

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of Suspension	)	
	)	
of the Educator Certificate of	)	ORDER OF SUSPENSION
	)	
Linda Moody Steffey,	)	
	)	
Certificate 161295	)	
	)	

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The State Board of Education (State Board) considered the matter on April 9, 2019. On February 27, 2019, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent a notice letter to Ms. Steffey, informing her that the State Board would meet to make a determination regarding the possible disciplinary action of her educator certificate, by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, delivery restricted to addressee. Ms. Steffey received the notice on March 7, 2019, as evidenced by the signed postal receipt. Ms. Steffey 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. Steffey's educator certificate for a period of one year, commencing on April 9, 2019, and ending on April 7, 2020. Ms. Steffey is also instructed to complete a SCDE approved addictions counseling program prior to the reinstatement of her certificate.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Ms. Steffey holds a valid South Carolina initial educator certificate and has over twenty-one years of teaching experience. Ms. Steffey was employed by Richland School District two (District) as a music teacher at Sandlapper Elementary School (School).

On September 10, 2018, the District informed the SCDE that Ms. Steffey resigned her employment with the District following an investigation into allegations that she was under the influence of alcohol while at work and had a wine bottle in her classroom. The District investigation revealed an incident that occurred on September 4, 2018 where Ms. Steffey reported to work under the influence of alcohol. A group of students discovered Ms. Steffey ill on the floor of the music room. When the School Nurse arrived to the room to care for her, Ms. Steffey admitted she consumed an entire bottle of wine earlier in the morning. In a written statement to the SCDE, Ms. Steffey apologized for her behavior on September 4, 2018 and stated she felt remorse each day since.

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to suspend Ms. Steffey's educator certificate for a period of one year, commencing on April 9, 2019, and ending on April 7, 2020. Ms. Steffey is also instructed to complete a SCDE approved addictions counseling program prior to the reinstatement of her certificate.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

"The South Carolina Board of Education may, for just cause, revoke or suspend the certificate of any person." S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-150 (2016); S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2016). Just cause includes unprofessional conduct. S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2016). The State Board finds that the evidence presented demonstrates that Ms. Steffey engaged in unprofessional conduct by being inebriated on school grounds during working hours. Accordingly, the evidence presented supports the State Board's determination that just cause exists to suspend the educator certificate of Linda Moody Steffey, Educator Certificate 161295, for a period of one year, commencing on April 9, 2019, and ending on April 7, 2020. Ms. Steffey is also instructed to complete a SCDE approved addictions counseling program prior to the reinstatement of her certificate.

If Ms. Steffey 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 he requests reinstatement. Ms. Steffey shall also submit documentation for the completion of a SCDE approved addictions counseling program and be responsible for the payment of the applicable reinstatement fee. The suspension of Ms. Steffey's Educator Certificate 161295 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: s/Del-Gratia Jones
Del-Gratia Jones, Chair