

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of Suspension
of the Educator Certificate of
Mathew Scott Streiffert,
Certificate 286902

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ORDER OF SUSPENSION

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The State Board of Education (State Board) considered the matter on February 13, 2018. On December 15, 2017, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent a notice letter to Mr. Streiffert, informing him that the State Board would meet to make a determination regarding the possible disciplinary action of his educator certificate, by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, delivery restricted to addressee. Mr. Streiffert received the certified mail on December 20, 2017, as evidenced by the United States Postal Tracking System. Mr. Streiffert has not requested a hearing in this matter and, in a statement to the SCDE, indicates he accepts responsibility and will accept the decision of the State Board. After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to suspend Mr. Streiffert's educator certificate for a period of one year, commencing on February 13, 2018, and ending on February 12, 2019. Mr. Streiffert is also instructed to complete a SCDE approved course in ethics and boundary training prior to the reinstatement of his certificate.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Mr. Streiffert holds a valid South Carolina initial educator certificate and has less than one year of teaching experience. The Georgetown County School District (District) employed Mr. Streiffert as a chemistry teacher at the Georgetown High School (School).

On November 27, 2017, the District informed the SCDE that Mr. Streiffert had resigned from his employment with the District, following an investigation into allegations of inappropriate communications with a student in the District. The District investigation revealed Facebook messages between Mr. Streiffert and Jane Doe, a student in the District. The messages began after Mr. Streiffert sent a friend request to Jane Doe when she appeared in the website's "People You May Know" feature. Jane Doe accepted the request and Mr. Streiffert began

messaging her over the weekend of November 17, 2017. During the conversation, Jane Doe informed Mr. Streiffert that she was 17 years old and would need permission from her parents before meeting him in person. Mr. Streiffert agreed, but did not ask further questions. Jane Doe was a student at the other high school in the District. Jane Doe's legal guardian reported the communications to District personnel.

The District found that Mr. Streiffert's conduct violated the District policies outlined in Policies GBEB: Staff Conduct and GBEBB: Staff Conduct with Students. These policies were further detailed in a memo titled "Staff Interactions with Students." District records show a copy of the memo with Mr. Streiffert's signature, acknowledging he had read and understood the policies. On November 28, 2017, Mr. Streiffert resigned from his employment with the District.

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to suspend Mr. Streiffert's educator certificate for a period of one year, commencing on February 13, 2018, and ending on February 12, 2019. Mr. Streiffert is also instructed to complete a SCDE approved course in ethics and boundary training prior to the reinstatement of his certificate.

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 (2016); S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2016). Just cause includes unprofessional conduct. S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2016). The State Board finds that the evidence presented demonstrates that Mr. Streiffert engaged in unprofessional conduct as a result of his inappropriate communications with a student during his employment with the District. Accordingly, the evidence presented supports the State Board's determination that just cause exists to suspend the educator certificate of Mathew Scott Streiffert, Educator Certificate 286902, for a period of one year, commencing on February 13, 2018, and ending on February 12, 2019. Mr. Streiffert is also instructed to complete a SCDE approved course in ethics and boundary training prior to the reinstatement of his certificate.

If Mr. Streiffert wishes to have his educator certificate reinstated at the end of the suspension period, he shall make a written request to the SCDE's Office of Educator Services and shall meet all certification requirements in effect at the time he requests reinstatement. Mr. Streiffert shall also submit documentation for the completion of a SCDE approved course in ethics and boundary training and be responsible for the payment of the applicable reinstatement

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fee. The suspension of Mr. Streiffert's Educator Certificate 286902 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: Sharon Wall
Sharon Wall, Ed.D., Chair

Columbia, South Carolina
February 13, 2018