

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the
Disciplinary Action of the
Educator Certificate of
Jacob Thomas Leslie
Certificate 276149

ORDER OF PUBLIC REPRIMAND

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on December 13, 2022. On September 28, 2021, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent Jacob Thomas Leslie a notice via regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, to Jacob Thomas Leslie concerning the pending action against educator certificate 276149. Mr. Leslie thereafter timely requested a hearing which was held on October 4, 2022. This matter is properly before the State Board pursuant to S.C Code Ann. § 59-25-150 (2020) and referred to a hearing officer pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. 59-5-70 (2020). After considering the evidence, testimony, and the report and recommendations presented, the State Board voted to publicly reprimand the certificate of Jacob Thomas Leslie, certificate 276149. Mr. Leslie shall also successfully complete the NASDTEC Prevention and Correction course prior to reinstatement of his certificate.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Mr. Leslie holds a South Carolina educator certificate and has over four years of educator experience. He has no prior record of disciplinary action with the State Board. At the time of the incident, Mr. Leslie was employed by the Spartanburg School District One (District) as a physical education teacher at T.E. Mabry Middle School (School).

During the 2018-19 school year, Mr. Leslie was reported to School administration for inappropriately touching students on their heads, necks, and shoulders. It was also reported he gave students full body hugs. Mr. Leslie also touched his teaching assistant by rubbing his back and touching his chest. The assistant asked Mr. Leslie to stop this behavior and that the touching was inappropriate. During the year, Mr. Leslie also shut himself in his locked office alone with a

student. This meeting was during class time, leaving the assistant to continue with the regular class after Mr. Leslie was unresponsive to knocks on the office door.

At the end of the 2018-19 school year, Mr. Leslie was reprimanded by the School's Principal and was counseled to limit physical contact with students to handshakes, fist bumps, and high fives. He was further instructed not be alone behind closed doors with students. After the 2019-20 school year began, it was reported that after the first week of the school year, Mr. Leslie again began rubbing the boys' heads, tickling their ears, and hugging them. It was further noted that Mr. Leslie was alone with students in the gym's laundry room. Shortly thereafter, a male student complained that Mr. Leslie had picked him up off his feet and called him "pretty boy." Two female students also complained about Mr. Leslie showing favoritism towards males in the class.

The Hearing Officer found substantial evidence that Mr. Leslie engaged in repeated inappropriate touching of male students, put himself in situations where he was alone with students, engaged in unwanted touching of his assistant, and engaged in the unequal treatment of male and female students. It was further noted that Mr. Leslie was insubordinate to his supervisors after the 2018-19 reprimand. The Hearing Officer did not find Mr. Leslie's defenses convincing or credible.

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board finds just cause to publicly reprimand Mr. Leslie's educator certificate. He shall successfully complete the NASDTEC Prevention and Correction course prior to reinstatement of his certificate.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

"The State Board may, for just cause, either revoke or publicly reprimand the certificate of any person." S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-150 (2020); S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2021). Just cause includes "unprofessional conduct, crime against the law of this State or the United State, evident unfitness for position for which employed, and sale or possession of narcotics." S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2020); S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 43-58 (2021). The State Board finds that the evidence presented demonstrates that Mr. Leslie engaged in unprofessional conduct due his insubordination and engaging in inappropriate conduct toward students. The State Board further finds that just cause

exists to publicly reprimand Jacob Thomas Leslie's educator certificate. Mr. Leslie shall also successfully complete the NASDTEC Prevention and Correction course prior to reinstatement of his certificate.

If Mr. Leslie wishes to have his certificate reinstated at the conclusion of the period of suspension, he shall make a written request to the SCDE's Office of Educator Services and submit proof of completion of the NASDTEC course. Mr. Leslie shall be responsible for meeting all certification requirements in effect at the time he requests reinstatement and for the payment of any applicable reinstatement fees. The suspension of Mr. Leslie'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.

Now, therefore it is hereby ordered that the educator certificate of Jacob Thomas Leslie, certificate 276149, is publicly reprimanded.

AND IT IS SO ORDERED.

South Carolina Board of Education

s/ Crystal F. Stapleton

Crystal F. Stapleton, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina

December 14, 2022