

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS  
GEOFFREY D. TOURETZ : ORDER OF REVOCATION  
\_\_\_\_\_ : DOCKET NO: 1314-247

At its meeting of July 24, 2014, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information the staff of the Office of Certification and Induction had forwarded regarding Geoffrey D. Touretz. In September 2013, Touretz surrendered his teaching certificates in New York after the New York Commissioner of Education (Commissioner) began proceedings against him. The Commissioner alleged that during the 2008-09 school year until the 2010-2011 school year, Touretz had engaged in inappropriate behavior that included: using his school district-issued computer to search for, access, download and/or view inappropriate internet material, including sites containing pornographic images or videos and sites containing sexual content; and showing to a female co-worker inappropriate internet material, including site(s) containing pornographic images or videos and/or site(s) containing sexual content. In New Jersey, Touretz currently holds Teacher of Elementary School and Teacher of the Handicapped certificates, both issued in December 1975. Upon review of the above information, at its meeting of September 19, 2014, the Board voted to issue Touretz an Order to Show Cause as to why his certificates should not be revoked.

The Board sent Touretz the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on September 23, 2014. The Order provided that Touretz had 30 days to respond. The certified mail receipt was signed and returned and the regular mail copy was not returned. Touretz did not respond. Thereafter, on November 10, 2014, the Board sent Touretz 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 copy was not returned. Touretz did not respond.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.7(e)*, on December 4, 2014, the Board sent Touretz a hearing notice by regular and certified mail. The notice explained that it appeared that no material facts

were in dispute. Thus, Touretz 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 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 Touretz' offenses warranted action against his certificates. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Touretz was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. The certified mail receipt was signed and returned and the regular mail copy was not returned. Once again, Touretz did not respond.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter, therefore, is whether Touretz' conduct and the surrender of his New York teaching certificate constitute conduct unbecoming a certificate holder. Since Touretz never responded to the Order to Show Cause, at its meeting of March 12, 2015, the Board had only the allegations contained in the Order to Show Cause to consider. The Board determined that no material facts related to Touretz' offense were in dispute since he did not deny that he had surrendered his New York certificate after being accused of inappropriate behavior. 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 Touretz' conduct as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, represents just cause to act against his certificates pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.5*. The Board finds that it does.

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, Touretz' inappropriate behavior in accessing pornographic sites on his district-issued computer leaves no doubt that he is unfit to be a teacher. The licensing authorities in New York thought so and this Board agrees. The Board therefore concludes that the only appropriate response to Touretz' breach is the revocation of his teaching certificates.

Accordingly, on March 12, 2015, the Board voted to revoke Geoffrey D. Touretz' Teacher of Elementary School and Teacher of the Handicapped certificates. On this 17th day of April 2015 the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that the revocation of Touretz' certificates be effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Touretz 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.

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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.