

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
CHRISTINE VERA : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 1819-175

At its meeting of March 8, 2019, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information the Ocean County Prosecutor's Office and the Office of Student Protection (OSP) forwarded regarding Christine Vera. On October 24, 2018, Vera received an Order of Postponement and entered a Pre-Trial Intervention (PTI) program for a period of 12 months following an Accusation for Aggravated Assault on a Law Enforcement Officer (4th degree). Vera allegedly jumped on the back of a police officer as he attempted an arrest.

Vera currently holds Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-8 Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing, Teacher of Students with Disabilities Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing, Teacher of Spanish Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing, Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-8, Teacher of Students with Disabilities, and Teacher of Spanish certificates. Upon review of the above information, at its April 12, 2019 meeting, the Board voted to issue Vera an Order to Show Cause as to why her certificates should not be revoked.

The Board sent Vera the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on April 16, 2019. The Order provided that Vera had 30 days to respond. The certified mail copy was returned "Unclaimed" and the regular mail copy was not returned. Vera did not respond. Thereafter, on May 22, 2019, the Board sent another notice providing Vera 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. Once again, Vera did not respond.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.6(e), on June 12, 2019, the Board sent Vera 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, Vera 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 Vera's offense warranted action against her certificates. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Vera 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, Vera did not file a response.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Vera's conduct constitutes conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. Since Vera 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 19, 2019, the Board considered only the allegations in the Order to Show Cause and the information received from the Prosecutor's Office and the OSP. The Board concluded that no material facts related to Vera's offense were in dispute since she never denied that she had engaged in the alleged conduct. 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 Vera had engaged in unbecoming conduct.

The Board must now determine whether Vera's conduct, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, provides just cause to act against her certificates 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). Vera’s actions of jumping on the back of a law enforcement officer while he was attempting an arrest clearly demonstrate conduct that is unacceptable for a role model. The Board therefore concludes that the appropriate response to her breach is the revocation of her certificates.

Accordingly, on September 19, 2019, the Board voted to revoke Christina Vera’s Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-8 Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing, Teacher of Students with Disabilities Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing, Teacher of Spanish Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing, Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-8, Teacher of Students with Disabilities, and Teacher of Spanish certificates. On this 1st day of November 2019 the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that Vera’s certificates are hereby revoked, effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Vera 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, Secretary
State Board of Examiners

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.