

Utah teacher no longer employed after advocating vaccination and telling students she hates Trump

Alpine School District said that kind of behavior “will not be tolerated.”

By Courtney Tanner

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A teacher is no longer working at a Utah high school after she was recorded sounding off to her students in a profane speech that jumped from former President Donald Trump to the COVID-19 vaccine, climate change and the LGBTQ community.

The video of her sharing her opinions in front of a class at Lehi High School on Tuesday was shared widely on social media. And by Wednesday morning — the second day of the new school year — Alpine School District in Utah County confirmed that she wasn't employed there any more.

Spokesman David Stephenson said in a statement that he cannot comment on personnel matters and would not say whether the teacher was fired, only that she was not working there now. She had originally been put on leave Tuesday while the district investigated.

“This behavior is inappropriate, not reflective of the professional conduct and decorum we expect of our teachers, and will not be tolerated,” Stephenson said.

Attempts to reach the teacher were unsuccessful. The Salt Lake Tribune has decided not to name her.

[The video of her address was posted online](#) by Eric Moutsos, the leader of the conservative Utah Business Revival organization that has [protested against pandemic-related health measures](#). He wrote: “Thank you to the student who filmed this. You're a hero.”

The Tribune confirmed it with one of three students who captured the footage, Zane Storms. The four-minute clip from Storms begins with the teacher telling her students that she would be “super proud” if they got the COVID-19 vaccine.

“We'll just keep getting variants over and over and over until people get vaccinated. It's never going to end,” she said. “It could end in five seconds if people would get vaccinated.”

Some of the students push back. Then the teacher starts talking about Trump.

“I hate Donald Trump,” she said. “I'm going to say. I don't care what you all think. Trump sucks.”

Some students giggle. A few mention former President Barack Obama. At least one asks her why she hates Trump.

“He's a sexual predator,” she comments, noting [the accusations against Trump for sexual assault](#). She continues: “He's a literal moron.”

One kid can be heard responding, “This is a chemistry class.”

The teacher then says: “Go tattle on me to the freakin' admin. They don't give a crap.”

She urges students, too, to turn off Fox News and think for themselves. She says they don't have to listen to their parents, including about the vaccine if they want to get it. She tells them that most of their parents are “dumber than you.”

The teacher says students not getting the vaccine puts her and her family at risk. “That's rude,” she says. “And I'm not going to pretend like it's not. So don't ask me to.”

A student speaks in support, adding, “You have all the right to.”

The teacher responds: “That's damn right.”

She then notes that they should avoid talking about politics but points to a student and says “you asked me. ... You can believe what you want to believe, but keep it quiet in here because I'm probably going to make fun of you.”

She calls one student “pathetic,” too, and tells him that if he doesn't believe in climate change then he can “get the hell out.”

Teachers in Utah are expected, under code, not to talk about personal beliefs in the classroom. [The law states](#): “School officials and employees may not use their positions to endorse, promote, or disparage a

particular religious, denominational, sectarian, agnostic, or atheistic belief or viewpoint.” The same is repeated for political opinions.

[The ACLU of Utah has also noted in its guide for educators](#), “School districts can regulate employees’ speech made in the course of their duties: what you say or communicate inside the classroom or in school settings is considered speech on behalf of the school district, so that speech is not protected by the First Amendment.”

Several conservative groups — both here in Utah and nationwide — have picked up the video and spoken out against the teacher, accusing her of indoctrination. State Sen. Todd Weiler, R-Woods Cross, also wrote, in part, on Twitter: “I was very sad to see this very unprofessional conduct in the classroom from the first day of school today in Lehi.”

She is not the first teacher to face repercussions for talking about vaccines in the classroom. An educator in Wisconsin was [also put on leave in May after calling a student a “jerk” and a “dummy”](#) for wearing his mask below his chin.

Storms, one of the students who recorded a video, said he thought the discussion was inappropriate. “I came into her class to learn chemistry not a political lesson on opinions,” he said in an email to The Tribune.

But some students in the class also defended the teacher, and some on social media are speaking in support of her statements. After the teacher talks about protecting LGBTQ students, one girl responds: “I think I love you even more now.”

The teacher said that she organized the gay-straight alliance at Lehi High.

“If you’re a homophobe, get the hell out,” she says. “Because I am the GSA faculty advisor and I love gay people, all LGBTQIA+ motherf---ers. If you don’t like it, get out.”

She continues: “If I hear you say a damn word against any of them, I will open a can and I will make your life a living hell. And they know it. If you say shiz to any LGBTQ kid in this school, I will hear about it and you will be in trouble.”

The teacher doesn’t appear to have a disciplinary record. But she has been outspoken before.

In 2016, she defended a colleague who was banned from Lehi High for saying “condom” and “boobs” while substituting in a math class.

[The teacher said then, in support](#): “I can honestly understand certain students, especially here in Lehi and Utah County, being slightly offended, but to the extent that they have taken this discipline is ridiculous.”