

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the
Disciplinary Action of the
Educator Certificate of
Gregory M. Fish
Certificate 200395

**CONSENT ORDER OF SUSPENSION
(UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT)**

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on February 11, 2020. On July 31, 2019, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent Gregory M. Fish a notice via regular and certified mail of his right to a hearing regarding the possible suspension of his South Carolina educator certificate. Mr. Fish subsequently contacted the SCDE and advised that he desired to waive his right to a hearing and wished to pursue an alternative resolution in this matter. Mr. Fish has agreed to this Consent Order of Suspension.

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to accept the Consent Order of Suspension of Mr. Fish's educator certificate for a period of one year, commencing February 11, 2020, and ending February 9, 2021. Further, Mr. Fish must complete the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) Prevention and Correction course prior to the reinstatement of his certification. Mr. Fish must also submit a letter from an SCDE-approved physician stating he is fit to return to the teaching profession.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Mr. Fish holds a valid South Carolina teaching certificate and has over eighteen years of educator experience. He has no prior record of disciplinary action with the State Board. However, Mr. Fish did receive a letter of concern from the SCDE for similar behavior in 2016. At the time of the 2018 incidents, Mr. Fish was employed by Anderson County School District Two (District).

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Mr. Fish was first employed by the District as a teacher at Honea Path Middle School on October 8, 2018. Mr. Fish was given his first reprimand on October 17, 2018, after discussing several inappropriate topics of a lewd and violent nature in the classroom. The District further learned Mr. Fish taught a lesson in class with music that contained inappropriate language and themes.

The District placed Mr. Fish on administrative leave to investigate the allegations. The District issued a reprimand, placed Mr. Fish on an improvement plan for the remainder of the year, and transferred him to Belton-Honea Path High School as a permanent substitute. Mr. Fish began teaching at the high school on October 18, 2018. Within two days, the District began to receive new reports of inappropriate discussions in Mr. Fish's class. Mr. Fish was again reprimanded, continued the inappropriate behavior, and was notified he would be recommended for termination on October 31, 2018. Mr. Fish subsequently resigned his employment with the District effective November 30, 2018. The District reported the matter to the SCDE on December 5, 2018.

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board finds just cause exists to suspend Mr. Fish's certificate 200395 for a period of one year, commencing on February 11, 2020, and ending on February 9, 2021. Mr. Fish will be required to complete the NASDTEC Prevention and Correction course prior to the reinstatement of his certification. Further, Mr. Fish must submit a letter from an SCDE-approved physician stating he is fit to return to the teaching profession prior to the reinstatement of his certification.

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 (2017); S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2017). Just cause includes unprofessional conduct. S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2017); 24 S.C. Code Regs. 43-58 (2017). The State Board finds that the evidence

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presented demonstrates that Mr. Fish engaged in unprofessional conduct as a result of repeated instances of inappropriate discussions and materials in the classroom. Accordingly, the evidence presented supports the State Board's determination that just cause exists to suspend the educator certificate of Gregory M. Fish, educator certificate 200395, for a period of one year, commencing on February 11, 2020, and ending on February 9, 2021. Mr. Fish will be required to complete the NASDTEC Prevention and Correction course prior to the reinstatement of his certification. Mr. Fish must also submit a letter from an SCDE-approved physician stating he is fit to return to the teaching profession before his certificate is reinstated.

If Mr. Fish wishes to have his educator certification reinstated at the end of the suspension period, he shall make a written request to the SCDE's Office of Educator Services and submit proof of completion for the NASDTEC course. Mr. Fish shall also submit a letter from an SCDE-approved physician clearing him to return to work. Mr. Fish shall be responsible for meeting all certification requirements in effect at the time he requests reinstatement and the payment of any applicable reinstatement fees. The suspension of Mr. Fish's educator certificate 200395 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

s/Michael Brennan
Michael Brennan, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina
February 11, 2020

(Consent order acknowledgement attached)

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I, Gregory M. Fish, S.C. Educator Certificate 200395, 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 of Suspension are not subject to reconsideration, collateral attack or judicial review. I have read the Consent Order of Suspension, consisting of four pages, and I freely and voluntarily agree to the terms set forth therein. I understand that this Order will be presented to the South Carolina State Board of Education for approval on Tuesday, February 11, 2020. I understand this Consent Order will not become effective until approved by the State Board and, if not approved, it shall not constitute an admission against interest in this proceeding or prejudice the right of the State Board to adjudicate this matter. If approved by the State Board, I give the SCDE permission to use my electronic signature in the style of “/s/ name” for required website publication.

Gregory M. Fish
Gregory M. Fish

01.09.2020
Date