

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATE OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
LESLEY DORSETT : ORDER OF SUSPENSION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 1011-170

At its meeting of February 24, 2011, the State Board of Examiners reviewed information received from the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office regarding Lesley Dorsett. On January 10, 2011, Dorsett was indicted for Attempted Murder, Conspiracy to Commit Murder, Tampering with Physical Evidence, Financial Facilitation of Criminal Activity, and Conspiracy to Commit Financial Facilitation of Criminal Activity. Dorsett currently holds a Teacher of Elementary School certificate, issued in June 1967. Upon review of the above information, at its meeting of May 12, 2011, the State Board of Examiners voted to issue Dorsett an Order to Show Cause as to why her certificate should not be suspended pending the outcome of the criminal charges against her.

The Board sent Dorsett the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on May 13, 2011. The Order provided that Dorsett must file an Answer within 30 days. The certified mail receipt was signed and returned. The regular mail copy was not returned. Dorsett did not file a response. Thereafter, on July 1, 2011, the Board sent Dorsett 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 and returned and the regular mail copy was not returned. Dorsett did not respond to the second notice.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9-17.7(e)*, on August 8, 2011, the Board sent Dorsett a hearing notice by regular and certified mail. The notice explained that it appeared that no material facts were in dispute. Thus, Dorsett 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 suspend her teaching certificate pending resolution of the criminal charges. The certified mail receipt was signed and returned and the regular mail copy was not returned. Once again, Dorsett did not respond.

The threshold issue before the State Board of Examiners in this matter, therefore, is whether the conduct underlying Dorsett's indictment constitutes conduct unbecoming a certificate holder. Since Dorsett failed to respond to the Order to Show Cause or the hearing notice, at its meeting of November 1, 2011, the Board considered only the allegations in the Order to Show Cause. The Board determined that no material facts related to Dorsett's offenses were in dispute since she never denied that she had been indicted on the offenses charged. Thus, the Board determined that summary decision was appropriate in this matter. *N.J.A.C. 6A:9-17.7(h)*. It is therefore ORDERED that the charges in the Order to Show Cause are deemed admitted for the purpose of this proceeding.

The State Board of Examiners must now determine whether the conduct underlying Dorsett's indictment, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, represents just cause to act against her certificate pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9-17.5*. The Board finds 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:9-17.5*. "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, the Commissioner has long held that teachers serve as role models for their students. Dorsett's indictment on charges of Attempted Murder, Conspiracy to Commit Murder, Tampering with Physical Evidence, Financial Facilitation of Criminal Activity,

and Conspiracy to Commit Financial Facilitation of Criminal Activity demonstrates behavior that falls far short of the role model status expected of teachers. Clearly, Dorsett cannot lay claim to that status.

Furthermore, a teacher's behavior outside the classroom may be relevant in determining that person's qualifications and continued fitness to retain her certificate. *In re Grossman*, 127 *N.J. Super.* 13, 30 (Sup. Ct. 1943), *aff'd*, 131 *N.J.L.* 326 (E & A 1944). 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 (Sup. Ct. 1943), *aff'd*, 131 *N.J.L.* 326 (E & A 1944). Accordingly, the State Board of Examiners finds that Dorsett's indictment for Attempted Murder, Conspiracy to Commit Murder, Tampering with Physical Evidence, Financial Facilitation of Criminal Activity, and Conspiracy to Commit Financial Facilitation of Criminal Activity provides just cause to take action against her certificate.

Accordingly, on November 1, 2011, the Board of Examiners voted to suspend Dorsett's certificate pending resolution of the criminal charges against her. On this 16th day of December 2011 the Board formally adopted its written decision to suspend and it is therefore ORDERED that Lesley Dorsett's Teacher of Elementary School certificate be suspended effective this day. If the charges are resolved in her favor, she shall notify the Board of Examiners for appropriate action regarding the suspension order. It is further ORDERED that Dorsett return her certificate to the Secretary of the State Board of Examiners, Office of Licensure and Certificates, PO Box 500, Trenton, NJ 08625-0500 within 30 days of the mailing date of this decision.

Robert R. Higgins, Secretary
State Board of Examiners

Date of Mailing:

Appeals may be made to the Commissioner of Education pursuant to the provisions of *N.J.S.A.* 18A:6-38.4.

RRH:MZ: