

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the
Disciplinary Action of the
Educator Certificate of
Grace Shepherd Newsom
Certificate 299756

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

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on April 9, 2024. On January 30, 2024, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent Grace Shepherd Newsom a notice via regular and certified mail of her right to a hearing regarding the possible suspension of her South Carolina educator certificate. Ms. Newsom received the notice on February 3, 2024, as evidenced by a signed postal receipt. 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. Newsom's educator certificate for a period of one year, commencing on April 9, 2024, and ending on April 8, 2025.

FINDINGS OF FACT

This case concerns a formal complaint from the Greenville County School District (District) seeking the suspension of the educator certificate of Ms. Newsom for breach of contract. The State Board has jurisdiction in this matter pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-150 (2020) and S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-530 (2020).

On March 29, 2023, Ms. Newsom signed a contractual agreement with the District to serve as a teacher for the 2023-24 school year. On December 19, 2023, Ms. Newsom submitted her resignation to the District. In her resignation, Ms. Newsom stated she had accepted a new job that would begin on January 16, 2024. On January 17, 2024, the District informed Ms. Newsom she would not be considered for release from her contract until a satisfactory replacement was obtained or the superintendent determine that no replacement was necessary. She did not return to fulfill her contract. The District Board

voted to report Ms. Newsom's breach of contract to the SCDE on January 23, 2024. The District reported the matter to the SCDE on January 26, 2024.

After considering the evidence, the State Board finds that the evidence presented demonstrates that Ms. Newsom breached her contract with the District, and that just cause exists to suspend Ms. Newsom's certificate 299756 for a period of one year, commencing on April 9, 2024, and ending on April 8, 2025.

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 Ms. Newsom 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 Grace Shepherd Newsom for a period of one year, commencing on April 9, 2024, and ending on April 8, 2025.

If Ms. Newsom 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. Ms. Newsom shall also pay the applicable reinstatement fee. The

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suspension of Ms. Newsom's educator certificate 299756 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/David C. O'Shields

David C. O'Shields, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina

April 9, 2024