

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the Suspension)

of the Educator Certificate of)

Gwendolyn M. Blakely)

Certificate 121641)

CONSENT ORDER OF SUSPENSION

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on June 9, 2011. On April 25, 2011, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent Gwendolyn M. Blakely a notice of her right to a hearing regarding the possible suspension or revocation of her South Carolina educator certificate by certified mail, return receipt requested, delivery restricted to addressee. On April 29, 2011, Ms. Blakely received the notice, as evidenced by the signed postal receipt bearing her signature. Ms. Blakely contacted the SCDE on April 29, 2011, and stated she desired to pursue an alternative resolution to this matter. On May 2, 2011, Ms. Blakely sent a letter to the SCDE in which she waived her right to a hearing and agreed to a two year suspension of her educator certificate. After reviewing the evidence presented, the State Board voted to suspend Ms. Blakely's certificate for a period of two years, commencing on June 9, 2011, and ending on June 8, 2013, subject to the terms specified herein.

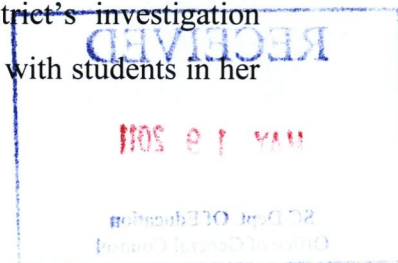
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FINDINGS OF FACT

Ms. Blakely holds a valid South Carolina professional educator certificate and has over twenty-four years of teaching experience. She has no prior record of disciplinary action with the State Board. Ms. Blakely was employed by the Allendale County School District (District) as a teacher at Fairfax Elementary School (School) for the 2010-2011 school year. On October 29, 2010, the District placed Ms. Blakely on administrative leave pending an investigation into allegations that she had engaged in inappropriate disciplinary measures towards students at the School. The District's investigation concluded that Ms. Blakely used inappropriate disciplinary measures with students in her



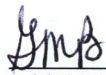
class including Ms. Blakely's violation of District Policy JKA (Corporal Punishment/Physical Force) which prohibits the use of corporal punishment. On November 19, 2010, Ms. Blakely admitted during a conference with the Superintendent that she did strike multiple students in her class on several occasions.

On November 22, 2010, the Superintendent recommended that the Allendale County District Board of Trustees (School Board) terminate Ms. Blakely's employment. The School Board accepted the Superintendent's recommendation, subject to its obligation to hear the matter on the merits, if Ms. Blakely requested a hearing. On November 23, 2010, the Superintendent informed Ms. Blakely in writing of the School Board's decision to accept his recommendation to terminate her employment with the District and also advised Ms. Blakely of her right to a hearing before the School Board. Ms. Blakely did not request a hearing within the fifteen day time period. On January 24, 2011, the District terminated Ms. Blakely's employment with the District.

On February 9, 2011, the Superintendent notified the SCDE of Ms. Blakely's termination from her employment with the District for misconduct. The SCDE investigated this matter and determined that Ms. Blakely had engaged in unprofessional conduct.

On April 25, 2011, the SCDE sent notice to Ms. Blakely of her right to a hearing regarding the possible suspension or revocation of her South Carolina educator certificate by certified mail, return receipt requested, delivery restricted to addressee. On April 29, 2011, Ms. Blakely received the notice, as evidenced by the signed postal receipt bearing her signature. After receiving the notice, Ms. Blakely informed the SCDE that she desired to waive her right to a hearing and pursue an alternative resolution to this matter. On May 2, 2011, Ms. Blakely sent a letter to the SCDE stating that she had decided to waive her right to a hearing and had agreed to the suspension of her educator certificate for a period of two years, commencing on June 9, 2011, and ending on June 8, 2013. During the suspension period, Ms. Blakely has agreed to complete a course that addresses classroom management and preventing disruptive behavior in the classroom. She will present SCDE with documentation of successful completion of the course.

Gwendolyn
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CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The State Board 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 and evident unfitness for position for which employed S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2004); 24 S.C. Code Regs. 43-58 (Supp. 2010.) The State Board finds that the evidence presented supports its conclusion that Ms. Blakely has engaged in unprofessional conduct and has demonstrated unfitness for the position for which employed as a result of her use of inappropriate disciplinary measures toward the students at the School. The State Board finds that just cause exists to suspend the educator certificate of Gwendolyn M. Blakely, certificate 121641, for a period of two years, beginning on June 9, 2011, and ending on June 8, 2013. During the period of suspension, Ms. Blakely shall not volunteer or be employed, in any capacity, in any South Carolina school district. The suspension of Ms. Blakely's educator certificate will be reported to all school districts in South Carolina and the NASDTEC Clearinghouse as a two year suspension, commencing June 9, 2011, and ending on June 8, 2013, with the reason for suspension stated as "unprofessional conduct and evident unfitness for position."

If Ms. Blakely wishes to have her educator certificate reinstated at the end of the suspension period, she must make a written request to the Department's Office of Educator Certification and submit documentation of successful completion of a course in classroom management and preventing disruptive behavior in the classroom. Ms. Blakely will also be responsible for meeting all current certification requirements and will be responsible for paying a reinstatement fee.

AND IT IS SO ORDERED.

South Carolina State Board of Education

By: *Gerrita Postlewait*
Gerrita Postlewait, Chair

Gwendolyn
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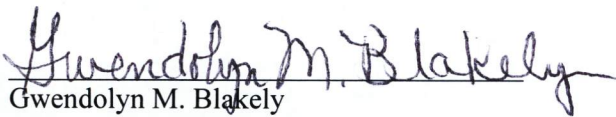
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Columbia, South Carolina

June 9, 2011

I, Gwendolyn M. Blakely, S.C. Educator Certificate 121641, do hereby agree to the terms of the Consent Order of Suspension, consisting of four pages, and understand that this Consent Order will be presented to the State Board of Education on June 9, 2011. I agree that during the suspension period, I will not be employed or volunteer, in any capacity as an educator, paraprofessional, aide, substitute teacher, coach, or in any other position in a public school in the State of South Carolina.


Gwendolyn M. Blakely

05-17-11
Date