

THE ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

**IN RE THE MATTER OF:
STEPHANIE ESTELLE HACKNEY
JULY 11, 2024**

PLSB CASE NO. 24-095

FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND ORDER

At its regular meeting on July 11, 2024, the Arkansas State Board of Education (“Board”) accepted the recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board Ethics Hearing Subcommittee (“Ethics Hearing Subcommittee”) for disciplinary action against the teaching license of Educator Stephanie Estelle Hackney (“Educator Hackney”). Based upon Educator Hackney’s 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 Hackney a standard five-year teaching license on January 1, 2020, valid until December 31, 2024.
- b. The Ethics Subcommittee received an allegation that Educator Hackney 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 November 13, 2023, the Ethics Subcommittee authorized an investigation into allegations that Educator Hackney 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; and*

Standard 4: an educator entrusted with public funds and property, including school sponsored activity funds, honors that trust with honest, responsible stewardship.

- d. Educator Hackney was notified on November 15, 2023, of the Ethics Subcommittee's authorization to investigate this allegation.
- e. After considering the investigator's report and evidence on February 2, 2024, the Ethics Subcommittee unanimously found that a preponderance of evidence existed to substantiate violation of Standards 1, 2, and 4 of the Code of Ethics. Educator Hackney rejected the Ethics Subcommittee's recommendation and requested an evidentiary hearing.
- f. On May 8, 2024, Educator Hackney appeared for her 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 Standards 1, 2, and 4 in that Educator Hackney:
 - Inappropriate interaction with a student(s).
 - Inappropriate communication with a student(s).
 - Exhibited inappropriate disposition inclusive of professional and ethical behavior.
 - Violated district, state or federal policies or law.
 - Mishandled funds.
- g. The Hearing Subcommittee recommended that the State Board take the following actions:
 1. Suspension of License for 1 year followed by a Probation of License for 2 years;
 2. Assess a \$500.00 fine (due within 90 days of State Board Order);
 3. Require Educator to complete the following coursework/readings:

- a. Title: The 85% Solution: How Personal Accountability Guarantees Success -- No Nonsense, No Excuses (256p) Author: Linda Galindo
ISBN 10: ISBN 13: 9780470500163
 - b. Code of Ethics Training Provided by the PLSB (1.5 Hours)
 - c. Tier I Training (Upon employment after suspension, including certificate of completion)
 - d. Title: Flipping the Switch: Unleash the Power of Personal Accountability Using the QBQ! (144 p) Author: John G. Miller ISBN
10: 0399152334 ISBN 13: 978-0399152337
 - e. CTM17081: Financial Literacy Unit One: Money, Budgeting, and Banking (1 Credit Hour)
4. Written reflection on each training/book regarding how they will impact her future interactions with students and handling of money (due to the PLSB for approval within 30 days prior to the end of their suspension for suspension removal);
5. While on probation, the educator will provide quarterly reports from her supervisor on how her interactions with students are progressing. If the educator is responsible for the handling of money, the educator must provide quarterly reports from supervisor on following district policies and procedures concerning the handling of school funds; and
6. Require Educator to pay all associated costs.
- h. On May 13, 2024, Educator Hackney's attorney was notified of the Hearing Subcommittee's final determination and recommendation by secure email. Educator Hackney accepted the Hearing 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.

- i. 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 Stephanie Hackney for her violation of the Code of Ethics.
- b. Educator Hackney is cautioned that her non-payment of the assessed fine of \$500.00 will result in the continued suspension of her license until the fine is paid in full.
- c. Educator Hackney 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 Hackney's 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