

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the)
)
Suspension of the)
)
Educator Certificate of)
)
Tiffany B. Vargo)
)
Certificate 209912)

ORDER OF SUSPENSION

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on March 14, 2017. On January 25, 2017, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) notified Tiffany B. Vargo of her right to a hearing regarding the possible suspension of her South Carolina Educator Certificate 209912 via certified mail, return receipt, restricted delivery, and regular mail. Ms. Vargo received the notice on January 30, 2017, as evidenced by a signed postal receipt bearing her signature. Ms. Vargo did not request a hearing and is in default. After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to suspend Ms. Vargo's educator certificate for a period of two (2) years, commencing on March 14, 2017, and ending on March 13, 2019.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Ms. Vargo holds a valid South Carolina Educator Certificate and has over fourteen (14) years of teaching experience. She began employment with the Horry County School District (District) in 2003 and was assigned as a home bound special education teacher at St. James High School (School) for the 2015-2016 school year. Ms. Vargo's unprofessional conduct was reported to the SCDE by District Superintendent, Rick Maxey, Ph.D., on April 6, 2016. Dr. Maxey reported that Ms. Vargo had been arrested for Grand Larceny, value more than \$2,000 but less than \$10,000 and that Ms. Vargo had been on administrative leave due to job performance issues related to not fulfilling homebound instruction services to students and submitting information as if the hours were complete. Ms. Vargo had failed to report her arrest to the District. The Fifteenth Judicial Circuit Solicitor's Office dismissed the criminal charge on July 15, 2016.

At the time of her arrest on March 1, 2016, Ms. Vargo was already on administrative leave from the District. On April 13, 2015, the District had placed Ms. Vargo on administrative leave following allegations of unprofessional conduct. After completing the investigation, the District determined that Ms. Vargo had falsified travel records and time sheets relating to homebound instructional services. She also failed to follow the directive of her supervisors after she was instructed not to provide homebound services until the end of the regular school day. Ms. Vargo admitted to being compensated for homebound services to students that she failed to provide. The District terminated her employment, effective April 15, 2016.

Ms. Vargo was being closely monitored by the District after a previous incident lead to a reprimand on October 18, 2013. An investigation had found evidence to substantiate allegations that Ms. Vargo had provided false information on student records.

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to suspend Ms. Vargo's educator certificate for a period of two (2) years, commencing on March 14, 2017, and ending on March 13, 2019.

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 (2004); S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (Supp. 2016). Just cause includes unprofessional conduct and dishonesty. S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (Supp. 2016). The State Board finds that the evidence presented by the SCDE demonstrates that Ms. Vargo engaged in unprofessional conduct and dishonesty as a result of her failure to provide homebound services to students and her falsification of travel records, time sheets and student records. Ms. Vargo also failed to report her arrest to the District in accordance with District policy. Accordingly, the evidence presented supports the State Board's determination that just cause exists to suspend the educator certificate of Tiffany B. Vargo, educator certificate 209912, for a for a period of two (2) years, commencing on March 14, 2017, and ending on March 13, 2019.

If Ms. Vargo 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. Vargo shall also be responsible for the payment of the applicable reinstatement fee. The

suspension of Ms. Vargo's educator certificate 209912 shall be reported to the NASDTEC Clearinghouse and all South Carolina school districts within thirty (30) 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
March 14, 2017