

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the Revocation)
)
of the Educator Certificate of)
)
Tony Allen Ford,)
)
Certificate 239229)
_____)

**ORDER OF
PERMANENT REVOCATION**

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on October 8, 2014. On September 21, 2012, Mr. Tony Allen Ford was arrested in Lancaster County, South Carolina, and charged with Sexual Battery With A Student (16 or 17 years of age, no aggravated force or coercion), S.C. Code Ann. § 16-3-755(B) (Supp. 2011). On November 16, 2012, the Chair of the State Board summarily suspended Mr. Ford's educator certificate. On November 16, 2012, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent notice to Mr. Ford informing him that his educator certificate had been summarily suspended and that the State Board would meet to make a determination regarding the possible suspension or revocation of his educator certificate by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested. On November 19, 2012, Mr. Ford received the notice as evidenced by a signed receipt bearing his signature. Mr. Ford did not request a hearing in this matter and is in default.

After considering the evidence presented concerning Mr. Ford's unprofessional conduct, the State Board voted to revoke Mr. Ford's educator certificate 253053, effective October 8, 2014.

FINDINGS OF FACT

The State Board has jurisdiction in this matter pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-150 and S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2004).

Mr. Ford holds a professional South Carolina educator certificate and has two years of teaching experience. Mr. Ford had been employed by the Lancaster County School District One (District) as a teacher at Lancaster High School (School). The District placed Mr. Ford on administrative leave, effective September 12, 2012, following the District's receipt of allegations that Mr. Ford had engaged in an inappropriate relationship with a student. On September 21,

2012, Mr. Ford was arrested and charged with Sexual Battery with a Student, (16 or 17 years of age, no aggravated force or coercion) pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 16-3-0755(B) (Supp. 2011). The charges alleged that Mr. Ford had inappropriately communicated with a student via phone and email, and that he had engaged in sex with the student. In accordance with S.C. Code Ann. § 1-23-370(C) (2004) and State Board Rule of Governance BBABA, the SCDE requested that the Chair of the State Board summarily suspend Mr. Ford's educator certificate as a result of his arrest and his unprofessional conduct. On November 16, 2012, the Chair of the State Board summarily suspended Mr. Brown's educator certificate. On September 25, 2012, Mr. Ford resigned from his position with the District.

On November 16, 2012, the SCDE sent notice to Mr. Ford that his South Carolina Educator Certificate was summarily suspended. The notice also informed Mr. Ford that the State Board would meet to make a determination regarding the possible suspension or revocation of his educator certificate and his right to a hearing. The SCDE sent the notice by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested. On November 19, 2012, Mr. Ford received the notice as evidenced by a signed receipt bearing his signature. Mr. Ford did not request a hearing in this matter and is in default.

The SCDE has investigated this matter and has presented evidence from the District documenting Mr. Ford's unprofessional conduct with a female student. Mr. Ford has admitted he participated in Gmail conversations with the student about being together and having a house and children with her in the future. Mr. Ford admitted that he eventually realized that their relationship was too close and that he had developed feelings for her. He also admitted to providing a pay as you go phone for her. Mr. Ford also admitted to helping the student get a phone that was on his plan as of September 13, 2012. Some examples of the Gmail conversations sent from Mr. Ford to the student include comments such as: "We will have a pretty nice place my love," "That is one advantage of marrying me;" the other is "I love you and I am an amazing lover;" "I love you unconditionally;" "I will hold you forever," and "anywhere I can hug you and kiss you and love on you I am happy."

The student asserts that she and Mr. Ford had sex several times with the first time taking place right before her seventeenth birthday in March 2011. Mr. Ford denied having sexual contact with the student. The student also claimed that the second phone was a gift from Mr. Ford and that he had also bought her jewelry.

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to permanently revoke Mr. Ford's educator certificate 253055, effective October 8, 2014.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

"The State Board may, for just cause, either revoke or suspend the certificate of any person." S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-150 (2004). Just cause includes "unprofessional conduct and evident unfitness for position for which employed." S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2004); 24 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 43-58 (Supp. 2011). The State Board finds that Mr. Ford engaged in unprofessional conduct and demonstrated evident unfitness for position for which employed, as a result of his inappropriate communication and relationship with a female student.

The State Board finds that the evidence presented by the SCDE supports its decision that just cause exists to permanently revoke educator certificate 253053 issued in the name of Tony Allen Ford. The permanent revocation of Mr. Ford's educator certificate 253053 shall be reported to the NASDTEC Clearinghouse and all South Carolina school districts within thirty days from the date of this order.

AND IT IS SO ORDERED.

South Carolina State Board of Education

By: 
Barry F. Bolen, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina
October 8, 2014