

THE ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

**IN RE THE MATTER OF:
REBEKAH LEEANN BENNETT
OCTOBER 11, 2018**

PLSB CASE NO. 17-157

FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND ORDER

At its regular meeting on October 11, 2018, the Arkansas State Board of Education (Board) reviewed the findings of the Professional Licensure Standards Board Evidentiary Hearing Subcommittee (Hearing Subcommittee) for disciplinary action against the teaching license of Rebekah Leeann Bennett (Educator Bennett). Based upon the briefs of the parties and the evidence presented to the Board, in accordance with the Administrative Procedures Act, Ark. Code Ann. 25-15-101 et seq., the Board hereby states as follows:

I. Procedural History

- a. The Arkansas Department of Education issued Rebekah Leeann Bennett a standard five-year teaching license on January 1, 2014, valid until December 31, 2018.
- b. The Ethics Subcommittee received an allegation that Educator Bennett 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 January 17, 2017, the Subcommittee authorized an investigation into allegations that Educator Bennett violated Standard 1: An educator maintains a professional relationship with each student, both in and outside of the classroom.

- d. Educator Bennett was notified on March 6, 2017, of the subcommittee's authorization to investigate this allegation.
- e. After considering the investigator's report and evidence on July 10, 2017, the subcommittee unanimously found that reasonable belief existed to substantiate a violation of Standard 1 in that Educator Bennett, while escorting a student down the hallway, shoved/slammed/threw the student against the wall.
- f. The Ethics Subcommittee recommended that the State Board take the following actions:
 - Permanent Revocation of License.
- g. On July 17, 2017, Educator Bennett was notified of the Ethics Subcommittee's reasonable belief determination and recommendation by certified and regular mail. On August 7, 2017, Educator Bennett rejected the Ethics Subcommittee's recommendation and requested an evidentiary hearing.
- h. On December 8, 2017, Educator Bennett, along with her attorney, Valerie Bailey, appeared for an evidentiary hearing before the PLSB Evidentiary Hearing Panel (Hearing Panel).
- i. The Hearing Panel rescinded the Ethics Subcommittee's recommendation and recommended that the State Board take the following action:
 - Suspension of Educator's License for 18 months.
- j. On March 27, 2018, Educator Bennett rejected the Hearing Panel's recommendation and requested an appeal of the decision to the State Board.
- k. Educator Bennett, along with her attorney, Matthew Campbell, appeared before the State Board today to appeal the Hearing Panel's recommendation.

1. At today's meeting, the Hearing Panel's recommendation, parties' briefs, and supporting documentation were presented to the Board as part of its action agenda.

II. Findings of Fact and 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 made the following findings, conclusions and determinations by a preponderance of the evidence:
 - Educator Bennett is a licensed educator in the state of Arkansas;
 - While escorting a student down the hallway, Educator Bennett DID shove/slam/throw the student against the wall; and
 - Educator Bennett DID violate Standard 1 of the Code of Ethics for Arkansas Educators.
- b. The State Board imposes the following sanction:
 - Written Reprimand;
 - Fifty dollar (\$50) Fine; (Due within ninety (90) days of the final order);
 - Complete Training Courses: SPB14008 Behavior is Communication (1.5 hours); and SPC17012 Introduction to Behavior: General Classroom Management Systems (1 hour);
 - Submit written reflection statements explaining how each training will impact educator's interactions with students; (All training and written reflections must be completed within ninety (90) days of the final order; and
 - All associated costs to be paid by educator.
- c. Educator Bennett is cautioned that her non-payment of the assessed fine of fifty dollars (\$50) will result in the continued suspension of her license until the fine is paid in full.

- d. Educator Bennett is cautioned that further violations of the Code of Ethics or failure to pay the fine within ninety (90) days from the date of this order may result in more severe discipline including permanent revocation of her license.
- e. This order shall remain permanently in Educator Bennett's professional licensure file and the confidential files of the Professional Licensure Standards Board.

IT IS SO ORDERED.



Dr. Jay Barth, Chair
Arkansas State Board of Education