

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the
Disciplinary Action of the
Educator Certificate of
Connie Kibben Harrell
Certificate 309192

**CONSENT ORDER OF SUSPENSION
(BREACH OF CONTRACT)**

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on October 11, 2022. On August 25, 2022, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent Connie Kibben Harrell a notice via regular and certified mail of her right to a hearing regarding the possible suspension of her South Carolina educator certificate based on her breach of contract. After receiving the notice, Ms. Harrell contacted the SCDE to discuss an alternate resolution. Ms. Harrell has agreed to waive her right to a hearing and enter into this Consent Order of Suspension.

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to suspend Ms. Harrell's educator certificate for a period of one year, commencing October 11, 2022, and ending October 10, 2023.

FINDINGS OF FACT

This case concerns a formal complaint from the Darlington County School District seeking the suspension of the educator certificate of Ms. Harrell for breach of contract. The State Board has jurisdiction in this matter pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-150 (2020) and S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-530 (2020).

On May 25, 2022, Ms. Harrell signed a contractual agreement with Darlington County School District to serve as a Teacher for the 2022-23. Ms. Harrell submitted her resignation on July 28, 2022, effective July 29, 2022. In her resignation, Ms. Harrell cited family medical issues as the reason for her resignation. Specifically, Ms. Harrell cited a need to move out-of-state to care for her daughter. The Darlington County School District informed Ms. Harrell that she would be released from her contract once a suitable replacement was found via letter on August 2, 2022. On August 4, 2022, after Ms. Harrell did not report to work, the District Superintendent informed her that a recommendation would be made to the District

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Board to report her resignation as a breach of contract to the SCDE. On August 8, 2022, the School Board of Trustees voted to report Ms. Harrell's breach of contract to the SCDE. On August 23, 2022, the District reported the matter to the SCDE.

After being notified of the pending action against her educator certificate, Ms. Harrell contacted the SCDE to discuss an alternate resolution. Ms. Harrell has agreed to the suspension of her educator certificate for a period of one year, beginning October 11, 2022, and ending October 10, 2023.

After considering the evidence, the State Board finds that the evidence presented demonstrates that Ms. Harrell breached her contract with the District, and that just cause exists to suspend Ms. Harrell's certificate 309192 for a period of one year, commencing on October 11, 2022, and ending October 10, 2023.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

"The South Carolina Board of Education may, for just cause, either revoke or suspend the certificate of any person." Just cause includes, inter alia, "unprofessional conduct" and "willful violation of the rules and regulations of the State Board of Education." S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (3) and (4) (2020). Pursuant to 24 S.C. Code Regs. 43-58 (2) and (14) (2018), the State Board of Education had the legal authority to suspend a certificate for "failure to comply with the provision of a contract without the written consent of the local school board." With respect to breach of contract, "any teacher who fails to comply with the provisions of his [or her] contract without written consent of the school board shall be deemed guilty of unprofessional conduct." S. C. Code Ann. § 59-25-530 (2020). "Upon formal complaint of the school board, substantiated by conclusive evidence, the State Board shall suspend or revoke the teacher's certificate, for a period not to exceed one calendar year."

The State Board finds that the evidence presented demonstrates that Ms. Harrell breached her contract without the consent and/or approval of the Darlington County School District. Accordingly, the evidence presented supports the State Board's determination that just cause exists to suspend the educator certificate of Connie Kibben Harrell for a period of one year, commencing on October 11, 2022, and October 10, 2023. If Ms. Harrell wishes to

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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 Services, and shall meet all certification requirements in effect at the time she requests reinstatement. Ms. Harrell shall also pay the applicable reinstatement fee. The suspension of Ms. Harrell's educator certificate 309192 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, breach of contract, willful neglect of duty, 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

s/Alan Waters
Alan Walters, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina
October 11, 2022

I, Connie Kibben Harrell, S.C. Educator Certificate 309192, 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 [three] 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, October 11, 2022. 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.

s/ Connie Kibben Harrell
Connie Kibben Harrell

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