

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the
Disciplinary Action of the
Educator Certificate of
Joseph Griffin Beckham
Certificate 299056

ORDER OF SUMMARY SUSPENSION

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on May 1, 2024. In accordance with S.C. Code Ann. § 1-23-370(c) (2020), § 59-5-10 (2020), and State Board Rule of Governance BBABA, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) requested that the Chair of the State Board summarily suspend the educator certificate of Joseph Griffin Beckham, educator certificate 299056, as a result of his arrest for four counts of disseminating harmful materials to minors.

The SCDE has reason to believe that, due to the serious nature of these allegations of misconduct, Mr. Beckham may pose a threat to the health, safety, and welfare of students, who may be under his instruction and that emergency action is required. After considering the evidence presented by the SCDE, the Chair of the State Board finds that Mr. Beckham's educator certificate shall be summarily suspended until a due process hearing is held and/or this matter is otherwise resolved. The SCDE is directed to serve notice on Mr. Beckham of the summary suspension, as well as the possible suspension or revocation of his educator certificate.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Mr. Beckham holds a South Carolina educator certificate and has over four years of educator experience. At the time of the incident, Mr. Beckham was a teacher for Laurens County School District 55 (District).

On April 25, 2024, the School's resource officer received a report of a teacher showing inappropriate photos to students. It was alleged that Mr. Beckham connected his personal cell phone to his classroom's digital white board. While connected to the board, Mr. Beckham

scrolled through the photos on his cell phone. The students in the classroom witnessed inappropriate photos that were stored on Mr. Beckham's phone. Mr. Beckham was arrested on four counts of disseminating harmful material to minors, S.C. Code Ann. § 16-15-385(A)(B).

The SCDE has reason to believe that, due to the serious nature of this allegation of misconduct, Mr. Beckham may pose a threat to the health, safety, and welfare of students who may be under his instruction, and that emergency action is required. After considering the evidence presented by the SCDE, the Chair of the State Board finds that Mr. Beckham's educator certificate shall be summarily suspended until a due process hearing is held and/or this matter is otherwise resolved. The SCDE is directed to serve notice on Mr. Beckham of the summary suspension, as well as the possible suspension or revocation of his educator certificate.

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, crime against the law of this State, and evident unfitness for position for which employed. S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2020); 24 S.C. Code Regs. 43-58 (2021). In accordance with S.C. Code Ann. § 1-23-370(c) (2020), "If the agency finds that the public health, safety or welfare imperatively requires emergency action, and incorporates a finding to that effect in its order, summary suspension of a license may be ordered pending proceedings for revocation or other action." Pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 59-5-10 (2020) and State Board Rule of Governance BBABA, the Chair of the State Board finds that as a result of the allegations of Mr. Beckham's unprofessional conduct, crime against the law of this State or the United States, and evident unfitness for the position for which employed, due to his arrest on four counts of felony disseminating harmful materials to minors, there is reason to believe Mr. Beckham may pose a threat to the health, safety, and welfare of students and emergency action is required.

Accordingly, the educator certificate of Joseph Griffin Beckham, certificate number 299056, is summarily suspended until a due process hearing is held and/or this matter is

Joseph Griffin Beckham, Certificate 299056

ORDER OF SUMMARY SUSPENSION

May 1, 2024

Page 3

otherwise resolved. The SCDE is directed to serve notice on Mr. Beckham of the summary suspension, as well as the possible suspension or revocation of his educator certificate.

AND IT IS SO ORDERED.

South Carolina Board of Education

S/David C. O'Shields

David C. O'Shields, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina

May 1, 2024