

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
THE CERTIFICATE OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS  
CHRISTIE L. NICHOLSON : ORDER OF REVOCATION  
\_\_\_\_\_ : DOCKET NO: 1718-125

At its meeting of September 15, 2017, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information received from the Gloucester County Prosecutor's Office and the Criminal History Review Unit (CHRU) regarding Christie L. Nicholson. On or about May 1, 2016, Nicholson was arrested and charged with Theft by Deception, Theft by Unlawful Taking and Failure to Make Required Disposition for receiving cash payments from her law firm's clients, doing the work in her firm's name but not giving the firm the money. On July 14, 2017, Nicholson received an Order of Postponement and was accepted into a Pretrial Intervention program (PTI) for 36 months. She was also ordered to make full restitution of the monies owed to the State or the victim.

Nicholson currently holds a Teacher of English Certificate of Eligibility. Upon review of the above information, the Board voted at its meeting of November 1, 2017 to issue Nicholson an Order to Show Cause as to why her certificate should not be revoked.

After several attempts at securing a correct current address for Nicholson, the Board sent her the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on January 3, 2018. The Order provided that Nicholson must file an Answer within 30 days. The certified mail receipt was signed and returned and the regular mail copy was not returned. Nicholson did not file a response. On February 15, 2018, the Board sent Nicholson another notice by certified and regular 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. Nicholson did not file a response.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(e)*, on March 6, 2018, the Board sent Nicholson a hearing notice by regular and certified mail. The notice explained that the allegations in the Order to Show Cause were deemed to be admitted as a result of her failure to file an Answer. Thus, Nicholson 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 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 Nicholson's offense warranted action against her certificate. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Nicholson 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, Nicholson did not file a response.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Nicholson's conduct constitutes conduct unbecoming a certificate holder. Since Nicholson failed to respond to the Order to Show Cause, the allegations therein are deemed admitted. *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(c)*. Consequently, at its meeting of April 13, 2018, the Board considered only the allegations in the Order to Show Cause and the information it had received from the Gloucester County Prosecutor's Office and the CHRU. The Board concluded that no material facts related to Nicholson's offense were in dispute since she never denied that she had engaged in the conduct alleged. Thus, the Board determined that summary decision was appropriate in this matter. *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(h)*. After reviewing the allegations, the Board found that Nicholson had engaged in unbecoming conduct.

The Board must now determine whether Nicholson's conduct, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, represents just cause to act against her certificate pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.4*. 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-4.4*. "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.

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 (1943), *aff'd*, 131 N.J.L. 326 (E & A 1944). In this instance, Nicholson's acts of theft demonstrate behavior that falls far short of a role model. The Board therefore concludes that the appropriate response to Nicholson's breach is the revocation of her certificate.

Accordingly, on May 24, 2018, the Board voted to revoke Christie L. Nicholson's Teacher of English Certificate of Eligibility. On this 29th day of June 2018 the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that the revocation of Nicholson's certificate be effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Nicholson return her certificate to the Secretary of the State Board of Examiners, Office of Certification and Induction, 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

RRH/MZ/th

**Date of Mailing:**  
**By certified and regular mail**

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