

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the
Disciplinary Action of the
Educator Certificate of
Joni Catherine Ray
Certificate 227033

CONSENT ORDER OF PUBLIC REPRIMAND

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on March 8, 2022. On April 2, 2020, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent Joni Catherine Ray a notice letter by certified mail, return receipt, restricted delivery, and regular mail, regarding possible action against her educator certificate. Ms. Ray contacted the SCDE to request a hearing. Prior to a hearing being scheduled, Ms. Ray advised that she desired to waive her right to a hearing and pursue an alternative resolution in this matter. Ms. Ray has agreed to complete a SCDE-approved classroom management course within six months of the date of this order. After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to accept this Consent Order of Public Reprimand.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Ms. Ray holds a valid South Carolina professional educator certificate and has over three years of experience. At the time of the incident, Ms. Ray was employed by the Aiken County School District (District) as a preschool child interventionist at Belvedere Elementary School (School).

On August 27, 2019, Ms. Ray walked a student to the front office for early dismissal. Hours later, Ms. Ray contacted administration to report the student was missing after she forgot the student left school early. In the following weeks, other students went missing from Ms. Ray's classroom and were left behind during class transitions. On October 17, 2019, two students were left alone in Ms. Ray's classroom when Ms. Ray and the assistant left the room with the rest of the class. After this incident,

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s/JCR
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Ms. Ray did not return to work and was allowed to resign from the District, effective November 19, 2019.

Ms. Ray has agreed to waive her right to a hearing and resolve this disciplinary matter by entering into this Consent Order of Public Reprimand, subject to the following terms: (1) a Public Reprimand shall be issued by the State Board, (2) the Public Reprimand shall be reported to the NASDTEC Clearinghouse and all South Carolina school districts within thirty days from the date of this order, and (3) the Consent Order of Public Reprimand shall be posted on the SCDE's website and shall be maintained as a public record in the OGC. Further, Ms. Ray agrees to complete a classroom management course approved by the SCDE. After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to accept the Consent Order of Public Reprimand with the terms set forth above.

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 (2017); S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2017). Just cause includes unprofessional conduct. S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2017); 24 S.C. Code Regs. 43-58 (2017). The State Board finds that the evidence presented by the District would not support a conclusion that just cause exists to suspend or revoke the educator certificate of Joni Catherine Ray; however, the evidence that would be presented would support a conclusion that Ms. Ray engaged in unprofessional conduct as a result of improper supervision of students. The State Board further finds that just cause exists for the issuance of a Public Reprimand to Ms. Ray by the State Board.

NOW, THEREFORE, it is ordered that the State Board hereby issues a Public Reprimand to Joni Catherine Ray, certificate 227033. The Public Reprimand shall be reported to the NASDTEC Clearinghouse and all South Carolina school districts within thirty days from the date of this order with the grounds listed as "unprofessional

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conduct.” This Consent Order of Public Reprimand shall be posted on the SCDE’s web site and shall be maintained as a public record in the SCDE’s Office of General Counsel. Ms. Ray will submit proof of completion of the classroom management course within six months of 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
March 8, 2022

I, Joni Catherine Ray, S.C. Educator Certificate 227033, understand there has been an investigation concerning alleged violations of the laws and regulations governing the practice of educator certificate holders and that I have waived my right to a hearing in this matter. I understand that the terms set forth in this Consent Order of Public Reprimand are not subject to reconsideration, collateral attack or judicial review. I have read the Consent Order of Public Reprimand, consisting of three pages, and I freely and voluntarily agree to the terms set forth therein. I understand that this Order will be presented to the South Carolina State Board of Education for approval on Tuesday, March 8, 2022. I understand this Consent Order will not become effective until approved by the State Board and, if not approved, it shall not constitute an admission against interest in this proceeding or prejudice the right of the State Board to adjudicate this matter. If approved by the State Board, I give the SCDE permission to use my electronic signature in the style of “/S/ name” for required website publication.

s/Joni Catherine Ray
Joni Catherine Ray

2/18/2022
Date