

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of Revocation)
)
of the Educator Certificate of)
)
Amy Munnerlyn Poston,)
)
)
Certificate 177678)

ORDER OF SUSPENSION

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The State Board of Education (State Board) considered the matter on January 9, 2018. On September 1, 2017, and October 27, 2017, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent notice letters to Ms. Poston, informing her that the State Board would meet to make a determination regarding the possible disciplinary action of her educator certificate, by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, delivery restricted to addressee. Ms. Poston received the notice letter on November 15, 2017, as evidenced by a signed postal receipt bearing her signature. She has not responded or requested a hearing in this matter and is in default. After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to suspend Ms. Poston's educator certificate for a period of one calendar year, commencing on January 9, 2018, and ending on January 8, 2019. Ms. Poston will also be required to complete SCDE approved course in professional boundary training prior to the reinstatement of her license.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Ms. Poston holds a valid South Carolina professional educator certificate and has over nineteen years of teaching experience. The Florence County School District Two (District) employed Ms. Poston as a language arts teacher at Hannah-Pamplico Elementary/Middle School (School). On April 22, 2016, the District placed Ms. Poston on administrative leave after allegations arose of her inappropriate communications with a male student. The District terminated her employment, effective October 27, 2016, following a hearing before the District Board of Trustees, after the District's investigation into allegations of Ms. Poston's violation of District policy in which she was communicating with students via text messaging.

The District Board of Trustees issued an order finding Ms. Poston was dishonest during the District's investigation of the allegations. The District also found Ms. Poston sent a large number of text messages to the student in violation of District policy. In the messages, Ms.

Poston told the student that she loved him and referred to him as “boo” and “babe.” Ms. Poston also made inappropriate remarks concerning other students in the text messages.

Ms. Poston argued that the issue was a family matter due to her husband’s familial relationship with the student. However, the District found that argument unpersuasive since the student’s parents reported the issue to local law enforcement.

On January 5, 2017, the District informed the SCDE that Ms. Poston had been terminated after allegations arose that she had engaged in unprofessional conduct by sending inappropriate communications with a student via text messaging. After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to suspend Ms. Poston’s educator certificate for a period of one calendar year, commencing on January 9, 2018, and ending on January 8, 2019. Ms. Poston will also be required to complete a SCDE approved course in professional boundary training.

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 and dishonesty. S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2016). The State Board finds the evidence presented demonstrates Ms. Poston engaged in unprofessional conduct as a result of her inappropriate communications with a student via text messaging and her dishonesty during the District investigation concerning the matter. Accordingly, the evidence presented supports the State Board’s determination that just cause exists to suspend the educator certificate of Amy Munnerlyn Poston, Educator Certificate 177678, for a for a period of one calendar year, commencing on January 9, 2018, and ending on January 8, 2019. Ms. Poston will also be required to complete a SCDE approved course in professional boundary training.

If Ms. Poston 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 provide documentation of her successful completion of the SCDE approved course in professional boundary training. She shall further meet all certification requirements in effect at the time she requests reinstatement and shall be responsible for the payment of the applicable reinstatement fee. The suspension of Ms. Poston’s Educator Certificate 177678 shall be reported

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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
Dr. Sharon Wall, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina
January 9, 2018