

**BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

|                                 |   |                   |
|---------------------------------|---|-------------------|
| In the Matter of the Revocation | ) |                   |
|                                 | ) |                   |
| Or Suspension of the            | ) | <b>ORDER OF</b>   |
|                                 | ) |                   |
| Educator Certificate of         | ) | <b>SUSPENSION</b> |
|                                 | ) |                   |
| Shannon L. Cook                 | ) |                   |
|                                 | ) |                   |
| <u>Certificate 252560</u>       | ) |                   |

**SUMMARY OF THE CASE**

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on March 13, 2013. On February 1, 2013, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent notice to Ms. Shannon L. Cook of the possible suspension or revocation of her educator certificate by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested. Ms. Cook received the notice letter on February 5, 2013, as evidenced by a postal receipt bearing her signature. Ms. Cook did not request a hearing in this matter and is in default. After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to suspend Ms. Cook's educator certificate for a period of two years, commencing on March 13, 2013, and ending on March 12, 2015.

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

Ms. Cook holds a professional educator certificate and has over nine years of teaching experience. She has no prior record of disciplinary action with the State Board. Ms. Cook had been employed by the Aiken County School District (District) since August 10, 2010, as a special education teacher and the 504 coordinator at Midland Valley High School (School). Ms. Cook resigned from the District, effective October 2, 2012, during a review of irregularities in internal paper work regarding her responsibilities as the 504 coordinator for the School.

The District conducted an investigation into allegations that Ms. Cook forged teachers' initials on District Form 17 of 504 documents. District Form 17 is a distribution form utilized by the 504 coordinator at the beginning of the school year to distribute 504 accommodation plans for students in the respective teachers' classes,

and/or other staff members with the need to know, regarding those accommodations. Ms. Cook admitted during the investigation that she had forged teachers' initials on Form 17 and that she had neglected to distribute those accommodations plans to persons with the need to know, as required by District policy and federal law. Ms. Cook had received proper training and knew the District process.

On February 1, 2013, the SCDE sent notice to Ms. Cook of the possible suspension or revocation of her educator certificate by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested. On February 5, 2013, Ms. Cook received the notice letter as evidenced by a postal receipt bearing her signature. Ms. Cook did not request a hearing within the time specified in the notice and is in default. After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to suspend Ms. Cook's educator certificate for a period of two years, commencing on March 13, 2013, and ending on March 12, 2015.

#### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

The State Board has jurisdiction in this matter, pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-150 (2004) and § 59-25-160 (2004).

"The State Board of Education may, for just cause, either revoke or suspend the certificate of any person." S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-150 (2004), S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2004), 24 S.C. Code Regs. 43-58 (2011). Just cause includes, inter alia, unprofessional conduct, dishonesty, and any conduct which evidences unfitness for teaching, S. C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2004); 24 S.C. Code Regs. 43-58 (2011). The State Board finds that the information presented supports its determination that Ms. Cook engaged in unprofessional conduct, dishonesty, and demonstrated evident unfitness for position for which employed as a result of her forging initials of teachers on Form 17 and neglecting to distribute the accommodations plans. The State Board finds that just cause exists to suspend Mr. Cook's educator certificate 252560 for a period of two years, beginning March 13, 2013, and ending on March 12, 2015.

Now, therefore, it is ordered that the State Board suspends the educator certificate of Shannon L. Cook, certificate 252560. The suspension of Ms. Cook's educator certificate 252560 shall be reported to the NASDTEC Clearinghouse and all South Carolina school districts within thirty days from the date of this order with the reasons

stated as unprofessional conduct, dishonesty, and evident unfitness for position for which employed.

If Ms. Cook wishes to have her educator certificate reinstated at the end of the suspension period, she shall make a written request to the SCDE's Office of Educator Certification, Recruitment and Preparation. Ms. Cook shall meet all certification requirements in effect at the time she requests reinstatement and shall be responsible for the payment of the applicable reinstatement fee.

**AND IT IS SO ORDERED.**

South Carolina State Board of Education

By: David W. Blackmon  
Dr. David Blackmon, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina

March 13, 2013