BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the Revocation Or Suspension of the Educator Certificate of John O. Thomas Certificate 136379	)	**ORDER OF SUSPENSION**

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on January 11, 2012. On December 13, 2011, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent notice to Mr. John O. Thomas of the possible suspension or revocation of his educator certificate by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested. On December 14, 2011, Mr. Thomas received the notice as evidenced by a signed receipt bearing his signature. Mr. Thomas did not request a hearing within the time specified in the notice and is in default. After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to suspend Mr. Thomas' educator certificate for a period of one year, commencing on January 11, 2012, and ending on January 10, 2013.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Mr. Thomas holds a professional educator certificate and has over seventeen years of teaching experience. He has no prior record of disciplinary action with the State Board. Mr. Thomas had been employed by the Charleston County School District (District) since 2001. During the 2010-2011 school year, Mr. Thomas was employed as a teacher at Burke High School (School). The District terminated Mr. Thomas following his acknowledgement that he violated District Policy GBEB Employee Conduct when he removed a District laptop computer from the School without authorization and pawned the laptop computer for his personal gain. Mr. Thomas used the laptop computer as collateral for a loan from a North Charleston pawnshop. According to the District, Mr. Thomas indicated that his intent was only to use the laptop as collateral and that he planned to return it to the District once he had repaid the money.

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Thomas' educator certificate for a period of one year, commencing on January 11, 2012, and ending on January 10, 2013.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

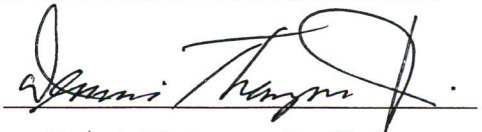
"The State Board of Education may, for just cause, either revoke or suspend the certificate of any person." S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-150 (2004), S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2004), 24 S.C. Code Regs. 43-58 (Supp 2010). Just cause includes unprofessional conduct, dishonesty, and any conduct which evidences unfitness for teaching, S. C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2004); 24 S.C. Code Regs. 43-58 (Supp. 2010). The State Board finds that Mr. Thomas engaged in unprofessional conduct, dishonesty and demonstrated unfitness for teaching as a result of his violation of District Policy on Employee Conduct when he removed a District laptop computer from one School without authorization and pawned the District property for his personal gain. The State Board further finds that the information presented supports its determination that just cause exists to suspend Mr. Thomas' educator certificate 136379 for a period of one year, beginning January 11, 2012, and ending on January 10, 2013.

Now, therefore, it is ordered that the State Board suspend the educator certificate of John O. Thomas, certificate 136379 for one year. The suspension of Mr. Thomas' educator certificate 136379 shall be reported to the NASDTEC Clearinghouse and all South Carolina school districts within thirty days from the date of this order with the reason stated as "unprofessional conduct."

If Mr. Thomas wishes to have his educator certificate reinstated at the end of the suspension period, he shall make a written request to the SCDE's Office of Educator Certification, Recruitment and Preparation. Mr. Thomas will be responsible for meeting all current certification requirements at the time he requests certification and shall be responsible for the payment of a reinstatement fee.

AND IT IS SO ORDERED.

South Carolina State Board of Education

By: 

Dennis Thompson, Jr., Chair

Columbia, South Carolina
January 11, 2012