

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the Revocation or)
Suspension of the Educator Certificate of)
John N. Sewell,)
Certificate 202231)
_____)

**ORDER OF
SUMMARY SUSPENSION**

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The Chair of the South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on August 25, 2015. In accordance with S.C. Code Ann. § 1-23-370(c) (2004), § 59-5-10 (2004), and State Board Rule of Governance BBABA, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) requested that the Chair of the State Board summarily suspend the educator professional certificate of John N. Sewell, certificate 202231, as a result of his unprofessional conduct involving inappropriate communications of a sexual nature, via text messages and pictures, to several current and former students.

The SCDE has reason to believe that, due to the serious nature of these allegations of misconduct, Mr. Sewell may pose a threat to the health, safety and welfare of students that may be under his instruction and that emergency action is required. After considering the evidence presented by the SCDE, the Chair of the State Board finds that Mr. Sewell’s educator professional certificate shall be summarily suspended until a due process hearing is held and/or this matter is otherwise resolved. The SCDE is directed to serve notice on Mr. Sewell of the summary suspension, as well as, the possible suspension or revocation of his educator professional certificate.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Mr. Sewell holds a South Carolina educator professional certificate and has fifteen (15) years of teaching experience in South Carolina. Mr. Sewell has been employed by the Spartanburg County School District Six (District) since 2003, as a mathematics teacher at Dorman High School (School). Currently, Mr. Sewell’s employment with the District has been recommended for termination to the Spartanburg County School District Six Board of Trustees. On August 18, 2015, a former student presented the Principal with text messages between himself and Mr. Sewell, dating back to September 2014 and continuing until August 2015. The District learned that Mr. Sewell sent inappropriate and sexually oriented text messages and

pictures to both current and former students. Mr. Sewell admitted his conduct to the District's administration. The District immediately reported this matter to law enforcement.

The SCDE has reason to believe that, due to the serious nature of these allegations of misconduct, Mr. Sewell may pose a threat to the health, safety and welfare of students that may be under his instruction and that emergency action is required. After considering the evidence presented by the SCDE, the Chair of the State Board finds that Mr. Sewell's educator professional certificate shall be summarily suspended until a due process hearing is held and/or this matter is otherwise resolved. The SCDE is directed to serve notice on Mr. Sewell of the summary suspension, as well as the possible suspension or revocation of his educator professional certificate.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

"The South Carolina Board of Education may, for just cause, either revoke or suspend the certificate of any person." S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-150 (2004). "'Just cause' may consist of any one or more of the following: . . . unprofessional conduct. . . [i]mmorality; [a]ny conduct involving moral turpitude. . . [or] [e]vident unfitness for position for which employed. . ." S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2004). In accordance with S.C. Code Ann. § 1-23-370(c) (2004), "[i]f the agency finds that the public health, safety or welfare imperatively requires emergency action, and incorporates a finding to that effect in its order, summary suspension of a license may be ordered pending proceedings for revocation or other action." Pursuant to S.C. Code Ann § 59-5-10 (2004), and State Board Rule of Governance BBABA, the Chair of the State Board finds that as a result of Mr. Sewell's conduct involving inappropriate communications of a sexual nature, via text message and pictures, to several current and former students, he has engaged in unprofessional conduct, immorality, conduct involving moral turpitude, and demonstrated evident unfitness for position for which employed. The Chair also finds that there is reason to believe that Mr. Sewell may pose a threat to the health, safety and welfare of students and that emergency action is required. Accordingly, the educator certificate of John N. Sewell, certificate 202231, is summarily suspended until a due process hearing is held and/or this matter is otherwise resolved. The SCDE is directed to serve notice on Mr. Sewell of the summary suspension, as well as, the possible suspension or revocation of his educator professional certificate. The suspension of Mr. Sewell's educator professional certificate 202231 shall be immediately reported to the NASDTEC Clearinghouse and all South Carolina school districts.

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AND IT IS SO ORDERED.

South Carolina State Board of Education

By: 
Traci Young-Cooper, Ed.D. Chair

Columbia, South Carolina
August 25, 2015