

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATE OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
RONALD F. HORNISH : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 1718-181

At its meeting of March 1, 2018, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) had forwarded regarding Ronald F. Hornish. After being indicted on charges of Possession of Child Pornography and later convicted of a disqualifying offense pursuant to Illinois law, the ISBE revoked Hornish's educator license in November 2017.

In New Jersey, Hornish currently holds a Teacher of Music Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing. Upon review of the above information, at its April 13, 2018 meeting, the Board voted to issue Hornish an Order to Show Cause as to why his certificate should not be revoked.

After many attempts at securing a correct address for Hornish, the Board sent him the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on October 9, 2018. The Order provided that Hornish had 30 days to respond. The certified mail copy was returned as "Unclaimed" and the regular mail copy was not returned. Hornish did not respond. On November 29, 2018, the Board sent Hornish another notice by certified and regular mail providing him 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. Hornish did not file a response.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(e)*, on December 28, 2018, the Board sent Hornish 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, Hornish 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 Hornish's offense warranted action against his certificate. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Hornish was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. Neither the certified nor the regular mail copy was returned. Once again, Hornish did not file a response.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Hornish's conduct constitutes conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. Since Hornish 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 March 8, 2019, the Board considered only the allegations in the Order to Show Cause and the information received from NASDTEC and the ISBE. The Board concluded that no material facts related to Hornish's offense were in dispute since he never denied that he 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 Hornish had engaged in unbecoming conduct.

The Board must now determine whether Hornish's conduct, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, provides just cause to act against his 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, 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). Hornish's indictment for possession of Child Pornography, his conviction for a disqualifying offense under Illinois law and the revocation of his Illinois educator license clearly demonstrate conduct that is unacceptable for a role model. The Board therefore concludes that the appropriate response to his breach is the revocation of his New Jersey certificate.

Accordingly, on March 8, 2019, the Board voted to revoke Ronald F. Hornish's Teacher of Music Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing. On this 12th day of April 2019 the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that the revocation of Hornish's certificate be effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Hornish return his 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.

Rani Singh, Acting Secretary
State Board of Examiners

RS/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.