

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
CHRISTOPHER TIPPIE : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 1011-242

At its meeting of July 28, 2011, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information received from the Office of Criminal History Review (OCHR) and the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office (Atlantic County) regarding Christopher Tippie. The OCHR and Atlantic County notified the Board that Tippie pled guilty in January 2011 to one count of Endangering the Welfare of Child-Duty. On June 10, 2011, Tippie was sentenced to a four year suspended sentence, parole supervision for life, Megan's Law registration and ordered to forfeit his public employment. As a result of the conviction, Tippie was disqualified from public school employment pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1 et seq.* Tippie currently holds a Teacher of Mathematics Certificate of Eligibility, issued in July 2005 and a Teacher of Mathematics certificate, issued in August 2006.

Tippie did not challenge the accuracy of his criminal history record before the Commissioner of Education. Upon review of the above information, the Board voted at its meeting of September 22, 2011 to issue Tippie an Order to Show Cause why his certificates should not be revoked.

The Board sent Tippie the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on September 30, 2011. The Order provided that Tippie must file an Answer within 30 days. The certified mail receipt was signed and returned. The regular mail copy was not returned. Tippie did not file a response. Thereafter, on November 16, 2011, the Board sent Tippie another notice by certified and regular mail providing him an additional 15 days to respond to the Order to Show Cause. The certified mail copy was returned as unclaimed and the regular mail copy was not returned. Tippie did not respond to the second notice.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9-17.7(e)*, on December 6, 2011, the Board sent Tippie a hearing notice by regular and certified mail. The notice explained that it appeared that no material facts were in dispute. Thus, Tippie was offered an opportunity to submit written arguments on the issue of whether the conduct addressed in the Order to Show Cause constituted conduct unbecoming a certificate

holder, as well as arguments with regard to the appropriate sanction in the event that the Board found just cause to take action against his certificates. It also explained that, upon review of the charges against him and the legal arguments tendered in his defense, the Board would determine if his disqualifying offense warranted action against his certificates. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Tippie was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. The certified mail copy was returned as unclaimed and the regular mail copy was not returned. Once again, Tippie did not respond.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Tippie's conviction and subsequent disqualification constitute conduct unbecoming a certificate holder. Since Tippie failed to respond to the Order to Show Cause or the hearing notice, at its meeting of March 1, 2012, the Board considered only the allegations in the Order to Show Cause. The Board determined that no material facts related to Tippie's offense were in dispute since he never denied that he had been convicted of the offense charged. Thus, the Board determined that summary decision was appropriate in this matter. *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9-17.7(h). It is therefore ORDERED that the charges in the Order to Show Cause are deemed admitted for the purpose of this proceeding.

The Board must now determine whether Tippie's conviction and resulting disqualification, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, represent just cause to act against his certificates pursuant to *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9-17.5. The Board finds that they do.

In enacting the Criminal History Review statute, *N.J.S.A.* 18A: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. Individuals convicted of a crime such as Endangering the Welfare of a Child-Duty fall squarely within this category. This strong legislative policy statement is in accord with the Commissioner's long-standing belief that teachers must serve as role models for their students. "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. Clearly, Tippie’s actions here are not those of a role model.

The strong policy statement on the part of the Legislature set forth in *N.J.S.A.* 18A:6-7.1(b) also offers guidance to the Board 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 certificate that authorizes such service. Nor should a person who has been disqualified from teaching in a public school be permitted to continue to hold himself out as a teacher. Thus, because the Legislature considers Tippie’s offense so significant, the Board believes that the only appropriate sanction in this case is the revocation of Tippie’s certificates.

Accordingly, on March 1, 2012, the Board voted to revoke Christopher Tippie’s Teacher of Mathematics Certificate of Eligibility and Teacher of Mathematics certificate. On this 2nd day of April 2012 the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that the revocation of Christopher Tippie’s certificates be effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Tippie return his 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:

Appeals may be made to the Commissioner of Education pursuant to the provisions of *N.J.S.A.* 18A:6-38.4.