

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of Revocation)
)
of the Educator Certificate of)
)
James Clayton Olsen,)
)
Certificate 205011)
_____)

ORDER OF REVOCATION

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on February 14, 2017. On December 1, 2016, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent notice to James Clayton Olsen, by regular and certified mail, informing him that the State Board would meet to make a determination regarding the possible suspension or revocation of his educator certificate on the grounds of unprofessional conduct. Mr. Olsen received the written notice on December 6, 2016, as evidenced by a signed postal receipt bearing his signature. Mr. Olsen did not request a hearing in this matter and is now in default. After considering the evidence presented concerning Mr. Olsen's unprofessional conduct, the State Board voted to revoke Mr. Olsen's educator certificate 205011, effective February 14, 2017.

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

Mr. Olsen holds a valid South Carolina professional educator certificate and has fourteen (14) years of teaching experience. He has no prior record of disciplinary action with the State Board. Mr. Olsen had been employed with the Beaufort County School District (District) since 2002. He was assigned as a fifth grade teacher at Coosa Elementary School (School) for the 2015-2016 school year.

On June 8, 2016, the District notified the SCDE that Mr. Olsen resigned from his employment following an investigation into allegations that he had repeatedly allowed his female students to sit his lap during class. A teacher at the school observed his behavior and reported it to the school principal in May of 2016. When confronted with these allegations, Mr. Olsen initially denied the charges. He later admitted that his denial was a lie and that he had allowed the female students to sit in his lap. In December of 2015, a teacher had observed a female student sitting on Mr. Olsen's lap during class. The principal also witnessed Mr. Olsen's

inappropriate behavior with the female student. The principal verbally warned him that his behavior violated District policies and provided him with clear direction to cease allowing female students to sit in his lap.

During the investigation, Mr. Olsen brought up his military history with the School representatives. In an interview, Mr. Olsen claimed to have killed people in combat during his time in the service. He later admitted this was also a lie, stating that he has “never been in combat, [was] always in [the] wrong unit or base.” Mr. Olsen admitted to these lies and did apologize for them. He ultimately resigned from the District, effective June 2, 2016.

Further evidence of Mr. Olsen’s unprofessional conduct can be found in the letter of reprimand he received on March 16, 2015, from his principal. The letter of reprimand details an incident on March 10, 2015, between Mr. Olsen and another teacher where Mr. Olsen loudly stated “horse crap, you don’t read your emails, you’ve always got an excuse” in front of fourth grade students. The letter of reprimand references this conduct as the second occurrence of this type that year.

After considering the evidence presented concerning Mr. Olsen’s unprofessional conduct, the State Board voted to revoke Mr. Olsen’s educator certificate 205011, effective February 14, 2017.

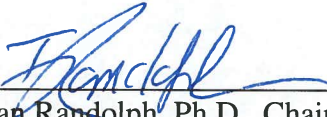
CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

“The South Carolina Board of Education may, for just cause, revoke or suspend the certificate of any person.” S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-150 (2004); S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2004). Just cause includes unprofessional conduct. S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2004). The State Board finds that the evidence presented demonstrates that Mr. Olsen engaged in unprofessional conduct as a result of his inappropriate behavior with students, inappropriate comments to a teacher in the presence of students, dishonesty during the district’s investigation, and failure to follow a directive of his principal during his employment as a teacher with the Beaufort County School District.

The State Board finds that the evidence presented by the SCDE supports its decision that just cause exists to revoke educator certificate 205011, issued in the name of James Clayton Olsen. The revocation of Mr. Olsen’s educator certificate 205011 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: 
Ivan Randolph, Ph.D., Chair

Columbia, South Carolina
February 14, 2017