

THE ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

IN RE THE MATTER OF:

JENNIFER ANN HILL

JULY 13, 2023

PLSB CASE NO. 23-060

FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND ORDER

At its regular meeting on July 13, 2023, the Arkansas State Board of Education (“Board”) accepted the recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board Ethics Subcommittee (“Ethics Subcommittee”) for disciplinary action against the teaching license of Jennifer Ann Hill (“Educator Hill”). Based upon Educator Hill’s failure to respond to the Ethics Subcommittee’s recommendation and the evidence presented, in accordance with the Administrative Procedure 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 Hill a standard five-year teaching license on January 1, 2020, valid until December 31, 2024.
- b. The Ethics Subcommittee received an allegation that Educator Hill 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 2, 2022, the Ethics Subcommittee authorized an investigation into allegations that Educator Hill violated *Standard 1: an educator maintains a professional relationship with each student, both in and outside the classroom;* *Standard 2: an educator maintains competence regarding his or her professional*

practice, inclusive of professional and ethical behavior, skills, knowledge, dispositions, and responsibilities relating to his or her organizational position. On February 3, 2023, after initial investigative review, Standards 3 and 8 were subsequently presented to and approved by the Ethics Subcommittee for investigation. Standard 3: an educator honestly fulfills reporting obligations associated with professional practices; Standard 8: an educator, while on school premises or at school-sponsored activities involving students, refrains from: a) using, possessing and/or being under the influence of alcohol or unauthorized drugs/substances, and/or possessing items prohibited by law, b) possessing or using tobacco or tobacco-related products, e-cigarettes, e-liquid, or vapor products, or c) abusing/misusing prescription medications or other authorized substances as evidenced by impairment.

- d. Educator Hill was notified on December 5, 2022, of the Ethics Subcommittee's authorization of an investigation for alleged violations of Standards 1 and 2 of the Code of Ethics. On February 3, 2023, after initial investigative review, Standards 3 and 8 were subsequently presented to and approved by the Ethics Subcommittee for investigation.
- e. After considering the investigator's report and evidence on June 2, 2023, the Ethics Subcommittee unanimously found that a preponderance of evidence existed to substantiate violation of Standards 1, 2, 3, and 8 in that Educator Hill:
- Engaged in inappropriate communications (in-person) with students.
 - Exhibited inappropriate disposition inclusive of professional and ethical behavior.
 - Violated district, state or federal policies or law.

- Educator intentionally or knowingly attempted to mislead an educational entity.
 - Educator was under the influence at school.
- f. The Ethics Subcommittee recommended that the State Board take the following actions:
1. Suspension of license for 1 year followed by a 2 year Probation.
 2. Assess a \$300 fine (due within 90 days of the State Board Order);
 1. Require Educator to complete the following coursework/readings:
 - a. Title: The New Art and Science of Teaching: More Than Fifty New Instructional Strategies for Students Success (152p) Author: Robert J. Marzano ISBN-13: 978-1943874965. Written reflection regarding how the book will impact the educator's classroom practices in the future. Written reflection due within 30 days prior to the end of suspension for suspension removal.
 - b. 6 Hours of content specific training in area of employment through Education Cooperative or Arkansas IDEAS in addition to state/district professional development requirements. Written reflection regarding how the training will impact the educator's classroom practices in the future. Written reflection on training due within 60 days of employment.
 2. Educator will complete a 1 year suspension, followed by a 2 year probation. Prior to the educator being released from suspension, the educator must provide a letter from a licensed mental health professional stating that she is competent to return to the classroom. The letter is due to the PLSB for approval within 30 days prior to the end of the suspension for suspension removal.
 3. During the suspension and probation, the educator will provide a quarterly report from a mental health professional that she is continuing prescribed treatment. Quarterly reports required to move from suspension to probation; and

4. Require Educator to pay all associated costs.
- g. On June 2, 2023, Educator Hill was notified of the Ethics Subcommittee's initial determination and recommendation by secure server. Educator Hill failed to respond to the Ethics Subcommittee's recommendation thereby waiving her right to any further notice, hearing, or any other rights she may have under the Administrative Procedure Act, including those rights set forth in Ark. Code Ann. §§ 25-15-211 and 25-15-212.
- h. At today's meeting, the Ethics Subcommittee's recommendation and supporting documentation were presented to the Board as part of its consent 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 Ethics Subcommittee's recommendations, and enacts the sanctions accordingly. The Board admonishes Educator Hill for her violation of the Code of Ethics.
- b. Educator Hill is cautioned that her non-payment of the assessed fine of \$300 will result in the continued suspension of her license until the fine is paid in full.
- c. Educator Hill 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.
- d. This order shall remain permanently in Educator Hill's professional licensure file and the confidential files of the Professional Licensure Standards Board.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Moore", is positioned above a horizontal line.

Dr. Sarah Moore, Chair
Arkansas State Board of Education