

## BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

|                                 |   |                             |
|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| In the Matter of the Suspension | ) |                             |
|                                 | ) |                             |
| of the Educator Certificate of  | ) | <b>ORDER OF SUSPENSION</b>  |
|                                 | ) |                             |
| Cristi Michelle Stiles,         | ) | <b>(BREACH OF CONTRACT)</b> |
|                                 | ) |                             |
| <u>Certificate 235255</u>       | ) |                             |

### SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on February 10, 2016. On December 23, 2015, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) attempted to serve Cristi Michelle Stiles a notice of her right to a hearing regarding the possible suspension of her South Carolina educator certificate, by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, delivery restricted to addressee. Ms. Stiles received the notice on December 26, 2015, as evidenced by a signed postal receipt bearing her signature. She did not request a hearing in this matter and is now in default.

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to suspend Ms. Stiles' educator certificate for a period of one year, commencing on February 10, 2016, and ending on February 9, 2017.

### FINDINGS OF FACT

This case concerns a formal complaint by the Greenville County School District (District) recommending the suspension of the educator certificate of Cristi Michelle Woods for breach of contract. The State Board has jurisdiction in this matter, pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-150 (Rev. 2004) and S.C. Code Ann § 59-25-530 (Rev. 2004).

Ms. Stiles holds a valid South Carolina educator certificate and has over eight years of teaching experience. On April 24, 2015, Ms. Stiles signed a Contractual Agreement with the District to serve as an English teacher at Blue Ridge High School for the 2015-2016 school year. Ms. Stiles submitted a letter of resignation on November 23, 2015, effective December 11, 2015. On December 2, 2015, the District Director of Professional Employment informed Ms. Stiles that her resignation did not meet the guidelines provided in Board Policy GBO and that she had engaged in unprofessional conduct by failing to comply with the provisions of her contract

without having been duly released from her contract. The District informed Ms. Stiles that a formal complaint would be filed with the State Board of Education.

On December 15, 2015, the District Board of Trustees found that Ms. Stiles failed to comply with the provisions of her contract without the written consent of the District Board of Trustees and that her behavior constituted a breach of her employment contract with the District. The District voted to report Ms. Stiles' breach of contract to SCDE and the State Board. On December 18, 2015, the District reported this matter to SCDE requesting that the State Board suspend Ms. Stiles' educator certificate.

On December 23, 2015, the SCDE attempted to serve Ms. Stiles with notice of her right to a hearing regarding the possible suspension of her South Carolina educator certificate, by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, delivery restricted to addressee. She received the notice on December 26, 2015, as evidenced by the signed postal receipt bearing her signature. Ms. Stiles has failed to request a hearing within the required time period and is in now in default.

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to suspend Ms. Stiles educator certificate for a period of one year, commencing on February 10, 2016, and ending on February 9, 2017.

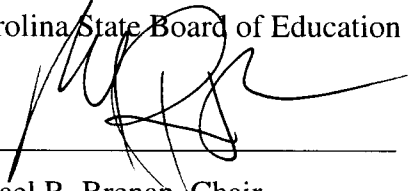
### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

"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 (Rev. 2004). Just cause includes, *inter alia*, "willful violation of the rules and regulations of the State Board of Education" and "unprofessional conduct." S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (3) and (4) (Rev. 2004). Pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-530 (Rev. 2004), "any teacher who fails to comply with the provisions of his contract without the written consent of the school board shall be deemed guilty of unprofessional conduct." 24 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 43-58 (2) and (14) (2011), provides that the State Board of Education has the legal authority, *inter alia*, to suspend a certificate for "wilful neglect of duty" and "failure to comply with the provisions of a contract without the written consent of the local school board." The State Board finds that the evidence presented demonstrates that Ms. Stiles breached her contract and engaged in unprofessional conduct, wilfully neglected her duty, and failed to comply with the provisions of her contract without the

written consent of the Greenville County School District. The evidence presented further supports the State Board's determination that just cause exists to suspend the educator certificate of Cristi Michelle Stiles, certificate 235255, for a period of one year, commencing on February 10, 2016, and ending on February 9, 2017. If Ms. Stiles 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 Services, and shall meet all certification requirements in effect at the time she requests reinstatement. Ms. Stiles shall also pay the applicable reinstatement fee. The suspension of Ms. Stiles' educator certificate 235255 shall be reported to the NASDTEC Clearinghouse and all South Carolina school districts within thirty days from the date of this order.

**AND IT IS SO ORDERED.**

South Carolina State Board of Education

By:   
Michael R. Brennan, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina  
February 10, 2016