

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the)
)
Suspension of the Educator)
)
Certificate of Vonda Richardson Ridge)
)
Certificate 149633)

**CONSENT ORDER OF
SUSPENSION**

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on August 9, 2016. On May 12, 2016, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent notice to Vonda Richardson Ridge informing her that the State Board would meet to make a determination regarding the possible suspension of her educator certificate by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested. After Ms. Ridge received the notice, her attorney informed SCDE that she desired to waive her right to a hearing in this matter. She has agreed to enter into a Consent Order of Suspension of her educator certificate 149633. After considering the information presented by the SCDE, the State Board voted to accept the Consent Order of Suspension for a period of one year from August 9, 2016, to August 8, 2017.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Ms. Ridge holds a valid South Carolina professional educator certificate and has 28 years of teaching experience. She has no prior record of disciplinary action with the State Board or the Lexington County School District 3 (District). Ms. Ridge began working with the District in 2005, and was the principal at Batesburg-Leesville Elementary School (School).

In a letter dated May 22, 2015, the District Superintendent reported to SCDE, pursuant to State Board Regulation R. 43-58.1, that Ms. Ridge had resigned her position as principal after an investigation into allegations that she had fabricated a document with signatures that purported to be the minutes of a planning meeting submitted as part of a Title 1 audit. Ms. Ridge admitted that she had fabricated minutes from an alleged planning meeting that had not taken place in April 2014. She informed the District that

Vonda
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she fabricated the minutes after no one attended a planning meeting she had previously scheduled. Ms. Ridge was responsible for conducting the planning meeting. Following the conclusion of the investigation, Ms. Ridge tendered her resignation and retired from the District.

On May 12, 2016, the SCDE sent notice to Ms. Ridge of the possible suspension or revocation of her educator certificate by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested. Ms. Ridge's attorney contacted the SCDE and informed the Office of General Counsel that Ms. Ridge had agreed to waive her right to a hearing in this matter and accept a one year period of suspension of her educator certificate, commencing on August 9, 2016, and ending on August 8, 2017. After considering the information presented by the SCDE, the State Board voted to suspend Ms. Ridge's educator certificate 149633 for a period of one year, commencing on August 9, 2016, and ending on August 8, 2017.

Ms. Ridge agrees to the suspension of her educator certificate, subject to the following conditions: (1) her educator certificate will be suspended for one year beginning immediately upon the approval by the State Board of the Consent Order of Suspension; and (2) she has waived her right to a hearing and understands that the terms set forth are not subject to reconsideration, collateral attack or judicial review.

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 and dishonesty. S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2004). The State Board finds that the evidence presented by the SCDE demonstrates that Ms. Ridge engaged in unprofessional conduct and dishonesty as a result of her fabricating documentation concerning an alleged planning meeting that she did not hold in April 2014. The State Board finds that the information presented supports its conclusion that just cause exists to suspend the educator certificate of Vonda Richardson Ridge on the grounds of unprofessional conduct and dishonesty for a period of one year commencing on August 9, 2016, and ending on August 8, 2017.

Now, therefore, it is hereby ordered that the educator certificate of Vonda Richardson Ridge, certificate 149633, is suspended for a period of one year, commencing

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on August 9, 2016, and ending on August 8, 2017. If Ms. Ridge wishes to have her certificate reinstated at the conclusion of the period of suspension, she shall make a written request to the SCDE's Office of Educator Services. Ms. Ridge shall be responsible for meeting all certification requirements in effect at the time she requests reinstatement and for the payment of any applicable reinstatement fees. The suspension of Ms. Ridge's 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:


Michael R. Brennan, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina
August 9, 2016

I, Vonda Richardson Ridge, S.C. Educator Certificate 149633, understand there has been an investigation concerning alleged violations of the laws and regulations governing the practice of educator certificate holders and that I have waived my right to a hearing in this matter. I understand that the terms set forth in this Consent Order are not subject to reconsideration, collateral attack or judicial review. I freely, knowingly and voluntarily agree to the Consent Order of Suspension, consisting of three pages, and understand that this Consent Order will be presented as signed to the South Carolina State Board of Education on August 9, 2016.


Vonda Richardson Ridge


Date