

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS  
TAMLA L. DOSS : ORDER OF REVOCATION  
\_\_\_\_\_ : DOCKET NO: 1819-141

At its meeting of February 28, 2020, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information the Office of Student Protection (OSP) forwarded regarding Tamla L. Doss. On or about July 16, 2018, Doss pled guilty to Resisting Arrest/Eluding (3rd degree). Doss had been charged with knowingly fleeing or attempting to elude a law enforcement officer after she had received a signal to stop her vehicle. Doss had been operating the vehicle while intoxicated. The Office of Student Protection (OSP) notified the Board that, as a result of her conviction, Doss was disqualified from public school employment pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1 et seq.* Doss currently holds a Teacher of Cosmetology/Hair Styling Certificate of Eligibility.

Doss 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 8, 2019 to issue Doss an Order to Show Cause as to why her certificates should not be revoked.

The Board sent Doss the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on March 12, 2019. The Order provided that Doss had 30 days to respond. The Board received the certified return receipt card and the regular mail was not returned. On April 24, 2019, the Board sent Doss another notice by certified and regular mail providing her an additional 15 days to respond to the Order to Show Cause. The Board received the certified return receipt card and the regular mail was not returned. Doss did not respond.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(e)*, on May 22, 2019, the Board sent Doss 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, Doss 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 regarding the appropriate sanction if 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. Doss was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. The certified return card was received, and the regular mail copy was returned. Doss did not file a response.

The matter was scheduled for a hearing on the papers at the Board's September 19, 2019 meeting. Doss appeared at that meeting and indicated that she had filed an Answer. She provided a copy of a handwritten letter dated May 15, 2019. The Answer indicated that she made an awful choice to operate a vehicle under the influence. She apologized for her actions and indicated that she loved teaching and would like to be back in the classroom. The Board adjourned the matter to consider the Answer and give Doss the opportunity to participate in the matter.

Pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(e)*, on October 31, 2019, the Board sent Doss a hearing notice by regular and certified mail. Again, the notice explained that the allegations in the Order to Show Cause were deemed to be admitted as a result of her conviction and the contents of her submitted Answer. Thus, Doss 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 regarding 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. Doss was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. Doss did not file a response.

On February 28, 2020, Doss appeared before the Board and offered testimony. She indicated she is sorry for what happened and would like to keep her license.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Doss' conviction and subsequent disqualification constitute conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. At its meeting of February 28, 2020, the Board considered the allegations in the Order to Show Cause as well as Doss'

Answer and testimony. The Board determined that no material facts related to Doss' offense were in dispute since she did not deny that she engaged in the conduct alleged in the Order to Show Cause and she was convicted. Thus, the Board determined that summary decision was appropriate in this matter. *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(h)*.

The Board must now determine whether Doss' 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 OSP 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 inappropriate role models for them. Individuals such as Doss, convicted of a crime involving Resisting Arrest/Eluding, 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 exemplars 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, Doss' conviction demonstrates behavior that falls 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. Because the Legislature and the Commissioner consider Doss' offense so significant, and the Board must render its determination within the confines of her disqualification, the Board believes that the only appropriate sanction in this case is the revocation of Doss' certificates.

Accordingly, on May 14, 2020, the Board voted to revoke Tamla L. Doss' Teacher of Cosmetology/Hairstyling Certificate of Eligibility. On this 26<sup>th</sup> day of June 2020, the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that Doss' certificates are hereby revoked, effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Doss 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.

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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*.