

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATE OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
SABRIN ABDULLAH : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 611-02/01-275

At its meeting of February 22, 2001, the State Board of Examiners reviewed information received from the Office of Criminal History Review indicating that Sabrin Abdullah was convicted in 1972 on charges of illegal possession of narcotics. As a result of such conviction, Abdullah was disqualified from public service pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1 et seq. Abdullah did not appeal the accuracy of her criminal history record before the Commissioner of Education. Upon review of the above information, at that February meeting the State Board of Examiners voted to issue Abdullah an Order to Show Cause. Abdullah currently holds a County Substitute certificate that the Camden County Office of Education issued.

The Board sent Abdullah the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on April 25, 2001. Abdullah did not respond although the certified mail receipt card was signed and returned. The regular mail copy was not returned. The Order provided that an Answer must be filed within 20 days. On November 2, 2001, the Board provided Abdullah an additional 10 days to file a response to the Order to Show Cause. The Board informed Abdullah that if she did not respond to the Order, the allegations would be deemed admitted and the State Board of Examiners would proceed to a decision as to revocation or suspension on the basis of the evidence before it. The certified mail return receipt was returned unclaimed. The regular mail copy was not returned. Once again, Abdullah did not respond.

The threshold issue before the State Board of Examiners in this matter, therefore, is whether Abdullah's disqualification from serving in the public schools of New Jersey gives the

Board just cause to act against her certificate pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6:11-3.6(a)1. Since Abdullah did not respond to the Order to Show Cause, the State Board of Examiners had no responsive pleading to consider in the hearing process. It is therefore ORDERED that the charges in the Order to Show Cause are deemed admitted for the purpose of this proceeding. N.J.A.C. 6:11-3.6(a)1. Since Abdullah's disqualification, which was predicated on the same offense as was set forth in the Order to Show Cause, is admitted, the Board of Examiners must now decide whether that constitutes a sufficient basis to act against her certificate pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6:11-3.6(a)1. We find that it does.

In enacting the Criminal History Review statute, N.J.S.A. 6-7.1 et seq. in 1986, the Legislature sought to protect public school pupils from contact with individuals whom it deemed to be a danger to them. In 1989 the Legislature specifically amended the statute to include all convictions concerning controlled dangerous substances as disqualifying offenses. See, N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1b. This amendment was a clear recognition on the part of the Legislature that individuals with such drug convictions should not be permitted to be in contact with school-aged children. The consistent and long standing policy of this State is to eliminate the use of illegal drugs. See, In the Matter of the Tenure Hearing of David Earl Humphreys, 1978 S.L.D. 689. To that end, the State and the schools herein have engaged in extensive educational efforts to warn the citizenry of the perils of illicit drugs. See, In the Matter of the Certificate of Barbara Corwick, OAL Dkt. No. EDE 3562-87, State Board of Examiners decision (March 24, 1988) Those who violate this deep-rooted policy, *whether by the use of drugs or their manufacture and distribution*, endanger the public welfare; they cannot be entrusted with the responsibility of caring for school aged pupils. Accordingly, the State Board of Examiners finds that Abdullah's

disqualification from service in the public schools of this State because of her conviction for possession of narcotics provides just cause to take action against her certificate.

That strong policy statement on the part of the Legislature set forth in N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1b also offers guidance to the State Board of Examiners as to the appropriate sanction in this matter. An individual whose offense is so great that he or she is barred from service in public schools should not be permitted to retain the license that authorizes such service. Nor should a person who has been disqualified from teaching in a public school be permitted to continue to hold herself out as a teacher. Because the Legislature considers Abdullah's offense so significant, the State Board of Examiners in this matter believes that the appropriate sanction for her disqualification is the revocation of her certificate to teach. See In the Matter of the Revocation of the Teaching Certificate of Patricia Rector, Agency Dkt. No. 19-02 (St Bd. of Education, August 7, 2002) (affirming the decision of the State Board of Examiners to revoke Rector's teaching certificate on the basis of her disqualification pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1.)

Accordingly, it is therefore ORDERED that Sabrin Abdullah's County Substitute certificate be revoked on this 17th day of January 2002. It is further ORDERED that Abdullah return her certificate to the Secretary of the State Board of Examiners, Office of Licensure and Credentials, PO Box 500, Trenton, NJ 08625-0500 within 15 days of receipt of this decision.

Joan E. Brady, Secretary
State Board of Examiners

Date of Mailing: March 12, 2003

Appeals may be made to the State Board of Education pursuant to the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:6-28.