

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the
Disciplinary Action of the
Educator Certificate of
Michael Jermaine White
Certificate 242439

ORDER OF DISMISSAL

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on May 14, 2024. On January 31, 2024, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent Michael Jermaine White a notice via regular and certified mail of his right to a hearing regarding the possible suspension or revocation of his South Carolina educator certificate. Mr. White timely requested a hearing, which was held on March 28, 2024. This matter is properly before the State Board pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-150 (2020) and referred to a hearing officer pursuant to S.C. Code ann. § 59-5-70 (2020).

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted on May 14, 2024, to dismiss the action and approved this Order of Dismissal.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Mr. White holds a valid South Carolina professional educator certificate and has over sixteen years of experience. At the time the incident was reported, Mr. White was working with the Charleston County School District (District). He resigned from the District on November 16, 2022. The District reported the incident to the SCDE.

On May 3, 2022, the District received a report stating Mr. White had sexual contact with a student while he was employed with a different school district in 2009. The District did report the charge to law enforcement, but the former student indicated she did not wish to press criminal charges against Mr. White. However, she stated Mr. White “should not be around kids” and remained in communication with the District.

During the hearing, Mr. White denied any inappropriate conduct and stated he had never engaged in behavior of a sexual nature with a student. A series of social media messages between the student and Mr. White from 2010 and 2022 were admitted into evidence at the hearing. Mr. White denied messaging the student in 2010, maintaining that his account was hacked and that his “voice” was different in the 2010 and 2022 messages. He did acknowledge messaging the student in 2022 after she contacted him about the allegations of the 2009 misconduct. The Hearing Officer emphasized that Mr. White also

admitted to inappropriately messaging the former student in “2014ish or whenever we did” and recognized his social media profile photograph was the same throughout the relevant period of time. The Hearing Officer found Mr. White was not a credible witness and that the former student was credible. The Hearing Officer concluded that there was substantial evidence that Mr. White engaged in inappropriate conduct and communications with a former student and recommended that the State Board permanently revoke his educator certificate.

The State Board finds that there is insufficient evidence to substantiate the allegations of inappropriate sexual contact by Mr. White in 2009 and inappropriate messages in 2010. The State Board finds that the subsequent inappropriate messages between Mr. White and the former student that were exchanged years later do not present sufficient just cause to warrant action against his educator certificate. After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted on May 14, 2024, to dismiss the action and approve this Order of Dismissal.

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 by the District would not support a conclusion that just cause exists to suspend or revoke the educator certificate of Michael Jermaine White. The State Board further finds that no cause exists for action against Mr. White’s educator certification.

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted on May14, 2024, to dismiss the action and approve this Order of Dismissal.

AND IT IS SO ORDERED.

South Carolina State Board of Education

s/David C. O’Shields

David C. O’Shields, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina

May 14, 2024