning that was part of the district’s one-year ban from all CHISD properties that had been issued nearly five months earlier.

In its final decision, the school board cited a violation of its code of ethics, insubordinate conduct, Ingram’s misrepresentation of his relationship with the girl while under investigation and the violation of district policies as reasons for his removal.

Excerpts from Texas Education Agency hearing examiner's report

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Furthermore, the SBEC issued him an inscribed reprimand, which is a permanent sanction that appears on an educator's teaching certificate and shows a teacher has been formally disciplined by the state board.

Hirings and application discrepancies

Ingram's alleged misconduct at Cedar Hill is contained in the state investigative report that came at Ingram's request after he felt he was wrongly terminated. The state investigative report is public — available for any future employer to see.

Texans Can Academy, which hired Ingram for the next school year, declined to comment, stating no one who was in its human resources department at the time of Ingram's hiring is currently there.

Uplift Hampton did not agree to an interview, but shared a statement via email, which said Ingram passed all state and federal background checks and that it was aware of the state reprimand on his teaching certificate but did not feel it was disqualifying. The school told *The News* Ingram's brief employment at Uplift was without incident and that he resigned voluntarily.

The school did tell *The News* Ingram listed on his employment application that he had "never been involuntarily terminated from another school district" and "never resigned from a position in lieu of termination." He instead said his reason for leaving Cedar Hill was for "career advancement."

The News, through a public records request, obtained Ingram's application to North Crowley and found he again stated he had never been previously terminated and left Cedar Hill for a "career change."

Ingram also indicated he had never "failed to have an employment contract renewed" on his application. *The News* obtained Cedar Hill's official letter issued to Ingram that terminated his contract with the district "effective

immediately” following the state investigation, which Ingram received in January 2020.

Ingram told *The News* he had not been aware that the non-renewal of his contract at Cedar Hill was synonymous with a termination.

“That was on me but it definitely wasn’t in the spirit of trying to be deceitful or trying to withhold information,” he said. “That was just, again, an error on my part because I thought I was being as truthful and honest about the whole scenario.”

It’s unclear whether any of the schools took steps to verify that Ingram had never been previously terminated or were aware of the specific allegations at Cedar Hill, despite both pieces of information being available online by using a name search under the Commissioner and Local Hearings page on the TEA’s website.

The News reached out to Crowley ISD four times to either request an interview or seek answers to specific questions that were provided. District officials provided some information through email responses and requested public records.

In one of those emails, *The News* presented the district with a copy of the state investigation and requested an interview to learn whether the district was aware of Ingram’s alleged misconduct at Cedar Hill and that he was previously fired when it decided to hire him and, if so, its reason for continuing to employ him.

A Crowley district representative at first asked when they would need to respond. Two days later, the district sent the following statement:

“Rodney Ingram is no longer employed by Crowley ISD. The district follows all applicable laws, policies and procedures in addressing personnel matters. Upon the advice of counsel, we do not discuss personnel matters.”

The district provided no further details.

The impact of an inscribed reprimand

Ingram had no trouble finding further teaching positions -- almost immediately.

According to the TEA, while vetting processes differ across districts, on a state level, there are standard tasks administrators are advised to complete before hiring a candidate, such as checking an educator’s teaching certification.

A district’s decision to hire an educator with a public reprimand on their certificate is discretionary but, if they are found to have one, according to the TEA, its intended impact is to prompt administrators to look further into the

educator's background.

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This can be achieved by contacting an employee's prior employers or requesting information directly from the agency, as *The News* did.

In some instances such as Ingram's, an educator's disciplinary history may already be publicly available on the TEA's website.

The News asked Cedar Hill officials if any of Ingram's subsequent employers contacted the district to inquire about the circumstances of his exit or his reprimand. Cedar Hill responded in a statement that it had no record in Ingram's personnel files "indicating that anyone in CHISD gave him a reference."

On Ingram's hiring materials at Crowley, district officials note they conducted a reference check with his most current supervisor at Uplift and they "Googled" Ingram as well as searched social media sites, per its hiring protocol.

It's unclear whether they sought to find further details regarding Ingram's state sanction or verified the information he listed on his application.

The News reached out to various school districts via email to see how they would handle an applicant with an inscribed reprimand.

One representative from Azle ISD, which serves a portion of Tarrant County, said in an email that its human resources department thoroughly reviews application information before making any hiring recommendations and that "any certification with an inscribed reprimand would require further investigation."

A representative from Carroll ISD, on behalf of its human resources director, said the district “would not have hired someone with this work history.”

Ingram isn't sure whether he will return to teaching. He said he fears the investigations and accusations have caused him to be blacklisted.

That decision will be up to him and any future employer. He has a valid teaching certificate.

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