

THE ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

**IN RE THE MATTER OF:
ROBERT THOMAS EDWARDS, III
SEPTEMBER 12, 2019**

PLSB CASE NO. 18-060

FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND ORDER

At its regular meeting on September 12, 2019, the Arkansas State Board of Education (Board) accepted the recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board Ethics Hearing Subcommittee (Hearing Subcommittee) for disciplinary action against the teaching license of Robert Thomas Edwards, III (Educator Edwards). Based upon Educator Edwards' acceptance of the Hearing Subcommittee's recommendation and the evidence presented, in accordance with the Administrative Procedures Act, Ark. Code Ann. 25-15-101 et seq., the Board hereby states as follows:

I. Findings of Fact

- a. The Arkansas Department of Education issued Educator Edwards a standard five-year teaching license on January 1, 2017, valid until December 31, 2021.
- b. The Professional Licensure Standards Board Ethics Subcommittee (Ethics Subcommittee) received an allegation that Educator Edwards violated the Arkansas Department of Education Rules Governing the Code of Ethics for Arkansas Educators promulgated pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-17-422 and 6-17-428.
- c. On December 1, 2017, the Ethics Subcommittee authorized an investigation into allegations that Educator Edwards violated Standard 2: an educator maintains competence regarding his or her professional practice inclusive of skills, knowledge, dispositions, and responsibilities relating to his or her organizational position.

- d. Educator Edwards was notified on December 4, 2017, of the Ethics Subcommittee's authorization to investigate this allegation.
- e. After considering the investigator's report and evidence on February 5, 2018, the Ethics Subcommittee unanimously found that a preponderance of evidence existed to substantiate violation of Standard 2 of the Code of Ethics. Educator Edwards rejected the Ethics Subcommittee's recommendation and requested an evidentiary hearing.
- f. On April 26, 2019, Educator Edwards appeared for his evidentiary hearing before the Hearing Subcommittee. After consideration of the testimony, evidence, and arguments presented at the evidentiary hearing, the Hearing Subcommittee found that a preponderance of evidence existed to substantiate violation of Standard 2 in that Educator Edwards:

- Solicited the assistance of a subordinate employee to take an online test on his behalf.

- g. The Hearing Subcommittee recommended that the State Board take the following actions:
1. Probation of license for 2 years;
 2. Assess a \$75 fine (due before the end of the first year of probation);
 3. Require Educator to complete the following coursework/readings:
 - Title: The Ethical Teacher (192p); Author: Elizabeth Campbell; ISBN 10: 0335212182; ISBN 13: 978-0335212187
 - Title: The Active/Ethical Professional: A Framework for Responsible Educators (200p); Author: Michael C. Gunzenhauser; ISBN 10: 1441152105; ISBN 13: 978-1441152107
 4. Require Educator to prepare written reflection for each book (due within 90 days of State Board Order);
 5. Require Educator to provide copies of curriculum required by the university; and

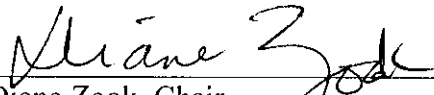
6. Require Educator to pay all associated costs.
- h. On May 9, 2019, Educator Edwards' attorney was notified of the Hearing Subcommittee's final determination and recommendation by certified mail. Educator Edwards accepted the Hearing Subcommittee's recommendation thereby waiving his right to any further notice, hearing, or any other rights he may have under the Administrative Procedure Act, including those rights set forth in Ark. Code Ann. §§ 25-15-211 and 25-15-212.
- i. At today's meeting, the Hearing Subcommittee's recommendation and supporting documentation were presented to the Board as part of its Action agenda.

II. Conclusions of Law

- a. Upon consideration of the evidence presented at the meeting, Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-11-105, 6-17-401, 6-17-422, 6-17-428 and 25-15-201 et seq., and the Arkansas Department of Education Rules Governing the Code of Ethics for Arkansas Educators, the Board adopts the Hearing Subcommittee's recommendations, and enacts the sanctions accordingly. The Board admonishes Educator Robert Thomas Edwards, III for his violation of the Code of Ethics.
- b. Educator Edwards is cautioned that his non-payment of the assessed fine of \$75 may result in the suspension of his license until the fine is paid in full.
- c. Educator Edwards is cautioned that further violations of the Code of Ethics or failure to pay the fine before the end of the first year of probation may result in more severe discipline including permanent revocation of his license.

- d. This order shall remain permanently in Educator Edwards' professional licensure file and the confidential files of the Professional Licensure Standards Board.

IT IS SO ORDERED.



Diane Zook, Chair
Arkansas State Board of Education