

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATE OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
BRADLEY E. MEA : ORDER OF SUSPENSION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 1617-266

At its meeting of July 27, 2017, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information received from the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) regarding Bradley E. Mea. On December 18, 2016, Mea was charged in South Carolina with Sexual Exploitation of a Minor, 1st degree and 2nd degree, as well as Criminal Solicitation of a Minor, based on allegations that he solicited a 13-year-old girl for nude photographs over the internet and then threatened to post the photos if she did not provide him with additional ones. On December 21, 2016, the South Carolina Board of Education entered a Summary Suspension of Mea's teaching certificates. Mea would be disqualified from public employment pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1 et seq.*, if he is convicted. Mea currently holds a Teacher of Music Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing. Upon review of the above information, at its meeting of September 15, 2017, the Board voted to issue Mea an Order to Show Cause as to why his certificate should not be suspended pending the resolution of the criminal proceedings against him.

The Board sent Mea the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on September 22, 2017. The Order provided that Mea must file an Answer within 30 days. The certified mail receipt was signed and returned and the regular mail copy was not returned. Mea did not respond.

Thereafter, on October 30, 2017, the Board sent Mea another notice by certified and regular mail providing him an additional 15 days to respond to the Order to Show Cause. The certified mail receipt was signed and returned and the regular mail copy was not returned. Mea did not file a response.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.7(e)*, on December 11, 2017, the Board sent Mea 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 his failure to file an Answer. Thus, Mea 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 his certificate. It also explained that, upon review of the charges against him and the legal arguments tendered in his defense, the Board would determine if his offense warranted action against his certificate. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Mea 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, Mea did not file a response.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter, therefore, is whether there is just cause to take action against Mea’s certificate. Since Mea 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. The Board concluded that no material facts related to Mea’s offense were in dispute since he never denied that he had pending charges against him and therefore 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 Mea had engaged in unbecoming conduct.

The Board must now determine whether Mea’s conduct and charges, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, represent just cause to act against his certificate pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.4*. 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-4.4*. In enacting the Criminal History Review statute, *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1 et seq.* in 1986, the Legislature sought to protect public school pupils from contact with individuals whom it deemed to be dangerous. Individuals convicted of crimes such as Sexual Exploitation of a Minor and Criminal Solicitation of a Minor fall squarely within this category. This strong legislative policy statement is in accord with the Commissioner’s long-held belief that teachers must serve as role models for students.

“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 (Sup. Ct. 1943), *aff'd*, 131 *N.J.L.* 326 (E & A 1944). In this case, Mea has been charged with sexual offenses against minors. The Board therefore finds that Mea’s potential disqualification from service in the public schools of this State because of his indictment for such a serious offense provides just cause to take action against his certificate.

Accordingly, on April 13, 2018, the Board voted to suspend Mea’s certificate pending resolution of the criminal proceedings against him. On this 24th day of May 2018, the Board formally adopted its written decision to suspend and it is therefore ORDERED that Bradley E. Mea’s Teacher of Music Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing be suspended, effective immediately. If the charges are resolved in his favor, he shall notify the Board for appropriate action regarding the suspension order. It is further ORDERED that Mea return his certificates to the Secretary of the State Board of Examiners, Office of Certification and Induction, PO 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 regular and certified mail

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