

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATE OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
AMANDA R. RICHARDSON : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 1920-171

The State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Professional Standards and Practices Commission (Commission) had forwarded regarding Amanda R. Richardson (Richardson). On May 17, 2019, Richardson voluntarily surrendered her Pennsylvania teaching certificate(s) after it was alleged she accepted gifts and money from a student in exchange for maintaining the student's grade at a certain level and inflated the grades of two other students. In New Jersey, Richardson currently holds a Teacher of English Certificate, issued May 2009. Upon review of the above information, at its May 14, 2020 meeting, the Board voted to issue Richardson an Order to Show Cause as to why her certificate should not be revoked.

The Board sent Richardson the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on June 3, 2020. The Order provided that Richardson had 30 days to respond. The certified mail receipt was signed as received, and the regular mail copy was not returned. Richardson did not respond. On August 27, 2020, the Board sent Richardson another notice by certified and regular mail providing her an additional 15 days to respond to the Order to Show Cause. The certified mail receipt was signed as received, and the regular mail copy was not returned. Richardson did not file a response.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(e)*, on October 6, 2020, the Board sent Richardson a hearing notice by regular and certified mail. The notice explained that pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(c)* the allegations in the Order to Show Cause were deemed to be admitted as a result of her failure to file an Answer. Thus, Richardson 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 certificate. It also explained that, upon review of the charges against her and the legal arguments tendered in her defense, the Board would determine if Richardson's offense warranted action against her certificate. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Richardson was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. The certified mail receipt was unclaimed and the regular mail copy was not returned. Once again, Richardson did not file a response.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Richardson's conduct constitutes conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. Since Richardson 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 February 26, 2021, the Board considered only the allegations in the Order to Show Cause and the information received from NASDTEC and the Commission. The Board concluded that no material facts related to Richardson's conduct were in dispute since she never denied that she engaged in the conduct alleged. 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 Richardson had engaged in unbecoming conduct.

The Board must now determine whether Richardson's conduct, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, provides just cause to act against her certificate 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). Richardson's acceptance of gifts and money from a student in exchange for maintaining the student's grade at a certain level and inflation of grades of two other students, as well as the surrender of her Pennsylvania certificate, lead the Board to conclude that the appropriate response to her breach is the revocation of her New Jersey certificate.

Accordingly, on February 26, 2021, the Board voted to revoke Richardson's Teacher of English Certificate. On this 1st day of April 2021, the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that Amanda R. Richardson's certificate is hereby revoked, effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Richardson return her certificate 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.