

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the
Disciplinary Action of the
Educator Certificate of
Jonathan Michaels Estrella
Certificate 280346

**ORDER OF
PUBLIC REPRIMAND**

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on June 13, 2023. On December 19, 2022, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent Jonathan Michaels Estrella a notice letter by certified mail, return receipt, restricted delivery, and regular mail, regarding possible action against his educator certificate. The SCDE has verified Mr. Estrella's address and the letter sent via regular mail has not been returned. On April 5, 2023, the SCDE informed Mr. Estrella via regular mail that the State Board would meet on May 9, 2023, or as soon thereafter as is feasible, to consider action against his educator certification. Under the South Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure 5(b), Mr. Estrella has been given fair notice of constitutional due process. He has not contacted the SCDE to request a hearing and is now in default.

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

FINDINGS OF FACT

Mr. Estrella holds a valid South Carolina professional educator certificate and has over five years of experience. At the time of the incident, Mr. Estrella was employed as a teacher at Spring Hill High School (School) with School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties (District).

On August 16, 2021, the School received a report alleging Mr. Estrella was using social media to communicate with a female student. Copies of the messages were provided to School administration. The messages were not directly school related but were casual in manner, with Mr. Estrella at one point wishing the student a happy birthday. However, Mr. Estrella continued

to “follow” the student and did ask her what she thought of him “as a person, not necessarily a teacher.” This was the last conversation with the student prior to the report.

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to issue a public reprimand of Mr. Estrella’s 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 Jonathan Michaels Estrella; however, the evidence would support a conclusion that Mr. Estrella engaged in unprofessional conduct as a result of inappropriate communication with a student through social media. The State Board further finds that just cause exists for the issuance of a Public Reprimand to Mr. Estrella by the State Board.

NOW, THEREFORE, it is ordered that the State Board hereby issues a Public Reprimand to Jonathan Michaels Estrella, certificate 280346. 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
June 13, 2023