

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CREDENTIAL OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
KAREN A. BOBB : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 1617-209

At its meeting of January 19, 2018, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information received from the Hudson County Prosecutor’s Office and the Criminal History Review Unit (CHRU) regarding Karen A. Bobb. On June 5, 2017, Bobb pled guilty to Child Abuse after being charged with Endangering the Welfare of a Child (2nd degree) and Child Abuse. On October 20, 2017, she received an Order of Postponement and was entered into a PreTrial Intervention Program (PTI) for a period of 24 months. The CHRU notified the Board that, as a result of her conviction, Bobb was disqualified from public school employment pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1 et seq.* Bobb currently holds Substitute Credential, which expires in January 2019.

Bobb did not challenge the accuracy of her criminal history record before the Commissioner of Education. Upon review of the above information, the Board voted at its meeting of March 1, 2018 to issue Bobb an Order to Show Cause as to why her credential should not be revoked.¹

The Board sent Bobb the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on March 6, 2018. The Order provided that Bobb had 30 days to respond. The certified mail copy was returned as “Unclaimed” and the regular mail copy was not returned. Bobb did not file a response.

¹ The Order to Show Cause lists an incorrect issue date of November 1, 2017. As stated above, the correct date was March 1, 2018.

Thereafter, on April 13, 2018, the Board sent Bobb 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. Bobb did not file a response.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(e)*, on May 14, 2018, the Board sent Bobb 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, Bobb 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 credential. It also explained that, upon review of the charges against her and the legal arguments tendered in her defense, the Board would determine if her offense warranted action against her credential. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Bobb 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, Bobb did not file a response.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Bobb’s conviction and subsequent disqualification constitute conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. Since Bobb 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 September 21, 2018, the Board considered only the allegations in the Order to Show Cause and the information received from the Prosecutor’s Office and the CHRU. The Board concluded that no material

facts related to Bobb's offense were in dispute since she never denied that she engaged in the conduct alleged 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 Bobb had engaged in unbecoming conduct.

The Board must now determine whether Bobb's conviction and resulting disqualification, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, represent just cause to act against her credential pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.4*. The Board finds that they do.

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 a danger. Individuals convicted of crimes such as Child Abuse fall squarely within this category. The strong legislative policy statement is also in accord with the Commissioner's long-standing belief that teachers must serve as role models for their 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 (1943), *aff'd*, 131 *N.J.L.* 326 (E & A 1944). In this instance, Bobb's conviction demonstrates behavior that falls far short of a role model.

The strong policy statement on the part of the Legislature set forth in *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1(b)* also offers guidance to the Board as to the appropriate sanction in this matter. An individual whose offense is so great that he or she is barred from service in public schools should not be permitted to retain the certificate that authorizes such service. Nor should a person who

has been disqualified from teaching in a public school be permitted to continue to hold herself out as a teacher. Thus, because the Legislature and the Commissioner consider Bobb's offense so significant, the Board believes that the only appropriate sanction in this case is the revocation of her credential.

Accordingly, on September 21, 2018, the Board voted to revoke Karen A. Bobb's Substitute Credential. On this 1st day of November 2018, the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that the revocation of Bobb's credential be effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Bobb return her credential 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:
Via 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.