

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
JODI THORP : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 0607-190

At its meeting of March 29, 2007, the State Board of Examiners reviewed information received from the Division of Criminal Justice indicating that on August 16, 2006, Jodi Thorp had pled guilty to charges of endangering the welfare of a child. On November 17, 2006, Thorp was sentenced to 364 days' incarceration, placed on four years probation and fined. Thorp was also ordered to enter and successfully complete a sex offender treatment program. Thorp currently holds a Teacher of Elementary School Certificate of Eligibility With Advanced Standing, issued in November 1996 and a Teacher of Elementary School certificate, issued in June 1999. Upon review of the above information, at its March 29, 2007 meeting, the State Board of Examiners voted to issue Thorp an Order to Show Cause.

The Board sent Thorp the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on April 3, 2007. The Order provided that Thorp's Answer was due within 30 days. The certified mail receipt was signed and returned. The regular mail copy was not returned. Thorp did not file a response. When Thorp did not respond, the Board sent Thorp a second notice by regular and certified mail on June 26, 2007. The certified mail was returned as "unclaimed" but the regular mail copy was not returned. Thorp did not respond to the second notice.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9-17.7(e)*, on February 27, 2008, the Board of Examiners sent Thorp a hearing notice by regular and certified mail. The notice offered her the opportunity to file a written submission with regard to the appropriate sanction in the event that the Board found just cause to revoke or suspend her certificates and providing her the opportunity to appear to provide testimony on the sanction issue. The certified mail was returned

as “unclaimed” and the regular mail copy was not returned. Once again, Thorp did not file a response.

The threshold issue before the State Board of Examiners in this matter, therefore, is whether Thorp’s guilty plea to endangering the welfare of a child constitutes conduct unbecoming a certificate holder. At its meeting of May 1, 2008, the State Board of Examiners reviewed the charges the Order to Show Cause. Since there was no response, the Board of Examiners determined that no material facts related to Thorp’s offense were in dispute since she had never denied that she had been convicted of the offense. 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. 6A:9-17.7(h)*.

The State Board of Examiners must now determine whether Thorp’s offense as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, provides just cause to act against her 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. Thorp’s acts of endangering the welfare of a child are inexcusable for any individual, teacher or not.

The Commissioner has long held that teachers serve as role models for their students. 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, Thorp has lost all right to lay claim to being a role model because she endangered the welfare of a child.

Accordingly, on 1st day of May 2008 the Board of Examiners voted to revoke Thorp's Teacher of Elementary School Certificate of Eligibility With Advanced Standing and Teacher of Elementary School certificate. On this 5th day of June 2008 the Board of Examiners voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that the revocation of Jodi Thorp's certificates be effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Thorp return her certificates to the Secretary of the State Board of Examiners, Office of Licensure, P.O. Box 500, Trenton, NJ 08625-0500 within 30 days of the mailing date of this decision.

Robert R. Higgins, Secretary
State Board of Examiners

Date of mailing: JUNE 10th , 2008

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