

THE ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

IN RE THE MATTER OF:
STEPHANIE LYNN FRITTS
NOVEMBER 9, 2023

PLSB CASE NO. #23-157

FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND ORDER

At its regular meeting on November 9, 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 Stephanie Lynn Fritts (“Educator Fritts”). Based upon Educator Fritts’ acceptance of 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 Fritts a standard five-year teaching license on January 1, 2021, valid until December 31, 2025.
- b. The Ethics Subcommittee received an allegation that Educator Fritts 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 June 2, 2023, the Ethics Subcommittee authorized an investigation into allegations that Educator Fritts 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.

- d. Educator Fritts was notified on June 13, 2023, of the Ethics Subcommittee's authorization to investigate this allegation.
- e. After considering the investigator's report and evidence on October 6, 2023, the Ethics Subcommittee unanimously found that a preponderance of evidence existed to substantiate violation of Standards 1 and 2 in that Educator Fritts:
 - Inappropriate interactions with a student(s).
 - Inappropriate communication with student(s).
 - Exhibited inappropriate disposition inclusive of professional and ethical behavior.
 - Violated district, state or federal policies or law.
- f. The Ethics Subcommittee recommended that the State Board take the following actions:
 1. Probation of License for 18 months;
 2. Assess a \$250 fine (due within 90 days of the State Board Order);
 3. Require Educator to complete the following coursework/readings:
 - a. Code of Ethics Training Provided by the PLSB (1.5 Hours)
 - b. Title: The Power Paradox: How We Gain and Lose Influence (208p)
Author: Dacher Keltner ISBN 10: 0143110292 ISBN 13: 978-0143110293
 - c. Title: Teaching with Love & Logic: Taking Control of the Classroom
Author: Jim Fay ISBN-10: 1942105231 ISBN-13: 978-1942105237
 4. Educator to provide written reflection on how each training/reading will influence the educator's interactions with students in the future. (due within 90 days of the state board order); and

5. Require Educator to pay all associated costs.
- g. On October 12, 2023, Educator Fritts' attorney, was notified of the Ethics Subcommittee's initial determination and recommendation by certified mail. Educator Fritts accepted 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 Stephanie Lynn Fritts for her violation of the Code of Ethics.
- b. Educator Fritts is cautioned that her non-payment of the assessed fine of \$250 may result in the suspension of her license until the fine is paid in full.
- c. Educator Fritts 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 Fritts' professional licensure file and the confidential files of the Professional Licensure Standards Board.

IT IS SO ORDERED.



Dr. Sarah Moore, Chair
Arkansas State Board of Education