

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
BRUCE ENGELKE : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 0506-309

At its meeting of July 20, 2006, the State Board of Examiners reviewed information received from the Division of Criminal Justice indicating that on August 24, 2005, Bruce Engelke had pled guilty to charges of endangering the welfare of a child, criminal trespass, and possession of weapons on school grounds. On September 30, 2005, Engelke was sentenced to three years' probation, psychiatric counseling, and ordered to have no contact with any victim or employees at Cavallini Middle School in the Upper Saddle River school district. Engelke currently holds a Teacher of Elementary School certificate, issued in August 1978, and a Teacher of Music certificate, issued in March 1969. Upon review of the above information, at its September 21, 2006 meeting, the State Board of Examiners voted to issue Engelke an Order to Show Cause.

The Board sent Engelke the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on September 27, 2006. The Order provided that Engelke's Answer was due within 30 days. Both copies were returned as undeliverable. As the Office of Licensure and Credentials could not find a current address for Engelke, it published the Order to Show Cause in two newspapers. Engelke did not respond to the published notice.

The threshold issue before the State Board of Examiners in this matter, therefore, is whether Engelke's guilty plea to endangering the welfare of a child, criminal trespass and possession of weapons on school grounds constitutes conduct unbecoming a certificate holder. At its meeting of March 29, 2007, the State Board of Examiners reviewed the charges in the Order to Show Cause. Since there was no response, the Board of Examiners determined that no material facts related to Engelke's offense were in dispute since he never denied that he had pled guilty to the offense and had been sentenced accordingly. It is therefore ORDERED that the charges in the Order to Show Cause are deemed admitted for the purpose of this proceeding.

The issue before the State Board of Examiners in this matter, therefore, is whether Engelke's offense, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, represents just cause to act against his certificates pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9-17.5*. The Board finds that it does.

The State Board of Examiners may revoke or suspend the certification of any certificate holder on the basis of demonstrated inefficiency, incapacity, conduct unbecoming a teacher or other just cause. *N.J.A.C. 6A:9-17.5*. "Teachers... are professional employees to whom the people have entrusted the care and custody of ... school children. This heavy duty requires a degree of self-restraint and controlled behavior rarely requisite to other types of employment." *Tenure of Sammons*, 1972 *S.L.D.* 302, 321. Moreover, the Commissioner has long held that teachers serve as role models for their students. Engelke's acts of endangering the welfare of a child, criminal trespass and possession of weapons on school grounds are inexcusable for any individual, teacher or not.

Furthermore, unfitness to hold a position in a school system may be shown by one incident, if sufficiently flagrant. *Redcay v. State Bd. of Educ.*, 130 *N.J.L.* 369, 371 (Sup. Ct. 1943), *aff'd*, 131 *N.J.L.* 326 (E & A 1944). In this instance, Engelke's criminal acts conclusively establish that he is unfit to remain in any New Jersey classroom.

Accordingly, on March 29, 2007, the Board of Examiners voted to revoke Engelke's certificates. On this 3rd day of May 2007, the Board formally adopted its written decision to revoke and it is therefore ORDERED that Bruce Engelke's Teacher of Elementary School and Teacher of Music certificates be revoked effective this day. It is further ORDERED that Engelke return his certificates to the Secretary of the State Board of Examiners, Office of Licensure and Credentials, PO Box 500, Trenton, NJ 08625-0500 within 30 days of the mailing date of this decision.

Robert R. Higgins, Acting Secretary
State Board of Examiners

Date of Mailing: MAY 4, 2007

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