

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the Suspension of)
)
the Educator Certificate of)
)
Anthony G. Pitts)
)
Certificate 278047)
_____)

ORDER OF SUSPENSION

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on March 12, 2019. On November 29, 2018, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent Anthony G. Pitts a notice of his right to a hearing before the State Board concerning the possible suspension or revocation of his South Carolina educator certificate 278047 by certified mail, return receipt, restricted delivery, and regular mail. The SCDE utilized Dr. Pitts' address from the Certification Portal System and a search of public records. Dr. Pitts declined to sign for the notice letters sent by certified mail, return receipt requested, delivery restricted to addressee. On January 23, 2019, the SCDE informed Dr. Pitts via regular and certified mail that the State Board would meet on March 12, 2019, to consider the circumstances surrounding his alleged unprofessional conduct as reported by the Jasper County School District (District). The SCDE has verified Dr. Pitts' address. Under the South Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure 5(b), Dr. Pitts has been given fair notice of constitutional due process. After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to suspend Dr. Pitts' educator certificate for a period of one year commencing on March 12, 2019 and ending on March 11, 2020.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Dr. Pitts holds a professional educator certificate and has over twenty-four years of teaching experience. Dr. Pitts was employed by the District as an English teacher at Ridgeland-Hardeeville High School (School).

On May 17, 2018, Dr. Pitts engaged in a discussion with his students that resulted in the students teasing him. During the discussion, Dr. Pitts was eating a cupcake with a fork. The students began to tease him about this, with one stating that Dr. Pitts' fingers

must taste burnt. Dr. Pitts was enraged by the comment and responded inappropriately with language that included curse words and the description of a sexual act. Another student in the room recorded the incident on their cell phone.

On January 23, 2019, the SCDE sent Dr. Pitts a final notice of his right to a hearing before the State Board concerning the possible disciplinary action of his South Carolina educator certificate 278047 by regular mail. Dr. Pitts did not request a hearing and is now in default. After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to suspended Dr. Pitts' educator certificate for a period of one year commencing on March 12, 2019, and ending on March 11, 2020.

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 (2004); S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2004). Just cause includes unprofessional conduct, crime against the law of this state, and evident unfitness for position for which employed. S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2004). The State Board finds that the evidence presented by the SCDE demonstrates that Dr. Pitts engaged in unprofessional conduct and displayed unfitness for position for which he was employed due to his inappropriate conduct and language in front and towards students. The State Board finds that the information presented supports its conclusion that just cause exists to suspend the educator certificate of Anthony G. Pitts on the grounds of unprofessional conduct for a period of one year commencing on March 12, 2019, and ending on March 11, 2020.

Now, therefore, it is hereby ordered that the educator certificate of Anthony G. Pitts, certificate 278047, is suspended for a period of one year commencing on March 12, 2019, and ending on March 11, 2020. If Dr. Pitts wishes to have his certificate reinstated at the conclusion of the period of suspension, he shall make a written request to the SCDE's Office of Educator Services. Dr. Pitts shall be responsible for meeting all certification requirements in effect at the time he requests reinstatement and for the payment of any applicable reinstatement fees. The suspension of Dr. Pitts' educator certificate 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: 
Del-Gratia Jones, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina
March 12, 2019