

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS  
SANDREA STEINMETZ : ORDER OF REVOCATION  
\_\_\_\_\_ : DOCKET NO: 1011-129

At its meeting of October 28, 2010, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information received pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9-17.4* from the Burlington County Institute of Technology (BCIT) regarding Sandra Steinmetz. BCIT reported that Steinmetz resigned from her position there after an investigation revealed discrepancies in information and documents Steinmetz had submitted to the school regarding her possession of a Registered Nurse license and her degree in nursing. Specifically, BCIT's investigation revealed that Steinmetz had never been issued a license from the Board of Nursing. The Board of Nursing confirmed that the nursing license number Steinmetz presented to BCIT when she was hired belonged to another individual. BCIT's investigation also revealed that the nursing school transcript that Steinmetz submitted did not comport with the format of the transcripts for the nursing school she claimed to have attended. The school had no record of Steinmetz ever attending, graduating or withdrawing. Although BCIT afforded Steinmetz an opportunity to provide documentation confirming her degree and nursing license, she did not provide an official college transcript or a valid RN license as requested. Steinmetz provided information similar to that which she had submitted to BCIT when she applied to the Office of Licensure and Credentials for teaching certification. Steinmetz holds a Teacher of Health Occupations Certificate of Eligibility, issued in October 2003 and a Teacher of Health Occupations certificate, issued in December 2004. Upon review of the above information, at its December 9, 2010 meeting, the Board voted to issue Steinmetz an Order to Show Cause why her certificates should not be revoked.

The Board sent Steinmetz the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on December 16, 2010. The Order provided that Steinmetz must file an Answer within 30 days.

The certified mail copy was returned as “Unclaimed” and the regular mail copy was not returned. Steinmetz did not respond. Thereafter, on January 24, 2011, the Board sent Steinmetz a second notice by regular and certified mail providing her 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. Steinmetz did not file a response.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9-17.7(e)*, on February 14, 2011, the Board sent Steinmetz a hearing notice by regular and certified mail. The notice explained that it appeared that no material facts were in dispute. Thus, Steinmetz 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 certificates. It also explained that upon review of the charges against her and the legal arguments tendered in her defense, the Board would determine if Steinmetz’s offenses warranted action against her certificates. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Steinmetz 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, Steinmetz did not respond.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter, therefore, is whether Steinmetz’s conduct, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, constitutes conduct unbecoming a certificate holder. Since Steinmetz failed to respond to the Order to Show Cause or the hearing notice, at its meeting of May 12, 2011, the Board considered only the allegations in the Order to Show Cause. The Board determined that no material facts related to Steinmetz’s conduct were in dispute since she never denied that she had engaged in the alleged conduct. 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 Steinmetz's conduct, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, represents just cause to act against her certificates pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9-17.5*. 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: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. Moreover, the Commissioner has long held that teachers serve as role models for their students.

Steinmetz's conduct in falsifying her qualifications both as a nurse and as a teacher is not only egregious but also dangerous. In the past the Board of Examiners has ordered revocation of an individual's legitimately-held certificates where a certificate had been altered in order to secure employment in an area for which the individual was not certified. *See, e.g., In re Shaffer, supra*, (New Jersey teacher altered Pennsylvania certificate to include Teacher of the Handicapped authorization); *State Bd. of Examiners v. Kaufman*, Dkt. No. 226-8/93-15 (Examiners Feb. 24, 1994) (health teacher fabricated certificate to seek employment as a school psychologist); *In re Certificate of Nieves*, OAL Dkt. No. EDE 7908-88, *adopted* (Examiners March 3, 1989) (teacher of cosmetology presented falsified elementary education certificate). This case presents similar concerns. A teacher who knowingly falsifies information in order to obtain a certificate and later a job in order to teach a subject matter for which she is not qualified does a great disservice to her students and her school district. That individual has no place in a classroom. In this instance, Steinmetz's lack of professional judgment warrants revocation.

Accordingly, on May 12, 2011, the Board voted to revoke Sandra Steinmetz's Teacher of Health Occupations Certificate of Eligibility and her Teacher of Health Occupations

certificate. On this 16th day of June 2011 the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that the revocation of Steinmetz's certificates be effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Steinmetz 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.

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Robert R. Higgins, Secretary  
State Board of Examiners

Date of Mailing:

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