

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the
Disciplinary Action of the
Educator Certificate of
Christopher Charles Lewis
Certificate 277384

**ORDER OF
PUBLIC REPRIMAND**

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on December 12, 2023. On September 26, 2022, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent Christopher Charles Lewis a notice letter by certified mail, return receipt, restricted delivery, and regular mail, regarding possible action against his educator certificate. Mr. Lewis contacted the SCDE and timely requested a hearing. A hearing on the matter was held on November 20, 2023, at the SCDE. On November 24, 2023, the SCDE and Mr. Lewis received the hearing officer's final report and recommendation.

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to issue a public reprimand of Mr. Lewis' educator certification and approved this Order of Public Reprimand.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Mr. Lewis holds a valid South Carolina professional educator certificate and has over eleven years of experience. At the time of the incident, Mr. Lewis was employed by Florence School District 4 (District) as a school counselor at an elementary school and as a basketball coach at Timmonsville High School (School).

The hearing officer considered allegations of financial impropriety. The hearing officer found Mr. Lewis opened a bank account for the basketball team. Mr. Lewis stated that the money in this account was donated by himself and an assistant coach. He admitted to using the basketball account for some personal purchases. The Hearing Officer found there was no evidence to refute Mr. Lewis' claim that the money in this account was his own. However, in considering the full record, as well as the Hearing Officer's report and recommendation, the State Board found that there was just cause to discipline Mr. Lewis for his lack of record keeping. In

the Hearing Officer's report, it was noted that Mr. Lewis' handling of the funds intended for District use was "sloppy and a bit naïve."

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to issue a public reprimand of Mr. Lewis' educator certification and approved this Order of Public Reprimand.

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 presented by the District would not support a conclusion that just cause exists to suspend or revoke the educator certificate of Mr. Lewis; however, the evidence would support a conclusion that Mr. Lewis engaged in unprofessional conduct as a result of improper keeping of a bank account intended for the District's basketball team. The State Board further finds that just cause exists for the issuance of a Public Reprimand to Mr. Lewis by the State Board.

NOW, THEREFORE, it is ordered that the State Board hereby issues a Public Reprimand to Christopher Charles Lewis, certificate 277382. The Public Reprimand shall be reported to the NASDTEC Clearinghouse and all South Carolina school districts within thirty days from the date of this order with the grounds listed as "unprofessional conduct." This Order of Public Reprimand shall be posted on the SCDE's web site and shall be maintained as a public record in the SCDE's Office of General Counsel.

AND IT IS SO ORDERED.

South Carolina State Board of Education

s/Crystal F. Stapleton, Ed.D.

Crystal F. Stapleton, Ed.D., Chair

Columbia, South Carolina
December 12, 2023