

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the
Disciplinary Action of the
Educator Certificate of
Arielle Christian Morton
Certificate 274496

ORDER OF SUMMARY SUSPENSION

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on April 2, 2025. 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 Ariella Christian Morton, educator certificate 274496, as a result of her arrest for the felony charge of unlawful conduct towards a child.

The SCDE has reason to believe that, due to the serious nature of these allegations of misconduct, Ms. Morton 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 Ms. Morton'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 Ms. Morton of the summary suspension, as well as the possible suspension or revocation of her educator certificate.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Ms. Morton holds a South Carolina educator certificate and has over eight years of educator experience. At the time of the incident, Ms. Morton was a special education teacher for L.W. Conder Elementary (School) with Richland County School District 2.

It is alleged that, on or about February 18, 2025, Ms. Morton took a slender twig from school grounds and hit a 5-year-old student. The student was left with visible marks on their skin.

Another staff member of the School witnessed the incident and intervened to take the switch from Ms. Morton. The incident was then reported to School administration.

The SCDE has reason to believe that, due to the serious nature of this allegation of misconduct, Ms. Morton 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 Ms. Morton'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 Ms. Morton of the summary suspension, as well as the possible suspension or revocation of her 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 Ms. Morton'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 her arrest for unlawful conduct towards a child, there is reason to believe Ms. Morton may pose a threat to the health, safety, and welfare of students and emergency action is required.

Accordingly, the educator certificate of Arielle Christian Morton, certificate number 274496, is summarily suspended until a due process hearing is held and/or this matter is otherwise resolved. The SCDE is directed to serve notice on Ms. Morton of the summary suspension, as well as the possible suspension or revocation of her educator certificate.

AND IT IS SO ORDERED.

South Carolina Board of Education

s/Rita Allison
Rita Allison, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina
April 2, 2025