

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the)
Permanent Revocation)
of the Educator Certificate of)
Courtney Ruth Martin,)
Certificate 251783)
_____)

**ORDER OF PERMANENT
REVOCATION**

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on October 8, 2014. On November 5, 2013, Ms. Courtney Ruth Martin was arrested in Conway, South Carolina and charged with Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor, S.C. Code Ann. § 16-17-490 (2003), following allegations that she had an inappropriate relationship with a male student . On November 14, 2013, the Chair of the State Board summarily suspended Ms. Martin’s educator certificate. On November 14, 2013, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent notice to Ms. Martin of the summary suspension and her right to a hearing by regular and certified mail. On December 2, 2013, SCDE received notice from Ms. Martin’s attorney requesting the SCDE suspend any action against Ms. Martin’s teaching certificate until any criminal charges against Ms. Martin were resolved.

On May 12, 2014, Ms. Martin plead guilty the charge of Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 16-17-490 (2003). The Court sentenced Ms. Martin to three years in prison, suspended to probation for two years.

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to permanently revoke Ms. Martin’s educator certificate 251783, 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).

Ms. Martin holds a professional South Carolina educator certificate that is currently suspended and has over three years of teaching experience. Ms. Martin had been employed by the Horry County School District (District) as a teacher at Conway High School (School). On October 29, 2013, Ms. Martin was placed on administrative leave following the allegations that she had an inappropriate relationship with a male student. On November 5, 2013, Ms. Courtney Ruth Martin was arrested in Conway, South Carolina and charged with Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor, S.C. Code Ann. § 16-17-490 (2003).

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 Ms. Martin's educator certificate as a result of her arrest and her alleged unprofessional conduct of inappropriate communication with a minor victim. On November 14, 2013, the Chair of the State Board summarily suspended Ms. Martin's educator certificate. On November 14, 2013, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent notice to Ms. Martin of the summary suspension and her right to a hearing by regular and certified mail. On December 2, 2013, SCDE received notice from Ms. Martin's attorney requesting the SCDE suspend any action against Ms. Martin's teaching certificate until any criminal charges against Ms. Martin were resolved.

On May 12, 2014, Ms. Martin plead guilty to the charge of Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 16-17-490 (2003). According to the indictment, Ms. Martin, Contributed to the Delinquency of a Minor between the dates of August 23, 2012, and October 29, 2013, when she knowingly and willingly encouraged, aid, caused or influenced a minor, age of 17, to become incorrigible or ungovernable. The evidence demonstrated that Ms. Martin developed an inappropriate relationship with a male student at the school where she was a teacher. The student was no longer in Ms. Martin's English class when the relationship began. The relationship involved inappropriate conversations with the minor male student via text messages. The text messages included discussions of planning for the future and sexual matters. Ms. Martin told the minor male student that she loved him and cared for him. The male student met Ms. Martin in her classroom during lunch or after school where they would hug, kiss and talk about their relationship. The Court sentenced Ms. Martin to three years in prison, suspended to probation for two years. The Court also ordered that Ms. Martin have no contact with the victim.

Ms. Martin's attorney informed SCDE that Ms. Martin no longer desired a hearing in this matter and was not going to contest the State Board's determination of disciplinary action concerning her educator certificate. After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to permanently revoke Ms. Martin's educator certificate 251783, 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, conduct involving moral turpitude, crime against the law of this State, immorality, and evident unfitness for position for which employed." S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2004); 2 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 43-58 (2011). The State Board finds that Ms. Martin engaged in unprofessional conduct, conduct involving moral

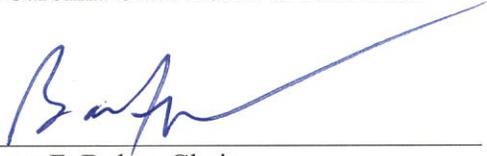
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turpitude, immorality, committed a crime against the law of this state, and demonstrated evident unfitness for position for which employed, as a result of her inappropriate relationship with a minor male student at the school where she taught and her guilty plea on May 12, 2014, to Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor, pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 16-17-490 (2003).

The State Board finds that the evidence presented by the SCDE supports its decision that just cause exists to permanently revoke educator certificate 251783 issued in the name of Courtney Ruth Martin. The permanent revocation of Ms. Martin's educator certificate 251783 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