

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
CHRISTIN A. WILLIAMSON : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 1920-164

At its meeting of February 28, 2020, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information regarding Christin A. Williamson (Michell). The Office of Student Protection (OSP) and the Ocean County Prosecutor's Office provided information to the State Board of Examiners (Board) regarding Williamson. In October 2018 Williamson was charged with 3 counts of Possession of Controlled Dangerous Substance (CDS), Possession of Paraphernalia, and Shoplifting. On October 23, 2019, Williamson pled guilty to Possession of CDS (3rd degree). She was sentenced to 8 days in Ocean County Jail and 18 months of probation.

In November 2018, Williamson was charged with Driving Under the Influence, Violation of Public Health and Safety, Abuse/Abandonment,/Cruelty and Neglect of a Child, Endangering-Abuse and Neglect, Possession of CDS, and Possession of Paraphernalia. On October 23, 2019, Williamson pled guilty to Abuse/Abandonment/Cruelty and Neglect of Child (4th degree). She was sentenced to 8 days in the Ocean County Jail and 18 months of probation. The OSP notified the Board that, as a result of her convictions, Williamson is disqualified from public school employment pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1 et seq.*

Christin A. Williamson (Michell) is the holder of a Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-8 Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing and a Teacher of Handicapped certificate. Williamson 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 May 14, 2020 to issue Williamson an Order to Show Cause as to why her certificates should not be revoked.

The Board sent Williamson the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on June 3, 2020. The Order provided that Williamson had 30 days to respond. The certified mail was marked as delivered and the regular mail was not returned. Williamson did not respond.

Thereafter, on August 12, 2020, the Board sent Williamson another notice by certified and regular mail providing her an additional 15 days to respond to the Order to Show Cause. The certified mail copy was marked unclaimed and the regular mail copy was not returned. Williamson did not file a response.

Accordingly, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(e)*, on September 9, 2020, the Board sent Williamson 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, Williamson 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 his defense, the Board would determine if her offense warranted action against her certificates. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Williamson was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. The certified mail card was signed for and the regular mail copy was not returned. Once again, Williamson did not file a response.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Williamson's conviction and subsequent disqualification constitute conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. Since Williamson 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 January 22, 2021 the Board

considered only the allegations in the Order to Show Cause and the information received and considered by the Board. The Board concluded that no material facts related to Williamson's offense were in dispute since she never denied that she engaged in the conduct alleged and had been convicted and 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 Williamson engaged in unbecoming conduct.

The Board must now determine whether Williamson's conviction and resulting disqualification, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, represent just cause to act against her certificate 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 were not proper examples for them. Individuals convicted of crimes such as Possession of CDS and Abuse/Abandonment/Cruelty and Neglect of a Child 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, Williamson's conviction for Possession of CDS and Abuse/Abandonment/Cruelty and Neglect of a Child demonstrates 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 herself out as a teacher. Thus, because the Legislature and the Commissioner consider Williamson's offense so significant, the Board believes that the only appropriate sanction in this case is the revocation of her certificate.

Accordingly, on January 22, 2021, the Board voted to revoke Christin A. Williamson's Teacher of Elementary Grades K-8 Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing, and Teacher of Handicapped Certificate. On this 26th day of February 2021, the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that the revocation of Williamson's certificates be effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Williamson 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

RS/KG/rg

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.