

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the Suspension)
)
or Revocation of the)
)
Educator Certificate of)
)
Steven C. Gehrke)
)
Certificate 120866)
_____)

**CONSENT ORDER OF
PUBLIC REPRIMAND**

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on August 18, 2011. On July 7, 2011, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent Steven C. Gehrke a notice of his right to a hearing before the State Board concerning the possible suspension or revocation of his South Carolina educator certificate 120866 by certified mail, return receipt, restricted delivery, and regular mail. Mr. Gehrke received the notice on July 9, 2011, as evidenced by a postal receipt bearing his signature. On July 18, 2011, Mr. Gehrke requested a hearing.

Prior to the hearing scheduled in this matter, counsel for Mr. Gehrke advised the SCDE that Mr. Gehrke agreed to waive his right to a hearing and agreed to resolve this disciplinary matter by entering into a 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 all school districts in South Carolina with the grounds listed as "unprofessional conduct," 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 SCDE's Office of General Counsel. After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to accept the Consent Order of Public Reprimand with the terms set forth above.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Mr. Gehrke holds a valid South Carolina professional educator certificate and has over sixteen years of teaching experience. He has no prior record of disciplinary action

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with the State Board. Mr. Gehrke was employed by the Florence County School District One (District) as a social studies teacher at Sneed Middle School. On April 4, 2011, Mr. Gehrke resigned from the District after an investigation into allegations that he had viewed and searched for inappropriate internet content on the district computer.

Mr. Gehrke admits that he engaged in unprofessional conduct when he viewed and searched for inappropriate internet content on the district issued computer. He has cooperated with the SCDE investigation.

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Prior to the hearing scheduled in this matter, counsel for Mr. Gehrke advised the SCDE that Mr. Gehrke agreed to waive his right to a hearing and agreed to resolve this disciplinary matter by entering into a 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 all school districts in South Carolina with the grounds listed as "unprofessional conduct," 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 SCDE's Office of General Counsel. 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 (2004); S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2004). Just cause includes "unprofessional conduct." S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2004); 24 S.C. Code Regs. 43-58 (Supp. 2010). The State Board finds that the evidence presented supports its conclusion that just cause does not exist to suspend or revoke the educator certificate of Steven C. Gehrke; however, the evidence presented

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demonstrates that Mr. Gehrke engaged in unprofessional conduct when he viewed and searched inappropriate internet content on the district computer while employed as a social studies teacher at Sneed Middle School. The State Board further finds that just cause exists for the issuance of a Public Reprimand to Mr. Gehrke.

Now, therefore, it is ordered that the State Board hereby issues a Public Reprimand to Steven C. Gehrke, certificate 120866. The Public Reprimand shall be reported to all school districts in South Carolina with the grounds listed as "unprofessional conduct." This Consent Order of Public Reprimand shall be posted on the SCDE's website and shall be maintained as a public record in the SCDE's Office of General Counsel.

AND IT IS SO ORDERED.

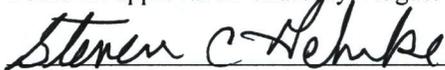
South Carolina State Board of Education

By: 
Gerrita Postlewait, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina

August 18, 2011

I, Steven C. Gehrke, SC Educator Certificate 120866, do hereby agree to the proposed Consent Order of Public Reprimand, consisting of three pages, and understand that this Order will be presented to the State Board for approval on Thursday, August 18, 2011.


Stephen C. Gehrke

8-18-2011
Date