

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
JESSICA R. CAMPBELL : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 1718-274

At its meeting of September 21, 2018, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information the Criminal History Review Unit (CHRU), local law enforcement and the Roxbury and Denville Municipal Courts had provided regarding Jessica R. Campbell. On February 15, 2018, Campbell was convicted in Roxbury Municipal Court of Possession of CDS and Failure to Give CDS to Law Enforcement. She was sentenced to two years' probation and 10 days' incarceration. On April 5, 2018, Campbell was convicted of Possession of CDS in Denville Municipal Court and had her driver's license suspended for six months and had ignition interlock for six months. The CHRU notified the Board that, as a result of her convictions, Campbell was disqualified from public school employment pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1 et seq.* Campbell currently holds a Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-6, Teacher of Elementary School with Subject Matter Specialization: Mathematics in Grades 5-8 and Teacher of Students with Disabilities Certificates of Eligibility with Advanced Standing.

Campbell 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 November 1, 2018 to issue Campbell an Order to Show Cause as to why her certificates should not be revoked.

The Board sent Campbell the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on November 7, 2018. The Order provided that Campbell had 30 days to respond. The certified mail receipt was signed and returned and the regular mail copy was not returned. Campbell did not file a response.

Thereafter, on December 18, 2018, the Board sent Campbell another notice by certified and regular mail providing her an additional 15 days to respond to the Order to Show Cause. Campbell filed a response on January 7, 2019.

In her Answer, Campbell admitted to her convictions but noted that she was never incarcerated. (Answer, p. 1.) She stated that she was given community service which she completed as required. (Answer, p. 1.) Campbell asked the Board not to revoke her certificates, adding that she was under a doctor's care to address her disorders leading to self-medicating and substance-abuse issues. (Answer, p. 1.) She added that teaching was her passion and wanted to have the chance to teach again. (Answer, p. 1.)

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.6(e), on February 15, 2019, the Board sent Campbell a hearing notice by regular and certified mail. The notice explained that there appeared to be no material facts in dispute. Thus, Campbell 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 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 her offense warranted action against her certificates. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Campbell 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. Campbell did not file a response.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Campbell's conviction and subsequent disqualification constitute conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause.

At its meeting of May 17, 2019, the Board considered only the allegations in the Order to Show Cause and the information received from law enforcement and the CHRU. The Board concluded that no material facts related to Campbell's offense were in dispute since she admitted that she had engaged in the conduct alleged and had been convicted. The Board 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 Campbell had engaged in unbecoming conduct.

The Board must now determine whether Campbell's conviction and resulting disqualification, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, represent just cause to act against her certificates 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 poor example for them. Individuals convicted of crimes such as Possession of CDS and Failure to Give CDS to Law Enforcement 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, Campbell's convictions demonstrate 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 himself out as a teacher. Thus, because the Legislature and the Commissioner consider Campbell's offenses so significant, the Board believes that the only appropriate sanction in this case is the revocation of her certificates.

Accordingly, on May 17, 2019, the Board voted to revoke Jessica R. Campbell's Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-6, Teacher of Elementary School with Subject Matter Specialization: Mathematics in Grades 5-8 and Teacher of Students with Disabilities Certificates of Eligibility with Advanced Standing. On this 28th day of June 2019, the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that Campbell's certificates be revoked, effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Campbell return her certificates 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

By certified and regular mail
Date of Mailing:

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