

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS  
CHRISTOPHER GRENDYSA : ORDER OF REVOCATION  
\_\_\_\_\_ : DOCKET NO: 726-06/02

At its meeting of June 13, 2002, the State Board of Examiners reviewed information it had received from the Division of Criminal Justice regarding Christopher Grendysa. The Burlington County Prosecutor had charged Grendysa with official misconduct and endangering the welfare of a child, contrary to the provisions of *N.J.S.A. 2C:30-2A* and *2C:24-4A*, respectively. Grendysa pled guilty to Unauthorized Use of a Computer-Wrongful Access, a disorderly persons offense, for which he was sentenced to one year of probation and fined \$3,657. The Board of Examiners voted to issue an Order to Show Cause to Grendysa. Grendysa currently holds a Teacher of the Handicapped certificate, issued in June 1989 and a Teacher of Elementary School Certificate of Eligibility With Advanced Standing, issued in June 1998.

The Board sent Grendysa the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on December 3, 2002. The Order provided that Grendysa must file an Answer within 20 days. Grendysa filed his Answer on December 10, 2002. In his Answer, Grendysa admitted that he had pled guilty to the disorderly persons offense and had been fined as specified in the Order to Show Cause. (Answer, ¶ 3). Grendysa further claimed that there was no basis to revoke or suspend his certificates. (Answer, ¶ 5). He argued that his guilty plea was for accessing a computer to draft his resume. (Answer, ¶ 5). Grendysa added that he had “destroyed no property, committed no theft and simply acknowledged that use of the computer for a personal undertaking...was not an authorized act by the school.” (Answer, ¶ 5). He also argued that his actions occurred

during his own lunchtime, did not affect his teaching responsibilities and was “insufficient conduct to establish conduct unbecoming or establish any basis upon which revocation or suspension should issue.” (Answer, ¶ 5).

The Board of Examiners transmitted the case to the Office of Administrative Law (OAL). Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) Bruce Gorman heard testimony on May 3, May 4, and August 7, 2007. After the record closed, the ALJ issued an Initial Decision on August 9, 2007. *In the Matter of the Certificates of Christopher Grendysa*, Dkt. No. EDE 985-03 (Initial Decision, August 7, 2007).

In that decision, ALJ Gorman heard testimony from one of Grendysa’s former students, Eren Brewer. Brewer was one of six students in Grendysa’s classroom during the second semester of the 1998-1999 school year. (Initial Decision, slip op. at 2). Brewer testified that Grendysa did very little teaching and allowed the students to play video games on the classroom computers. (Initial Decision, slip op. at 3). Grendysa used racial epithets to describe Hispanics and African-Americans and told the class “bizarre and violent stories.” (Initial Decision, slip op. at 3). Brewer also testified that Grendysa would access pornographic sites on the classroom computers and allow the students to view them. (Initial Decision, slip op. at 2-3). Among the images Brewer saw were naked women, men and women having intercourse, and two women having sex. (Initial Decision, slip op. at 2). Brewer indicated that he was “deeply traumatized by looking at the naked women.” (Initial Decision, slip op. at 4).

Another witness, Linda Moore, was the Substance Awareness Coordinator for the Evesham Township Board of Education. (Initial Decision, slip op. at 6). Moore testified that she was assigned to counsel the students in Grendysa’s class during the 1998-1999

school year and had a negative opinion of his teaching skills. (Initial Decision, slip op. at 7). Moore stated that she never saw him engage in formal instruction and thought Grendysa was “unprofessional.” (Initial Decision, slip op. at 7). Moore added that she first became aware that Grendysa had shown his students pornography when she counseled individual students in November 1999. (Initial Decision, slip op. at 8). Moore told her supervisor who, in turn, contacted the police. (Initial Decision, slip op. at 8). Other witnesses who testified in the matter included Frank R. Summers, III, the district’s Education Technology Coordinator and Sean Hicks, a former student of Grendysa’s during the relevant school year, who testified by way of deposition. (Initial Decision, slip op. at 9-12). Summers affirmed that pornographic and other inappropriate sites were accessed through the computer in Grendysa’s room during the 1998-1999 school year. (Initial Decision, slip op. at 9-11). Hicks reiterated Brewer’s account of viewing pornography in Grendysa’s classroom and confirmed that Grendysa told the class stories about his college days and how he used to humiliate women. (Initial Decision, slip op. at 12).

Although Grendysa was present for the first two days of the hearing, he did not appear on the third day. (Initial Decision, slip op. at 12). The ALJ noted that he provided Grendysa with “personal notice of the date trial would resume by announcing same from the bench in his presence at the completion of the first day of trial.” (Initial Decision, slip op. at 12). After giving Grendysa twenty-four hours to explain his absence, the ALJ closed the record when Grendysa did not respond. (Initial Decision, slip op. at 12).

The ALJ determined that he had heard “uncontroverted testimony showing that respondent Grendysa committed several acts that amount to unbecoming conduct.”

(Initial Decision, slip op. at 13). ALJ Gorman noted that Grendysa “did virtually no teaching...afforded young students unfettered access to the internet...showed his class pornographic web sites...permitted his students to access other pornographic web sites...expressed a dislike for persons based upon their race...spoke disparagingly of the police...used profanity in front of his students...and engaged in violent behavior, yelling at his students.” (Initial Decision, slip op. at 6). Since Grendysa presented no defense, ALJ Gorman concluded that he had confirmed “the truth of the charges made against him by his former students.” (Initial Decision, slip op. at 13). Accordingly, ALJ Gorman determined that Grendysa be adjudged “to have committed conduct unbecoming a teaching staff member.” (Initial Decision, slip op. at 14). The ALJ therefore concluded that “Grendysa’s misconduct rises to the level where his continuation in the teaching profession is inappropriate” and he ordered the revocation of Grendysa’s certificates. (Initial Decision, slip op. at 14). Neither the Deputy Attorney General (DAG) representing the Board of Examiners nor Grendysa filed exceptions to the Initial Decision.

The Board must now determine whether to adopt, modify or dismiss the Initial Decision in this matter. At its meeting of September 20, 2007, the State Board of Examiners reviewed the Initial Decision. After full and fair consideration of all the submissions, the Board voted to adopt the Initial Decision to revoke Grendysa’s certificates. There is no doubt that the ALJ is in the best position to render credibility determinations and the Board will defer to those findings.

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. 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). “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. The Board agrees that ALJ Gorman correctly determined that “Grendysa utilized his classroom to engage in activities that were deleterious to the young students in his charge. To term his actions conduct unbecoming is an understatement.” (Initial Decision, slip op. at 14). There is no doubt that Grendysa’s conduct supports one of the grounds for revocation or suspension of a teaching certificate. *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9-17.5. Accordingly, the Board will defer to those findings and its remaining decision is one of penalty.

Grendysa’s continued disregard of every norm of appropriate professional behavior warrants the imposition of a strict penalty. His actions are indefensible and, indeed, he refused to offer no explanation in mitigation of his behavior. Certainly, Grendysa has relinquished all claim to serving as a role model for students. The Board therefore determines that revocation is the only appropriate response to Grendysa’s breach.

Accordingly, on September 20, 2007, the Board voted to adopt the Initial Decision to revoke Grendysa’s certificates. On this 17th day of January 2008, the Board formally adopted its decision to revoke and it is therefore ORDERED that Christopher Grendysa’s Teacher of the Handicapped certificate and Teacher of Elementary School

Certificate of Eligibility With Advanced Standing be revoked on this day. It is further ORDERED that Grendysa return his certificates to the Secretary of the State Board of Examiners, Office of Licensure, PO 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

**Date of Mailing: JANUARY 22, 2008**

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