

## THE ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

**IN RE THE MATTER OF:  
MELISSA L. STRICKLAND  
AUGUST 8, 2024**

**PLSB CASE NO. 24-198**

### **FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND ORDER**

At its regular meeting on August 8, 2024, 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 Melissa L. Strickland (“Educator Strickland”). Based upon Educator Strickland’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 Strickland a standard five-year teaching license on April 28, 2021, valid until December 31, 2025.
- b. The Ethics Subcommittee received an allegation that Educator Strickland 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 April 5, 2024, the Ethics Subcommittee authorized an investigation into allegations that Educator Strickland violated *Standard 1: an educator maintains a professional relationship with each student, both in and outside the classroom; and 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 Strickland was notified on April 8, 2024, of the Ethics Subcommittee's authorization to investigate this allegation.
- e. After considering the investigator's report and evidence on July 12, 2024, the Ethics Subcommittee unanimously found that a preponderance of evidence existed to substantiate violation of Standards 1 and 2 in that Educator Strickland:
  - Inappropriate interaction with a student(s).
  - Physical contact 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) Written Reprimand;
  - (2) Assess a \$100.00 fine (due within 90 days of the State Board Order);
  - (3) Require Educator to complete the following coursework/readings:
    - (a) Title: Classroom Management for Elementary Teachers: 15 Strategies to Manage Challenging Behaviors and Create a Responsive Classroom; Author: Freya Fan; ISBN-13:979-8461993252.
    - (b) ArkansasIDEAS Training SPC17013 Introduction to Behavior: Behavior Intervention Plans (1 Credit Hour)
    - (c) Code of Ethics Training Provided by the PLSB (1.5 Hours)

- (4) Educator to provide written reflection on each training/book regarding how the educator will improve her interactions with students in the future. Due to the PLSB for approval within 90 days of the State Board Order; and
  - (5) Require Educator to pay all associated costs.
- g. On July 12, 2024, Educator Strickland's attorney, was notified of the Ethics Subcommittee's initial determination and recommendation by secure server. Educator Strickland 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 Melissa L. Strickland for her violation of the Code of Ethics.
- b. Educator Strickland is cautioned that her non-payment of the assessed fine of \$100.00 may result in the suspension of her license until the fine is paid in full.

- c. Educator Strickland 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 Strickland's professional licensure file and the confidential files of the Professional Licensure Standards Board.

IT IS SO ORDERED.



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Dr. Sarah Moore, Chair  
Arkansas State Board of Education