

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
THE CERTIFICATE OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS  
JENNIFER DEGROAT (INGERMAN) : ORDER OF REVOCATION  
\_\_\_\_\_ : DOCKET NO: 1314-199

At its meeting of April 4, 2014, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information regarding Jennifer DeGroat (Ingerman). In April 2013, DeGroat pled guilty in Pennsylvania to Unlawful Contact with a Minor, Corruption of Minors and Criminal Use of a Communication Facility. In addition to her guilty plea, DeGroat surrendered her certificates in lieu of discipline in Pennsylvania in November 2013. In New Jersey, DeGroat holds a Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-5 Certificate of Eligibility With Advanced Standing, issued in February 2011. Upon review of the above information, at its May 22, 2014 meeting, the Board voted to issue DeGroat an Order to Show Cause.

The Board sent DeGroat the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on May 28, 2014. The Order provided that DeGroat had 30 days to respond. The certified mail copy was returned as "Refused" and the regular mail copy was not returned. After securing a new address for DeGroat, the Board re-sent the Order to Show Cause to on June 5, 2014 by regular and certified mail. The certified mail receipt was signed and returned and the regular mail copy was not returned. DeGroat did not respond. Thereafter, on July 30, 2014, the Board sent DeGroat another notice by certified and regular mail providing her an additional 15 days to respond to the Order to Show Cause. The certified mail receipt was signed and returned and the regular copy was not returned. DeGroat did not respond.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.7(e)*, on August 20, 2014, the Board sent DeGroat a hearing notice by regular and certified mail. The notice explained that it appeared that no material facts were in dispute. Thus, DeGroat 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 determined to take action against her certificate. It also explained that upon review of the charges against her and the legal arguments tendered in her defense, the Board would determine if DeGroat's offenses warranted

action against her certificate. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. DeGroat 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, DeGroat did not respond.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether DeGroat’s conduct and crime constitute conduct unbecoming a certificate holder. Since DeGroat failed to respond to the Order to Show Cause or the hearing notice, at its meeting of October 23, 2014, the Board considered only the allegations in the Order to Show Cause. The Board determined that no material facts related to DeGroat’s offense were in dispute since she never denied that she had been convicted or that her Pennsylvania certificates had been revoked. Thus, the Board determined that summary decision was appropriate in this matter. *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.7(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 DeGroat’s conviction and the revocation of her Pennsylvania certificates, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, provide just cause to act against her New Jersey certificate pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.5*. The Board finds that they do.

The Board 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:9B-4.5*. “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, 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 (1943), *aff’d*, 131 *N.J.L.* 326 (E & A 1944). In this matter, DeGroat has a conviction for an offense against children. That conviction and the revocation of her Pennsylvania certificates leave no doubt that she is unfit to be a teacher in New Jersey. Her conduct demonstrates behavior that falls so far short of a role model that the Board believes that the only appropriate sanction in this case is the revocation of DeGroat’s New Jersey certificate.

Accordingly, on October 23, 2014, the Board voted to revoke DeGroat's Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-5 Certificate of Eligibility With Advanced Standing. On this 12th day of December 2014 the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that the revocation of Jennifer DeGroat's certificate be effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that DeGroat return her certificate 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.

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Robert R. Higgins, Secretary  
State Board of Examiners

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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.