

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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

**ORDER OF
SUMMARY SUSPENSION**

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The Chair of the South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on November 13, 2013. 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 certificate of Courtney Ruth Martin, certificate 251783, as a result of her being arrested on November 5, 2013, and charged with Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor following allegations that she had an inappropriate relationship with a male student in Conway, South Carolina.

The SCDE has reason to believe that, due to the serious nature of these allegations of misconduct, Ms. Martin may pose a threat to the health, safety and welfare of students that may be under her instruction and that emergency action is required. After considering the evidence presented by the SCDE, the Chair of the State Board finds that Ms. Martin’s educator 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 Ms. Martin’s of the summary suspension, as well as the possible suspension or revocation of her educator certificate.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Ms. Martin holds a professional South Carolina educator certificate and has four years of teaching experience. The Horry County School District (District) has employed Ms. Martin as an Honors English teacher at Conway High School since July 2010. On October 29, 2013, the District placed Ms. Martin on administrative leave during an investigation regarding Ms. Martin’s unprofessional conduct with a student.

On October 29, 2013, the District received an anonymous phone call informing the District that a teacher and a student were involved in an inappropriate relationship. According to the caller, Ms. Martin had sent the student nude photos of her body parts. The Principal and School Resource

Officer notified the Conway Police Department who subsequently responded to the high school to investigate the allegations made by the caller.

According to the police incident report, the student was initially interviewed and denied that any relationship existed between him and Ms. Martin. Ms. Martin was then interviewed and also denied that a relationship existed between the two. The student later recanted his story and admitted that he and Ms. Martin had been in a relationship since 2012 when he was a student in one of her English classes. The student claimed that the relationship had ended when he texted Ms. Martin to inform her that the police were at the school and had interviewed him concerning their relationship. According to the student, he would go to Ms. Martin's classroom during lunch or after school and the two would hug, kiss, and talk about their relationship. On November 5, 2013, the Conway Police Department arrested Ms. Martin and charged her with Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor.

The SCDE has reason to believe that, due to the serious nature of these allegations of misconduct, Ms. Martin may pose a threat to the health, safety and welfare of students that may be under her instruction and that emergency action is required. After considering the evidence presented by the SCDE, the Chair of the State Board finds that Ms. Martin's educator 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 Ms. Martin of the summary suspension, as well as the possible suspension or revocation of her educator 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 includes unprofessional conduct, immorality, any conduct involving moral turpitude, crime against the law of this State and evident unfitness for position for which employed. S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2004); 24 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 43-58 (2011). In accordance with S.C. Code Ann. § 1-23-370(c) (2004), "If 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 Ms. Martin's inappropriate relationship with a male student, she has engaged in unprofessional conduct, immorality, conduct involving moral turpitude, committed a crime against the law of this State and demonstrated evident unfitness for position for which employed. The Chair of the State Board also finds that there is reason to believe that Ms. Martin may pose a threat to the health, safety

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and welfare of students and that emergency action is required. Accordingly, the educator certificate of Courtney Ruth Martin, certificate 251783, 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 Ms. Martin of the summary suspension, as well as the possible suspension or revocation of her educator certificate.

AND IT IS SO ORDERED.

South Carolina State Board of Education



By: _____

David W. Blackmon, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina

November 13, 2013