

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS  
ERIKA K. CANFORA : ORDER OF REVOCATION  
\_\_\_\_\_ : DOCKET NO: 1819-218

At its meeting of June 28, 2019, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information that the Office of Student Protection (OSP), formerly known as the Criminal History Review Unit, forwarded regarding Erika K. Canfora. On January 16, 2015, Canfora was charged with two counts of Theft by Unlawful Taking after she took \$200 from a coworker's wallet and also took 6 Xanax pills from the purse of another coworker. These charges were dismissed on May 4, 2015.

On November 11, 2015, Canfora was charged with Use or Possession of Drug Paraphernalia, and Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance, specifically 2 Oxycodone pills and 1 suboxone strip. Both charges were downgraded and remanded to municipal court and later dismissed. Then, on November 30, 2017, Canfora was charged with stealing a check, forging the needed signature and collecting \$432. On February 12, 2018, Canfora was convicted and received 18 months' probation.

On April 5, 2017, in between charging and sentencing on the above matter, Canfora was charged again with Theft by Unlawful Taking after she allegedly inflated tips at Houlihan's in the amount of over \$600. On July 18, 2017, she was convicted and received 18 months' probation. On June 14, 2018, Canfora was charged with Possession of Heroin. This charge was no billed, downgraded, and dismissed on motion of the prosecutor.

Canfora currently holds a Teacher of Preschool through Grade 3 and Teacher of Students with Disabilities Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing. Upon review of the above information, at its August 1, 2019 meeting, the Board voted to issue Canfora an Order to Show Cause as to why her certificates should not be revoked.

The Board sent Canfora the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on August 5, 2019. The Order provided that Canfora had 30 days to respond. Canfora filed an Answer on August 26, 2019.

In that Answer, Canfora admitted that she received pretrial intervention for theft when she took \$200 from a coworker's wallet and 6 Xanax pills from the purse of another coworker. (Answer, ¶ 3). Further, Canfora stated that the charges for possession of CDS were dismissed as the result of narcotic testing was inconclusive. (Answer, ¶ 4). Canfora also admits that she forged signatures and collected \$432 and also inflated tips to collect over \$600. She states that she was under the influence of opioid drugs which consumed her life. (Answer, ¶ 5). She states that she is trying to "reclaim" her life and remain sober and free of drugs. She has been drug free for 15 months and is learning to live independently. (Answer, ¶ 7).

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(e)*, on September 24, 2019, the Board sent Canfora a hearing notice by regular and certified mail. The notice explained that there appeared to be no material facts in dispute. Thus, Canfora was offered an opportunity to submit written arguments on the issue of whether the conduct addressed in the Order to Show Cause provided just cause to take action against her certificates as well as arguments with regard to the appropriate sanction in the event that the Board determined to take action against her certificates. It also explained that upon review of the charges against her and the legal arguments tendered in his defense, the Board would determine if Canfora's offense warranted action against her certificates. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Canfora was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. Canfora did not file a submission nor request to appear before the Board.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Canfora's conduct constitutes conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. At its meeting of January 23, 2020, the Board considered the allegations in the Order to Show Cause as well as Canfora's Answer. The Board determined that no material facts related to Canfora's offense were in dispute since she admitted the convictions and the associated conduct, indicating that she was under the influence of opioids. 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 Canfora engaged in unbecoming conduct.

The Board must now determine whether Canfora'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). Canfora's conduct and conviction for taking money and medicine that does not belong to her, inflating tips, and fraudulently signing documents, clearly indicates a serious lapse in judgment. The Board therefore concludes that the appropriate response to her breach is a revocation of her certificates.

Accordingly, on January 23, 2020, the Board voted to revoke Erika K. Canfora's Teacher of Preschool through Grade 3 and Teacher of Students with Disabilities Certificates of Eligibility with Advanced Standing. On this 28<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2020 the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that Canfora's certificates are hereby revoked, effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Canfora 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.