

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of Suspension	)	
	)	
of the Educator Certificate of	)	ORDER OF SUSPENSION
	)	
Kayla Brooke Griffith,	)	
	)	
Certificate 266057	)	
_____	)	

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The State Board of Education (State Board) considered the matter on August 13, 2019. On May 21, 2019, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent a notice letter to Kayla Brooke Griffith 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. On May 29, 2019, Ms. Griffith sent a letter to SCDE, received June 3, 2019, stating that she will not request a hearing concerning the matter of her educator certificate. After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to suspend Ms. Griffith's educator certificate for a period of two years, commencing on August 13, 2019, and ending on August 12, 2021. Ms. Griffith is also instructed to complete the NASDTEC Correction and Prevention course prior to the reinstatement of her certificate.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Ms. Griffith holds a valid South Carolina initial educator certificate and has over four years of teaching experience. Ms. Griffith was employed by Oconee County School District (District) as a math teacher and cheerleading coach at West Oak High School (School) for the 2017-2018 school year.

On March 26, 2018, the District informed SCDE that Ms. Griffith resigned her employment with the District following an investigation into allegations that she engaged in inappropriate communications with students. The District investigation revealed instances where Ms. Griffith discussed inappropriate topics of a personal and sexual nature with three female students. The investigation revealed those same students felt pressured to spend time with Ms. Griffith, specifically in social settings outside of school. This included at least one trip out of state for no

educational purpose that was not authorized by the parents. The students stated that they worried about retaliation from Ms. Griffith if they reported the behavior.

After the investigation, Ms. Griffith resigned from the District and was reported to the SCDE for unprofessional conduct. On May 29, 2019, Ms. Griffith wrote a letter informing the SCDE that she is declining her right to a hearing on the matter of her educator certificate. Ms. Griffith's letter also stated an understanding of the allegations against her and what impact forfeiting a hearing may have to her case.

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to suspend Ms. Griffith's educator certificate for a period of two years, commencing on August 13, 2019, and ending on August 12, 2021. Ms. Griffith is also instructed to complete the NASDTEC Correction and Prevention course 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. Griffith engaged in unprofessional conduct by engaging in inappropriate communications with students. Accordingly, the evidence presented supports the State Board's determination that just cause exists to suspend the educator certificate of Kayla Brooke Griffith, Educator Certificate 266057, for a period of two years, commencing on August 13, 2019, and ending on August 12, 2021. Ms. Griffith is also instructed to complete the NASDTEC Correction and Prevention course prior to the reinstatement of her certificate.

If Ms. Griffith 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. Griffith shall also submit documentation for the completion of the NASDTEC Correction and Prevention course and be responsible for any applicable reinstatement fee. The suspension of

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Ms. Griffith's Educator Certificate 266057 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

Columbia, South Carolina
August 13, 2019