

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the
Disciplinary Action of the
Educator Certificate of
Dawn Allison Strickland
Certificate 163844

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

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on June 13, 2023. On August 29, 2022, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent Dawn Allison Strickland a notice via regular and certified mail of her right to a hearing regarding the possible suspension of her South Carolina educator certificate. Dr. Strickland received the notice and timely requested a hearing on September 8, 2022. The hearing was scheduled for May 2, 2023. On April 29, 2023, Dr. Strickland contacted the SCDE to withdraw her hearing request. She is now being presented to the State Board as a default matter.

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to suspend Dr. Strickland's educator certificate for a period of one year, commencing on June 13, 2023, and ending on June 12, 2024.

FINDINGS OF FACT

This case concerns a formal complaint of the Greenville County School District (District) seeking the suspension of the educator certificate of Dr. Strickland 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 May 9, 2022, Dr. Strickland signed a contractual agreement with the District to serve as an educator for the 2022-23 school year. On July 14, 2022, Dr. Strickland submitted her resignation to the District. On August 15, 2022, the District informed Dr. Strickland she was not released from her contract. The District Board voted to report Dr. Strickland's breach of contract to the SCDE on August 23, 2022. The District reported the matter to the SCDE on August 26, 2022.

After considering the evidence, the State Board finds that the evidence presented demonstrates that Dr. Strickland breached her contract with the District, and that just cause exists to suspend Dr. Strickland's certificate 163844 for a period of one year, commencing on June 13, 2023, and ending on June 12, 2024.

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) (2020). Pursuant to 24 S.C. Code Regs. 43-58 (2) and (14) (2021), the State Board of Education has 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 (2020). "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 Dr. Strickland 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 Dawn Allison Strickland for a period of one year, commencing on June 13, 2023, and ending on June 12, 2024.

If Dr. Strickland 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 she requests reinstatement. Dr. Strickland shall also pay the applicable reinstatement fee. The suspension of Dr. Strickland's educator certificate 163844 shall be reported to the NASDTEC Clearinghouse and all South Carolina school districts within thirty days from the

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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/Crystal F. Stapleton, Ed.D.

Crystal F. Stapleton, Ed.D., Chair

Columbia, South Carolina

June 13, 2023