

Subcommittee for the Commission on Teacher and Administrator Education,  
Certification and Licensure and Development  
Senator Grey Ferris Boardroom, Central High School Building  
359 North West Street, Jackson, MS 39201  
June 21, 2023

In accordance with Miss. Code Ann. §§ 37-3-2(10) and 25-41-5, a Subcommittee of the members of the Commission on Teacher and Administrator Education, Certification and Licensure and Development met at 9:00 a.m. on June 21, 2023, in the Senator Grey Ferris Boardroom located on the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor of the Central High School Building, 359 North West Street Jackson, Mississippi 39201.

Members in Attendance: Etta Taplin, Jamie Creel, and Mary Hill-Taylor  
Commission Counsel: Kristi Kennedy, Special Assistant Attorney General

OEM Counsel: Joseph Runnels, Esq.

Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) Personnel in Attendance:  
Scott DeJong, Director of the Office of Educator Misconduct  
Tilla Tate, Licensure Investigator for the Office of Educator Misconduct  
Anissa Stubbs, OEM Administrative Assistant

Others in Attendance:  
Dr. Jermain Taylor, Superintendent of West Point Consolidated School District  
("WPCSD")  
Dr. Kendall Pickens, Assistant Superintendent of WPCSD  
Richard Bryant, former Principal of Fifth Street School  
Danielle Spencer, Counselor at Fifth Street School  
Mechelle Welch, IT Director of WPCSD  
Stacy Harris, parent

Matters before the Commission Hearing Subcommittee ("Subcommittee"):

**I. In the Matter of Mississippi Educator License No. 324405, Antavious Belgrave**

Etta Taplin, presiding officer of the Subcommittee, called the hearing to order at 9:31 a.m.

After all exhibits were received into evidence, OEM Counsel advised that due to the nature of the case, there was a risk of a student's personally identifiable information ("PII") being disclosed in contravention of the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"). Jamie Creel made a motion for the Subcommittee to enter an executive session for the purpose of hearing the testimony of witnesses. This motion was seconded by Mary Hill-Taylor and passed unanimously. The

Subcommittee entered executive session at 9:37 a.m. The following people remained in the room during Executive Session: Subcommittee members Etta Taplin, Jamie Creel, and Mary Hill-Taylor; Subcommittee Counsel Kristi Kennedy; OEM Counsel Joseph Runnels; MDE personnel Scott DeJong, Tilla Tate, and Anissa Stubbs; Respondent Antavious Belgrave; and witnesses Dr. Jermain Taylor, Richard Bryant, Danielle Spencer, Mechelle Welch, and Stacy Harris.

After all testimony was heard, Jamie Creel moved to return to open session, which was seconded by Mary Hill-Taylor. After a unanimous vote, the Subcommittee returned to open session at 12:43 p.m. Mary Hill-Taylor moved to close the session to determine whether the Subcommittee should enter into Executive Session. Upon a second to the motion by Jamie Creel, the Subcommittee voted unanimously to close the session.

Mary Hill-Taylor made a motion for the Subcommittee to enter into Executive Session to consider the evidence presented and to deliberate with regard to the license of the above-identified educator. Upon a second to the motion by Jamie Creel, the Subcommittee voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session. Subcommittee members Etta Taplin, Jamie Creel, and Mary Hill-Taylor and Subcommittee Counsel, Kristi Kennedy, remained in the room during Executive Session.

During Executive Session, the Subcommittee unanimously agreed to take the following action:

Jamie Creel moved that the Commission Hearing Subcommittee suspend Mississippi Educator License No. 324405 issued to Antavious K. Belgrave for one (1) year from the date of this hearing. During his one (1) year suspension, the Respondent, at his own expense, shall take a minimum of one (1) three-hour course, dealing with School Law and one (1) three-hour course dealing with cybersecurity training for teachers from an accredited university or school board entity, and he shall submit proof of attendance and successful completion of the required courses of study to the Office of Educator Misconduct by June 21, 2024. Failure to submit said proof by the deadline shall result in continued suspension of the Respondent's educator license until the required courses have been successfully completed. If the Respondent successfully completes the required courses, under Miss. Code Ann. § 37-3-2(14)(a) his license shall be reinstated automatically upon submission of a written request to the Commission. Mary Hill-Taylor seconded the motion, and the Commission Hearing Subcommittee unanimously approved the motion.

On a motion by Jamie Creel, seconded by Mary Hill-Taylor, the Subcommittee voted unanimously to return to an open meeting. In Open Session, counsel read the decision of the Subcommittee to those remaining present at the meeting.

Presiding Officer Etta Taplin pronounced the conclusion of the hearing at 1:55 p.m.

**II. In the Matter of Mississippi Educator License No. 194962, Kwame Smith**

Etta Taplin, presiding officer of the Subcommittee, called the hearing to order at 2:01 p.m.

OEM Counsel stated that Respondent called the OEM that morning and advised he would be unable to attend the hearing because he was affected by recent tornados in his area. Respondent requested a continuance of his hearing. OEM Counsel advised that Respondent had previously had a continuance of his hearing and was obliged to appear in person to request a second hearing per the Commission's Rules for Procedure in Disciplinary Hearings. OEM Counsel advised that considering the Respondent's circumstances, the OEM did not have an objection to the Respondent's request for a continuance.

On motion by Mary Hill-Taylor, seconded by Jamie Creel, the Subcommittee unanimously voted to grant a continuance of the Respondent's hearing.

Presiding Officer Etta Taplin pronounced the conclusion of the hearing at 2:04 p.m.

**III. Agreed Orders**

Etta Taplin, serving as presiding officer for the Subcommittee, called the hearing to order at 2:04 p.m.

Scott DeJong, Director for the Office of Educator Misconduct, presented four proposed Agreed Order for ratification by the Subcommittee:

- A. Tavares Johnson, Educator License No. 323009, Standard 4;
- B. Brandi S. Ratliff, Educator License No. 258620, Standard 10;
- C. Whitney W. Wooten, Educator License No. 318568, Standard 10; and
- D. Symone Montgomery, Educator License No. 253771, Standard 10.

Following the Presentation by OEM, Mary Hill-Taylor moved that the Subcommittee accept and ratify the proposed Agreed Orders. Jamie Creel seconded the motion and the Subcommittee unanimously voted to accept and ratify the above listed matters.

This matter concluded at 2:13 p.m.

On a motion by Mary Hill-Taylor, seconded by Jamie Creel, the Commission Hearing Subcommittee unanimously voted to adjourn for the day 2:13 p.m.

Etta Taplin, presiding officer of the Subcommittee, reopened the hearing at 2:18 p.m.

Scott DeJong, Director for the Office of Educator Misconduct, stated on the record that during the presentation of the Agreed Order of Whitney W. Wooten, Educator License

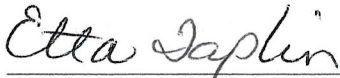
No. 318568, presented for ratification, he inadvertently read Ms. Wooten's zip code in place of her educator license number. Mr. DeJong stated Ms. Wooten's correct educator license number for the record.

This matter concluded at 2:20 p.m.

**IV. Adjournment.**

On a motion by Mary Hill-Taylor, seconded by Jamie Creel, the Commission Hearing Subcommittee unanimously voted to adjourn for the day 2:20 p.m.

Approved:



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Etta Taplin, Subcommittee Chair  
Commission on Teacher and Administrator  
Education, Certification and Licensure and  
Development



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Cory Murphy, Ph.D., Executive Secretary  
Commission on Teacher and Administrator  
Education, Certification and Licensure and  
Development