

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the
Disciplinary Action of the
Educator Certificate of
Kyndra Sumter Ford
Certificate 184236

AMENDED ORDER OF SUSPENSION

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on May 14, 2024. On May 28, 2020, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent a notice via regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, to Kyndra Sumter Ford concerning the pending action against educator certificate 184236. Ms. Ford thereafter timely requested a hearing which was held on February 21, 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, testimony, and the report and recommendations presented, the State Board voted to suspend the certificate of Ms. Ford's, certificate 184236, for a period of one year, retroactively commencing on May 14, 2023, and ending on May 14, 2024.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Ms. Ford holds a South Carolina educator certificate and has over nineteen years of educator experience. At the time of the allegations, Ms. Ford served as a speech language pathologist for the Berkeley County School District (District). Effective December 21, 2018, Ms. Ford resigned from the District.

The Hearing Officer found substantial evidence that Ms. Ford created a hostile work environment for her coworkers. She engaged in intimidating and confrontational behavior towards colleagues and supervisors that questioned her, evaluated her, or made professional suggestions for improvement. This behavior included inundating others with disrespectful, confusing, and repetitive emails. Once such email indicated that Ms. Ford was "very alarmed and

concerned about receiving increased and unsubstantial scrutiny” due to a mentor being assigned to assist her in meeting her evaluation goals.

Other staff members indicated they were afraid to file complaints regarding Ms. Ford’s behavior due to possible confrontation. This fear was not unfounded, as it was known Ms. Ford had confronted a teacher in her classroom after the teacher expressed concerns about Ms. Ford’s communications. It was also noted that there was at least one known incident where Ms. Ford hit an assistant principal on the arm. Ms. Ford had left a student meeting without explanation and the administrator was required to retrieve her to end the meeting with the student and the student’s parents.

The Hearing Officer found Ms. Ford also violated other District policies for staff conduct. This included refusal to follow supervisor instructions and a neglect of duty for failure to consistently provide speech services to students. Ms. Ford also disclosed student information to unauthorized recipients, which is a violation of federal education law. During the hearing, Ms. Ford denied the allegations and argued that her treatment was the result of retaliation and conspiracy by the District. The Hearing Officer did not find Ms. Ford’s testimony to be credible. The Hearing Officer recommended a permanent revocation of Ms. Ford’s educator certification.

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board concluded that a one-year suspension of Ms. Ford’s educator certificate was most appropriate under the circumstances. The State Board voted to suspend the certificate of Kyndra Sumter Ford’s, certificate 184236, for a period of one year, retroactively commencing on May 14, 2023, and ending on May 14, 2024.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

“The State Board may, for just cause, either revoke or suspend the certificate of any person.” S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-150 (2020). Just cause includes “incompetence; willful neglect of duty; willful violation of the rules and regulations of the State Board of Education; unprofessional conduct; drunkenness; cruelty; crime against the law of this State or the United States; immorality; any conduct involving moral turpitude; dishonesty; evident unfitness for

Kyndra Sumter Ford, Certificate 184236

ORDER OF SUSPENSION

May 14, 2024

Page 3

position for which employed; or sale or possession of narcotics.” S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2020); S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 43-58 (2021).

The State Board finds that the evidence presented supports its determination that just cause exists to suspend the educator certificate of Kyndra Sumter Ford for a period of one year, retroactively commencing on May 14, 2023, and ending on May 14, 2024.

If Ms. Ford wishes to have her educator certificate reinstated at the end of the suspension period, she shall make a written request to the SCDE’s Office of Educator Services and shall meet all certification requirements in effect at the time she requests reinstatement. Ms. Ford shall also pay the applicable reinstatement fee. The suspension of Ms. Ford’s educator certificate shall be reported to the NASDTEC Clearinghouse and all South Carolina school districts within thirty days from the date of this order.

AND IT IS SO ORDERED.

South Carolina Board of Education

s/David C. O’Shields

David C. O’Shields, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina

May 14, 2024