

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the
Disciplinary Action of the
Educator Certificate of
Vanessa Hewitt DeVore
Certificate 277154

**ORDER OF SUSPENSION
(BREACH OF CONTRACT)**

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on June 14, 2022. On February 15, 2022, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent Vanessa Hewitt DeVore a notice via regular and certified mail of her right to a hearing regarding the possible suspension of her South Carolina educator certificate. The SCDE has verified Vanessa Hewitt DeVore's address and the letter sent via regular mail has not been returned. Ms. DeVore contacted the SCDE but did not request a hearing. On May 20, 2022, the SCDE informed Ms. DeVore via regular mail that the State Board would meet on June 14, 2022, to consider action against her educator certification. Under the South Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure 5(b), Ms. DeVore has been given fair notice of constitutional due process. Ms. DeVore 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. DeVore's educator certificate for a period of one year, commencing June 14, 2022, and ending on June 13, 2023.

FINDINGS OF FACT

This case concerns a formal complaint School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties (District) seeking the suspension of the educator certificate of Ms. DeVore for breach of contract. The State Board has jurisdiction in this matter pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-150 (2018) and S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-530 (2018).

On June 16, 2021, Ms. DeVore signed a contractual agreement with the District to serve as an educator for the 2021-22 school year. On January 7, 2022, Ms. DeVore submitted her resignation to the District, effective January 12, 2022. In her resignation, Ms. DeVore cited a need to serve as a caregiver for multiple family members experiencing

medical problems. Ms. DeVore further maintained that her resignation was the product of an unsafe environment at the School. The District informed Ms. DeVore that she was not released from her contract and that she was expected to fulfill her duties. Ms. DeVore did not return to the District. The District Board voted to report Ms. DeVore's breach of contract to the SCDE on February 7, 2022. The District reported the matter to the SCDE on February 9, 2022.

After considering the evidence, the State Board finds that the evidence presented demonstrates that Ms. DeVore breached her contract with the District, and that just cause exists to suspend Ms. DeVore's certificate 277154 for a period of one year, commencing on June 14, 2022, and ending on June 13, 2023.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

"The South Carolina Board of Education may, for just cause, either revoke or suspend the certificate of any person." Just cause includes, *inter alia*, "unprofessional conduct" and "willful violation of the rules and regulations of the State Board of Education." S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (3) and (4) (2018). Pursuant to 24 S.C. Code Regs. 43-58 (2) and (14) (2018), the State Board of Education had the legal authority to suspend a certificate for "failure to comply with the provision of a contract without the written consent of the local school board." With respect to breach of contract, "any teacher who fails to comply with the provisions of his [or her] contract without written consent of the school board shall be deemed guilty of unprofessional conduct." S. C. Code Ann. § 59-25-530 (2018). "Upon formal complaint of the school board, substantiated by conclusive evidence, the state board shall suspend or revoke the teacher's certificate, for a period not to exceed one calendar year." *Id.*

The State Board finds that the evidence presented demonstrates that Vanessa Hewitt DeVore breached her contract without the consent and/or approval of the District. Accordingly, the evidence presented supports the State Board's determination that just cause exists to suspend the educator certificate of Vanessa Hewitt DeVore for a period of one year, commencing on June 14, 2022, and ending on June 13, 2023.

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If Ms. DeVore 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 shall meet all certification requirements in effect at the time he requests reinstatement. Ms. DeVore shall also pay the applicable reinstatement fee. The suspension of Vanessa Hewitt DeVore's educator certificate 277154 shall be reported to the NASDTEC Clearinghouse and all South Carolina school districts within thirty days from the date of this order, with the reason stated as "unprofessional conduct, breach of contract, willful neglect of duty, and failure to comply with the provisions of a contract without the written consent of the local school board."

AND IT IS SO ORDERED.

South Carolina State Board of Education

s/Alan Walters

Alan Walters, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina

June 14, 2022