

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of	)	
	)	ORDER OF SUSPENSION
Kourtney Goodman	)	
	)	(BREACH OF CONTRACT)
Educator Certificate #287622	)	

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The South Carolina State Board of Education ("State Board") considered this matter on November 13, 2018. The South Carolina Department of Education ("SCDE") notified Kourtney Goodman (Goodman) of her right to a hearing regarding the possible suspension of her South Carolina Educator Certificate by letters dated May 7, 2018, May 21, 2018, and June 19, 2018, all sent via certified and regular U.S. Mail. Goodman timely requested a hearing. On October 5, 2018, a hearing was held concerning Goodman's alleged Breach of Contract with Lexington School District Two (District).

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board hereby voted to suspend Goodman's educator certificate for a period of one calendar year, commencing on November 13, 2018, and ending on November 12, 2019.

FINDINGS OF FACT

This case concerns a formal complaint by the District seeking the suspension of the Educator Certificate of Goodman for breach of contract. The State Board has jurisdiction in this matter, pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-150 (2004) and S.C. Code Ann § 59-25-530 (2004).

Goodman holds a valid South Carolina Educator Certificate and was employed by the District as a Special Education Resource Teacher at Springdale Elementary School (Springdale). She signed a contract with the District for the 2017-2018 school year on June 22, 2017.

On February 5, 2018, Goodman resigned her teaching position and did not return thereafter. Her stated reasons for leaving were stress and a hostile working environment. Goodman's problems with the District emanated from an increase in her caseload that she had difficulty handling. She also had difficulty juggling an after school part time teaching job with meetings scheduled after hours at Springdale. Goodman's contract with the District specifically addressed the requirement that she attend school and District meetings. Further, she was counseled on this requirement prior to her acceptance of the position with the District.

On February 26, 2018, the Lexington District Two Board of Trustees voted to report Goodman's breach of contract to SCDE. The District notified Ms. Goodman via letter dated May 1, 2018. Goodman's students did not receive special education services for approximately four to five weeks after her departure because a substitute teacher could not be secured. When a substitute was finally secured, she only worked a few weeks and resigned due to her long commute. The students were without special education services for another two to three weeks before a long term substitute could be located.

After considering the evidence presented at the October 5, 2018 hearing and the Hearing Officer's Report and Recommendation, the State Board finds that the evidence presented demonstrates that Goodman breached her contract with the District. Accordingly, the Board finds that just cause exists to suspend Goodman's Educator Certificate for a period of one calendar year, commencing on November 13, 2018 and ending on November 12, 2019.

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). Just cause includes, *inter alia*, "unprofessional conduct". S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (4) (2004).

S. C. Code Ann. §59-25-530 (2004) provides that a teacher who fails to comply with the provisions of his or her contract without the written consent of the school board is deemed guilty of unprofessional conduct and subject to suspension of the educator certificate for up to one calendar year.

The State Board finds that the evidence presented demonstrates that Goodman engaged in unprofessional conduct by failing to comply with the provisions of her contract without the written consent of the District. Further, she abandoned her position with no notice to the District. Accordingly, the evidence presented supports the State Board's determination that just cause exists to suspend the Educator Certificate of Kourtney Goodman, Educator Certificate #287622, for a period of one (1) calendar year, commencing on November 13, 2018, and ending on November 12, 2019. If Goodman wishes to have her Educator Certificate reinstated at the end of the suspension period, she shall make a written request to the SCDE's Office of Educator Certification, Recruitment, and Preparation, and shall meet all certification requirements in effect

at the time she requests reinstatement. Goodman shall also pay all applicable reinstatement fees. The suspension of Goodman's Educator Certificate #287622 shall be reported to the NASDTEC Clearinghouse and all South Carolina school districts within thirty (30) days from the date of this order with the reason stated as "unprofessional conduct for breach of contract and failure to comply with the provisions of a contract without the written consent of the local school board."

AND IT IS SO ORDERED.

South Carolina State Board of Education

By: Sharon Wall
Dr. Sharon Wall, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina
November 13, 2018