

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the
Disciplinary Action of the
Educator Certificate of
Lee Wesley Houston
Certificate 303079

**ORDER OF SUSPENSION
(BREACH OF CONTRACT)**

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on March 4, 2025. On December 20, 2024, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent Lee Wesley Houston a notice via regular and certified mail of his right to a hearing regarding the possible suspension of his South Carolina educator certificate. Mr. Houston received the notice on December 26, 2024, as evidenced by a signed postal receipt. He has not contacted the SCDE to request a hearing and is now in default.

After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to suspend Mr. Houston's educator certificate for a period of one year, commencing on March 4, 2025, and ending on March 3, 2026.

FINDINGS OF FACT

This case concerns a formal complaint from the Aiken County Public School District (District) seeking the suspension of the educator certificate of Mr. Houston for breach of contract. The State Board has jurisdiction in this matter pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-150 (2020) and S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-530 (2020).

On May 10, 2024, Mr. Houston signed a contractual agreement with the District to serve as a teacher for the 2024-2025 school year. On September 26, 2024, Mr. Houston submitted his resignation to the District, effective October 7, 2024. He did not provide a reason for his resignation. On September 26, 2024, the District informed Mr. Houston he would not be considered for release from his contract until a suitable candidate was found to fill the position. He did not return to fulfill his contract. The District Board voted to

report Mr. Houston's breach of contract to the SCDE on November 19, 2024. The District reported the matter to the SCDE on November 19, 2024.

After considering the evidence, the State Board finds that the evidence presented demonstrates that Mr. Houston breached his contract with the District, and that just cause exists to suspend Mr. Houston's certificate 303079 for a period of one year, commencing on March 4, 2025, and ending on March 3, 2026.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

"The South Carolina Board of Education may, for just cause, either revoke or suspend the certificate of any person." Just cause includes, *inter alia*, "unprofessional conduct" and "willful violation of the rules and regulations of the State Board of Education." S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (3) and (4) (2020). Pursuant to 24 S.C. Code Regs. 43-58 (2) and (14) (2021), the State Board of Education has the legal authority to suspend a certificate for "failure to comply with the provision of a contract without the written consent of the local school board." With respect to breach of contract, "any teacher who fails to comply with the provisions of his [or her] contract without written consent of the school board shall be deemed guilty of unprofessional conduct." S. C. Code Ann. § 59-25-530 (2020). "Upon formal complaint of the school board, substantiated by conclusive evidence, the state board shall suspend or revoke the teacher's certificate, for a period not to exceed one calendar year." *Id.*

The State Board finds that the evidence presented demonstrates that Mr. Houston breached his contract without the consent and/or approval of the District. Accordingly, the evidence presented supports the State Board's determination that just cause exists to suspend the educator certificate of Lee Wesley Houston for a period of one year, commencing on March 4, 2025, and ending on March 3, 2026.

If Mr. Houston wishes to have his educator certificate reinstated at the end of the suspension period, he shall make a written request to the SCDE's Office of Educator Services and shall meet all certification requirements in effect at the time he requests reinstatement. Mr. Houston shall also pay the applicable reinstatement fee. The

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suspension of Mr. Houston's educator certificate 303079 shall be reported to the NASDTEC Clearinghouse and all South Carolina school districts within thirty days from the date of this order, with the reason stated as "unprofessional conduct, breach of contract, willful neglect of duty, and failure to comply with the provisions of a contract without the written consent of the local school board."

AND IT IS SO ORDERED.

South Carolina State Board of Education

s/Rita Allison
Rita Allison, Chair

March 4, 2025
Columbia, South Carolina