

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the
Disciplinary Action of the
Educator Certificate of
Heather George
Certificate 294291

ORDER OF SUSPENSION

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on August 9, 2022. On March 31, 2022, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent Heather George a notice via regular and certified mail of her right to a hearing regarding the possible suspension of her South Carolina educator certificate. Ms. George received the notice on April 4, 2022, as evidence by signed postal receipt. On April 21, 2022, the SCDE sent notice to Ms. George that this matter would be presented to the State Board on May 17, 2022, or as soon thereafter as is feasible. She has not contacted the SCDE to request a hearing and is now in default.

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to suspend Ms. George's educator certificate for a period of two years, retroactively beginning on January 1, 2022, and ending on December 31, 2023.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Ms. George holds a valid South Carolina professional educator certificate and has over eight years of educator experience. Ms. George does not have a record of teaching in South Carolina. She received her South Carolina educator certification through reciprocity with Arizona.

On November 18, 2021, the Superintendent of Public Instruction in North Carolina signed an order suspending Ms. George's North Carolina educator certification from January 1, 2022, through December 31, 2023. The suspension was due to Ms. George's failure to report an alleged sexual assault of a student. At the time of the incident, Ms. George served as a guidance counselor in North Carolina. She received a report of the allegations from two students on February 16, 2021. However, this information was not found until an investigation began on February 24, 2021, when an administrator learned of the allegations and reported the incident to law enforcement.

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to accept the Order of Suspension of Heather George's educator certificate 294291 for a period of two years, commencing on January 1, 2022, and ending on December 31, 2023.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

"The South Carolina Board of Education may, for just cause, either revoke or suspend the certificate of any person." S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-150 (Rev. 2004); S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2016). Just cause includes unprofessional conduct. S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2016); 24 S.C. Code Regs. 43-58 (2016). The State Board finds that the evidence presented demonstrates that Ms. George engaged in unprofessional conduct due to the suspension of her North Carolina educator certification and her failure to report an alleged sexual assault of a student. The State Board further finds that just cause exists for the suspension of Ms. George's educator certificate 212391 for a period of two years, commencing on January 1, 2022, and ending on December 31, 2023.

Now, therefore, it is hereby ordered that the educator certificate of Heather George educator certificate 294291, is suspended for a period of two years, commencing on January 1, 2022, and ending on December 31, 2023.

If Ms. George wishes to have the certificate reinstated at the conclusion of the period of suspension, she shall make a written request to the SCDE's Office of Educator Services. Ms. George shall be responsible for meeting all certification requirements in effect at the time she requests reinstatement and for the payment of any applicable reinstatement fees. The suspension of Ms. George's educator certificate 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

s/Alan Walters
Alan Walters, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina
August 9, 2022