

**STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
BEFORE THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

In the Matter of	)	
	)	ORDER OF SUSPENSION
Michelle Milene Steward,	)	
	)	(UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT)
Educator Certificate #170029	)	
_____	)	

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on November 13, 2018. The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) notified Michelle Milene Steward (Steward) of her right to a hearing regarding the possible suspension of her South Carolina Educator Certificate via certified letter dated June 28, 2018. Steward timely requested a hearing and such was held on September 18, 2018. The hearing concerned Steward's alleged possession of alcohol on school grounds and her failure to perform her duties relating to student 504 plans.

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to suspend Steward's educator certificate until such time as she successfully meets the requirements set forth herein.

FINDINGS OF FACT

This is a matter involving unprofessional conduct in which Steward brought alcohol onto school premises in violation of Berkeley School District (District) Policy GBRAA and S. C. Code Ann. §61-6-4710 (2009). 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).

Steward holds a valid South Carolina Educator Certificate and was employed by the District as an Assistant Principal at West View Middle School for the 2017-2018 school year. On February 23, 2018, two cans of beer (one empty and one unopened) were found in her purse on school premises. Steward was subsequently terminated for possessing alcohol on school premises

and for performance concerns. This was Steward's second offense of this nature. On December 15, 2017, she was likewise found with beer in her purse on school premises. In addition, performance issues were addressed with her. Steward denies having an alcohol problem and only participates in an addiction program intermittently. Steward has not worked since her termination in March 2018.

After considering the evidence presented at the September 18, 2018 hearing, the State Board finds that the evidence presented demonstrates that Steward acted in an unprofessional manner. As such, the Board finds that just cause exists to suspend Steward's Educator Certificate #170029 effective immediately, until such time as she completes the following requirements:

- (1) Steward must enroll in an accredited alcohol and drug abuse treatment program and the provider will determine the type and frequency of alcohol drug testing from a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) approved laboratory to determine abstinence;
- (2) Steward must participate in meetings and/or counseling sessions pursuant to this treatment program as recommended, with a twelve (12) month period of sobriety preceding her application for reinstatement and must submit evidence of such from the treatment provider to the SCDE with her application;

Any future alcohol related offences incurred by Steward after reinstatement will result in revocation.

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). "Just cause" includes, *inter alia*, "unprofessional conduct." S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (4) (2004).

The State Board finds that the evidence presented demonstrates that Steward engaged in unprofessional conduct in possessing alcohol on school premises in violation of state law and District policy. Accordingly, the evidence presented supports the State Board's determination that just cause exists to suspend the Educator Certificate of Michelle Milene Steward, Educator

Certificate #170029, for a period commencing on November 13, 2018, and continuing until such time as Steward has completed the above cited requirements and provides proof of successful completion as prescribed above to SCDE. If Steward 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 Certification, Recruitment, and Preparation, and shall meet all certification requirements in effect at the time she requests reinstatement. Steward shall also pay all applicable reinstatement fees. The suspension of Steward's Educator Certificate #170029 shall be reported to the NASDTEC Clearinghouse and all South Carolina school districts within thirty (30) days from the date of this order with the reasons stated as "unprofessional conduct". Steward is cautioned that any future alcohol related offenses that she incurs after reinstatement will result in revocation of Steward's teaching certificate.

AND IT IS SO ORDERED.

South Carolina State Board of Education

By: Sharon Wall
Dr. Sharon Wall, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina
November 13, 2018