

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the
Disciplinary Action of the
Educator Certificate of
Bridget C. Johnson
Certificate 186001

ORDER OF SUSPENSION

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on September 13, 2022. On September 28, 2021, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent Bridget C. Johnson a notice via regular and certified mail of her right to a hearing regarding the possible suspension of her South Carolina educator certificate. After receiving the notice, Ms. Johnson contacted the SCDE to request a hearing on October 13, 2021. On December 17, 2021, Ms. Johnson contacted the SCDE to state she would no longer be requesting a hearing due to a new allegation.

On April 26, 2022, after receiving notice of and investigating the new allegations, the SCDE sent Ms. Johnson a second notice letter. After receiving the second notice, Ms. Johnson did not contact the SCDE. On July 22, 2022, Ms. Johnson was notified this matter would be presented to the State Board on September 13, 2022. Ms. Johnson has not requested a hearing and is now in default.

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to suspend Ms. Johnson's educator certificate for a period of two years, commencing on September 13, 2022, and ending on September 12, 2024. Ms. Johnson will also be required to submit a letter from her medical provider indicating she is safe to return to work letter prior to reinstatement of her certification.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Ms. Johnson holds a valid South Carolina professional educator certificate. Ms. Johnson has over twenty-three years of educator experience and has no prior record of disciplinary action with the State Board.

On December 9, 2020, Ms. Johnson reported to work at Boiling Spring Intermediate School for Spartanburg County School District Two. It was alleged at the time that Ms. Johnson

was under the influence of alcohol. Ms. Johnson was observed by other staff to be behaving strangely. The principal and school resource officer reported she smelled of alcohol. Alcohol was subsequently discovered in a bag belonging to Ms. Johnson. Following an investigation, Ms. Johnson resigned from her employment, effective December 9, 2020.

On June 30, 2021, Ms. Johnson signed a teacher contract with High Point Academy, a charter school sponsored by the South Carolina Public Charter School District. The application for the position did not ask about pending certification matters. Ms. Johnson also stated she left her previous job to relocate to the Charleston area. On December 13, 2021, the SCDE received a letter from the school reporting Ms. Johnson's termination. It was alleged that she was under the influence of alcohol during the school day. Specifically, on October 13, 2021, Ms. Johnson's assistant principal observed her behavior to be, "way off." Ms. Johnson stated she was having issues with medication and was sent home after being examined by the school nurse. On December 7, 2022, the assistant principal at was approached by a student who disclosed Ms. Johnson was acting strangely again. School administration confronted Ms. Johnson and she admitted to being intoxicated. Ms. Johnson was terminated from the school, effective December 8, 2021.

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to accept the Order of Suspension of Bridget Combs Johnson's educator certificate 186001 for a period of two years, commencing on September 13, 2022, and ending on September 12, 2024.

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 (2020); S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2020). Just cause includes unprofessional conduct. S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2020); 24 S.C. Code Regs. 43-58 (2021). The State Board finds that the evidence presented demonstrates that Ms. Johnson engaged in unprofessional conduct by reporting to school intoxicated on multiple occasions. The State Board further finds that just cause exists for the suspension of Ms. Johnson, educator certificate 186001 for a period of two years, commencing on September 13, 2022, and

ending on September 12, 2024. Ms. Johnson will also be required to submit a safe to return to work letter from her medical provider prior to reinstatement of her certification.

Now, therefore, it is hereby ordered that the educator certificate of Bridget C. Johnson educator certificate 186001, is suspended for a period of two years, commencing on September 13, 2022, and ending on September 12, 2024.

If Ms. Johnson wishes to have the 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. Johnson 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. Johnson'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

s/Alan Walters
Alan Walters, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina
September 13, 2022