

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA	)	DIVISION OF THE SECRETARY
	)	
COUNTY OF HUGHES	)	SOUTH DAKOTA DEPT. OF EDUCATION

In re: Certification Application of	)	DSE 2026-01
GORDON HOOKS-WILLIAMS	)	ORDER DENYING APPLICATION AND
	)	REVOKING EDUCATOR CERTIFICATE

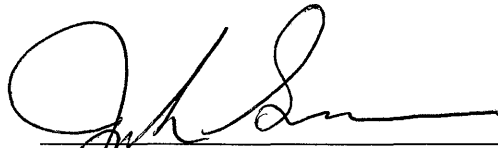
In accordance with and pursuant to the authority granted to the Secretary by SDCL § 13-42-4, 13-42-9, and ARSD article 24:18, and after review of the record herein, the Secretary issues the following Order:

1. The Secretary affirms and adopts the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law of the Independent Hearing Examiner, Robert B. Anderson, and hereby incorporates such Findings and Conclusions into this Order by this reference as if set forth in full.
2. The application of Gordon Hooks-Williams for an educator certificate is **denied**.
3. Although the Independent Hearing Examiner recommended Hooks-Williams' application be denied and his certificate be revoked for a period of five (5) years, the Secretary finds the conduct disclosed in the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law particularly egregious and a permanent revocation is warranted.
 - a. Since initially obtaining a South Dakota teaching certificate in 1996, Hooks-Williams has consistently failed to comply with disclosure requirements to either renew or obtain his certificate.
 - b. Hooks-Williams was convicted of a DUI while driving a school vehicle and two protection orders were entered against him in regard to two prior girlfriends.
 - c. Hooks-Williams employment at Wolsey-Wessington School District and Andes Central School District depicts a history of unprofessional conduct and failure to accept responsibility for his actions.

4. The teaching certificate of Gordon Hooks-Williams, Certificate # 56957, is hereby **permanently revoked.**
5. Hooks-Williams is permanently prohibited from reapplication for an educator certificate in the State of South Dakota.
6. The Order and Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law are a public record pursuant to SDCL § 13-42-17.1 and ARSD 24:18:04:05.
7. Notification of this denial is to be placed on the NASDTEC registry and be placed in applicant's permanent certification file within the South Dakota Department of Education.

This constitutes final agency action and may be appealed to circuit court pursuant to ARSD 24:18:02:06.

Dated this the 7th of July, 2026.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dr. Joseph Graves', written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Joseph Graves
Secretary
South Dakota Department of Education
800 Governors Drive
Pierre, SD 57501

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA)
)SS
COUNTY OF HUGHES)

DIVISION OF THE SECRETARY

S.D. DEPT. OF EDUCATION

In Re:	DSE 2026-01
Certification Application of GORDON HOOKS-WILLIAMS	FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The South Dakota Department of Education issued a written “Notice of Intent to Deny” an Administrator Alternative Certification Application made by Gordon Hooks-Williams (Hooks) and to revoke his teaching certificate previously issued by the Department.

A hearing on the Notice of Intent to Deny was held on Hooks’ timely request before Robert B. Anderson, the duly appointed Independent Hearing Examiner, on May 11, 2026, commencing at approximately 9:00 o’clock a.m. CDT in the MacKay Building Library Commons, 800 Governors Drive, in Pierre, South Dakota 57501. The hearing was a public hearing at the request of Mr. Hooks. The hearing was held pursuant to written Notice of Hearing dated February 26, 2026.

The South Dakota Department of Education (Department) appeared through Kathryn Blaha, Director of Accreditation and Certification for the Department, and Amanda LaCroix, Senior Staff Attorney for the Department. Hooks appeared personally without counsel. Hooks had contacted an attorney several days before the hearing, and that attorney did not respond to either a telephone call and an email from the Hearing Examiner stating that a continuance would be considered if the lawyer confirmed in writing that he would appear for Mr. Hooks. No such confirmation was made. The hearing was held before the duly appointed Independent Hearing Examiner, a verbatim record was made, and the Hearing Examiner had an opportunity to see all witnesses testify and make a determination as to their credibility. After hearing the arguments of counsel and the parties and having reviewed all the testimony and exhibits and other evidence offered at the time of the hearing, including but not limited to a review of the written transcript of the May 11, 2026 hearing, as Independent Hearing Examiner, I now make and enter the following Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Sometime in approximately 1996, Hooks applied for and received a teaching certificate from the South Dakota Department of Education (DOE).

2. In 1998, Hooks’ teaching certificate was revoked based on a conviction of a crime of moral turpitude – *i.e.*, contributing to the abuse, neglect, or delinquency of a minor after initial charges of 3rd Degree rape and sexual contact with a minor had been made against him. *See* Exhibit 1.

3. The conviction mentioned in finding 2 above took place in 1994.

4. Hooks did not disclose his charge or conviction described in finding 2 above when he applied for and received a teaching certificate in 1996.

5. In 2002, Hooks received a pardon for his 1994 conviction.

6. In 2006, Hooks applied for a new teaching certificate, and that application was granted by DOE. In the conduct review portion of that application dated August 30, 2006, Hooks failed to disclose a criminal conviction described further in finding 7 below. *See Exhibit 3.*

7. In September 2005, prior to Hooks' application for the new certificate in 2006, he had been convicted of stalking (domestic violence). That conviction was not disclosed in his 2006 application. *See Exhibit 2.*

8. Sometime in 2013, Hooks was warned by DOE of the importance of full disclosure on future applications.

9. In May of 2018, Hooks applied to renew his teaching certificate, and the application was granted.

10. When he applied for renewal in 2018, Hooks did not disclose that he had been charged and convicted with petty theft in July of 2014. *See PTPSC Complaint and Conviction described in Exhibit 4.*

11. In 2020, Hooks filed a motion to expunge the petty theft charge, and the motion was granted.

12. Based on a complaint filed the Professional Teacher Practices and Standards Commission (PTPSC), Hooks and the Commission entered into a stipulation where, among other things, Hooks admitted that he had been warned about complete disclosure on future applications and that his file had been "red-flagged". *See Exhibit 6, ¶ 5.* Further, in that stipulation, Hooks admitted that he had failed to disclose his 2014 criminal charge and conviction. *See Exhibit 6, ¶ 4.* Hooks further admitted certain violations of administrative rules pertaining to certified teachers in Exhibit 6.

13. In the stipulation (at a time when Hooks was represented by legal counsel), he stipulated that, in order to maintain a current teaching certificate, he would have to comply with a number of conditions, one of which was that he would not commit any violations of the Teacher's Code of Ethics in the future and that he would continue to meet all requirements for certification.

14. Based on the stipulation (Exhibit 6), an Order was entered the PTPSC obligating Hooks to comply with certain requirements including but not limited to those reference in finding 13 above. No time limit was placed on those obligations. *See Exhibit 5.*

15. On December 7, 2018, Hooks pled guilty to driving a vehicle owned by his employer, the Wolsey-Wessington School District, while under the influence of a combination of alcohol and marijuana. Hooks received a suspended imposition of sentence.

16. The stipulation entered into by Hooks and the PTPSC also obligated Hooks to report any criminal violations to the PTPSC within 14 days. *See* Exhibit 6, ¶ 12(d). Hooks failed to report the DUI incident.

17. In May of 2023, Hooks again applied to renew his teaching certificate, and the application was granted. At that time, he did disclose the 2018 DUI, which occurred while he was employed by the Wolsey-Wessington School District.

18. When Hooks filed his May, 2023 renewal application, Hooks should have been and was likely well aware of the disclosure requirements and that, under the circumstances which existed, failure for him to completely and thoroughly disclose all items in response to the conduct questionnaire could have a detrimental effect on his application and teaching career.

19. By written document dated November 10, 2018, Hooks was suspended with pay and barred from the school campus of his employer, Wolsey-Wessington School District.

20. An incident occurred in August, 2021, at the Wolsey-Wessington football field, which led to the filing of Title IX complaint against Hooks for making inappropriate comments about female students.

21. The complaint led to a Title IX investigation, which was returned as unsubstantiated.

22. In May, 2022, an incident occurred which led to allegations that Hooks may have kept illegal drugs on school property. An investigation by two Wolsey-Wessington Administrators found that Hooks had a cigar with CBD in it. As a result of the investigation (which is described in Exhibit 11), the conclusion was reached that Hooks had told inconsistent stories concerning the incident and the cigar being kept on the school campus.

23. On October 4, 2022, Hooks' long-time girlfriend filed for and obtained an immediate protection order against Hooks. *See* Exhibit 12.

24. As a result of the immediate protection order and the permanent protection order entered later after hearing, Hooks was banned from the Wolsey-Wessington school grounds. *See* Exhibit 14.

25. After Hooks moved to Andes Central School District, he received a written reprimand from the Superintendent dated October 13, 2023, based on inappropriate behavior and failure to follow job expectations. *See* Exhibit 15.

26. Hooks received an evaluation on May 17, 2024, and March 7, 2025, where he it was recommended that his employment at Andes Central not be continued. *See* Exhibits 16 and 18.

27. As a result of a complaint made by the Andes Central School District Superintendent, the Board of Education held a hearing in August, 2024, after the Superintendent recommended Hooks' immediate termination. Numerous witnesses testified in executive session, and the hearing resulted in written findings of fact, conclusions of law, and decision. *See* Exhibit 20.

28. The hearing resulted in a finding that there was insufficient, competent, credible evidence necessary to immediately terminate Hooks' employment.

29. The findings included determinations that the testimony and written statements of the Principal and Superintendent were credible but that the testimony of Mr. Hooks was "less than fully credible".

30. This Hearing Examiner specifically finds that, although some of Hooks' testimony is credible and persuasive on certain points, much of his testimony was not credible when viewed in light of the entire record.

31. Hooks' behavior reflects a continuing pattern of deception, if not outright dishonesty, when dealing with his employers and others.

32. Hooks has a history of strained relationships with his superiors, students, coworkers, and, in particular, females.

33. Hooks made a somewhat valid point that the questions in the conduct review portion of the DOE applications are extremely broad and sometimes vague. In fact, DOE witness Blaha agreed with him to a certain point on that issue.

34. However, Hooks' repeated failures to completely and thoroughly respond to questions in the conduct review statement portion of the applications are not excused under these circumstances, since Hooks should have been aware of the DOE concern about fully and thoroughly completing the conduct review statement.

35. Evidence reflects that Hooks was effective as a coach, to a certain degree, and, to a lesser degree, as a teacher. The record reflects that Hooks had a documented history of disorganization, making erroneous assumptions, being disruptive, argumentative, and not following rules imposed by the DOE or his employers.

36. Hooks' testimony regarding the protection hearing on the petition brought by [REDACTED] exemplifies his approach in terms of not accepting responsibility for his actions. First, he testified that he did not have a gun. Then he admitted that he had a gun, but it was a toy. Then he stated that the gun had a red tip (apparently indicating that someone should have known it was a toy). However, [REDACTED] was clearly and justifiably concerned about

Hooks coming to her door with what appeared to be a gun, and Hooks' intent was clearly to intimidate and/or threaten her.

37. Hooks presented a number of letters and comments from his students showing that those students appreciated him as a coach and, to a lesser degree, as a teacher. Those comments are accepted as genuine. However, there is more to being a teacher and coach than keeping the students happy.

38. Although Hooks' testimony that he has been the victim of racial discrimination in the past is unrefuted, there is no evidence in the record that racial discrimination played a part in problems he experienced at either Wolsey-Wessington, Andes Central, or any other school district/employer.

39. Any finding of fact which is more appropriately deemed a conclusion of law is, by this reference, incorporated therein.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. Robert B. Anderson was duly designated and appointed as Independent Hearing Examiner pursuant to ARSD 24:18:02:03 by the South Dakota Secretary of Education and is thereby designated to preside over the contested case relating to the Department's Notice of Intent to Deny Hooks' Application for Administrative Alternative Certificate and the Revocation of Hooks' existing Educator Certificate. The Hearing Officer's jurisdiction is based on the authorizing statutes, administrative rules, and the Order from the Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Education which appoints him.

2. The Department of Education has jurisdiction over the parties and the subject matter of this proceeding.

3. SDCL § 13-42-9 provides that the Secretary of the Department of Education has the power and authority to refuse to issue any certificate for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to, violation of the code of ethics, failure to fulfill any requirement for certification imposed pursuant to SDCL §§ 13-42 or 13-43 or administrative rules promulgated thereto, or moral turpitude as defined in SDCL § 22-1-2.

4. The South Dakota Department of Education has the burden of going forward and the burden of proof on whether Hooks' actions as described in the Notice of Intent to Deny his Certificate justify such suspension by a preponderance of the evidence.

5. The South Dakota Department of Education has the burden of going forward and the burden of proof to show, by a preponderance of the evidence, that it is justified in denying Hooks' application for an Administrative Alternative Certification and, in addition, revoking his current Educator Certificate.

6. The South Dakota Department of Education has met its burden of proof as to its decision to deny Hooks' application for an Administrative Alternative Certificate and to revoke his current Educator Certificate.

7. The Department of Education's reliance on the provisions of SDCL §§ 13-42-9, 13-42, and 13-43, in general, are supported by the facts found in this matter and justify denial of Hooks' application for an Administrative Alternative Certificate and for revocation of his current Educator Certificate.

8. The South Dakota Department of Education has a legitimate concern relating to Hooks' criminal history, his continued failure to properly respond completely to the applicant's conduct review statement contained in the various applications he has filed and, in general, his behavior when employed as a teacher and a coach.

9. The Department of Education justifiably depended on Hooks and other applicants like him to comply with the requirements of whatever application he completed and, in particular, to do so fully and honestly.

10. It is both the finding and conclusion of this Hearing Officer that the Department of Education's decision to deny Hooks' application for an Administrative Alternative Certificate and to revoke his current Educator Certificate should be upheld and granted for the reasons set forth in these findings and conclusions as amplified in the Memorandum Opinion filed simultaneously herewith. However, such denial shall not be permanent. Hooks shall be precluded from reapplying for any type of educator certification or administrative alternative certification in the State of South Dakota for a period of five (5) years after a final decision in this matter is signed and filed by the Secretary of Education.

11. Any finding of fact which is actually a conclusion of law shall be denominated as such, and any conclusion of law which is actually a finding of fact shall be denominated as such.

An order should be entered consistent with these Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law.

Dated this 25 day of June, 2026.



Robert B. Anderson
Independent Hearing Examiner

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA)
)SS
COUNTY OF HUGHES)

DIVISION OF THE SECRETARY
S.D. DEPT. OF EDUCATION

In Re:

DSE 2026-01

Certification Application of
GORDON HOOKS-WILLIAMS

**ORDER UPHOLDING DENIAL OF
EDUCATOR CERTIFICATE**

Pursuant to the authority granted to the undersigned Independent Hearing Examiner by SDCL § 13-42, ARSD 24:18, and any other applicable statute and/or administrative rule, and further based upon the appointment of this Independent Hearing Examiner by the Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Education, and based upon Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law which are hereby incorporated by this reference, it is hereby

ORDERED that the Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Education is determined to have both a factual and legal basis to deny Hooks' application for an Administrative Alternative Certificate and to revoke Hooks' current Educator Certificate; it is further

ORDERED that Gordon Hooks-Williams be precluded from applying for certification of any type, including but not limited to educator certificate and/or administrative alternative, with the Department of Education in the State of South Dakota for a period of five (5) years after the date the Secretary of Education signs and files a decision in this matter. Thereafter, Hooks may apply for any type of Educator Certificate or Administrative Alternative Certificate in the State of South Dakota, through the Department of Education, that may be appropriate; it is further

ORDERED that this Order and the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law and the Memorandum Opinion upon which it is based will be served upon Gordon Hooks-Williams by the Department of Education pursuant to statute.

Dated this 25 day of June, 2026.



Robert B. Anderson
Independent Hearing Examiner