

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATE OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
MEG GEISSER : ORDER OF SUSPENSION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 1617-197

At its meeting of March 3, 2017, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office had forwarded regarding Meg Geisser. On August 12, 2015, Geisser pled guilty to Theft By Unlawful Taking after she removed currency from the purses of various employees of Weymouth Elementary School with the intent to keep the currency. Geisser was sentenced to 17 days' time served and fined. Geisser currently holds a Teacher of Elementary School certificate, issued in November 1996. Upon review of the above information, at its April 6, 2017 meeting, the Board voted to issue Geisser an Order to Show Cause as to why her certificate should not be revoked.

The Board sent Geisser the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on April 10, 2017. The Order provided that Geisser had 30 days to respond. The certified mail copy was returned as "Unclaimed" and the regular mail copy was not returned. Geisser did not file a response.

Thereafter, after securing a new address for Geisser, on September 28, 2017, the Board sent her 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 copy was not returned. Geisser did not respond.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(e)*, on October 30, 2017, the Board sent Geisser 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, Geisser was offered an opportunity to submit written arguments on the issue of whether the conduct as set forth in the Order to Show Cause provided just cause to take action against her certificate, 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. Geisser was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on

the sanction issue. The certified mail receipt was signed and returned and the regular mail copy was not returned. Once again, Geisser did not respond.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Geisser's conduct and conviction constitute conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. Since Geisser 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 19, 2018, the Board considered only the allegations in the Order to Show Cause and the information received from the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office. The Board concluded that no material facts related to Geisser's offense were in dispute since she never denied that she engaged in the conduct alleged or was convicted and therefore determined that summary decision was appropriate in this matter. *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.7(h)*. After reviewing the allegations, the Board found that Geisser had engaged in unbecoming conduct.

The Board must now determine whether Geisser'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). In this matter, Geisser has a conviction for Theft committed against her colleagues. While her conduct demonstrates behavior that falls short of a role model, given the relatively light sentence she received, the Board believes that the appropriate sanction in this case is a two-year suspension of Geisser's teaching certificate.

Accordingly, on January 19, 2018, the Board voted to suspend Meg Geisser's Teacher of Elementary School certificate for a period of two years. On this 1st day of March 2018 the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that Geisser's certificate is hereby suspended for a period of two years, effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Geisser 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.

Robert R. Higgins, Secretary
State Board of Examiners

RRH/MZ/th

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.