

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the
Disciplinary Action of the
Educator Certificate of
Charles Stokes
Certificate 303280

ORDER OF SUMMARY SUSPENSION

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on August 26, 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 Charles Stokes, educator certificate 303280, as a result of his arrest for the felony charge of criminal sexual conduct with a minor, 3rd degree.

The SCDE has reason to believe that, due to the serious nature of these allegations of misconduct, Mr. Stokes may pose a threat to the health, safety, and welfare of students, who may be under her instruction and that emergency action is required. After considering the evidence presented by the SCDE, the Chair of the State Board finds that Mr. Stokes' 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. Stokes of the summary suspension, as well as the possible suspension or revocation of his educator certificate.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Mr. Stokes holds a South Carolina educator certificate and has over three years of educator experience. At the time of his arrest, Mr. Stokes was a teacher at River Oaks Middle School with Dorchester County School District Two.

On or about August 16, 2024, Mr. Stokes was arrested on the felony count of criminal sexual conduct with minor, 3rd degree, pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. §16-3-655(C). It is alleged that

the incident occurred the previous school year at Berkeley Middle School, when Mr. Stokes worked for the Berkeley County School District.

The SCDE has reason to believe that, due to the serious nature of this allegation of misconduct, Mr. Stokes may pose a threat to the health, safety, and welfare of students who may be under her instruction, and that emergency action is required. After considering the evidence presented by the SCDE, the Chair of the State Board finds that Mr. Stokes' 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. Stokes 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. Stokes' 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 for the felony charge of criminal sexual conduct with a minor, 3rd degree, there is reason to believe Mr. Stokes may pose a threat to the health, safety, and welfare of students and emergency action is required.

Accordingly, the educator certificate of Charles Stokes, certificate number 303280, is summarily suspended until a due process hearing is held and/or this matter is otherwise resolved.

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The SCDE is directed to serve notice on Mr. Stokes 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
August 26, 2024