

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS  
ROBERT A. GOODLIN : ORDER OF REVOCATION  
\_\_\_\_\_ : DOCKET NO: 1718-145

At its meeting of August 1, 2019, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information the Office of Student Protection (OSP) and the Union County Prosecutor's Office provided to the State Board of Examiners (Board) regarding Goodlin. On September 14, 2017, Goodlin was charged with Aggravated Sexual Assault – Victim between 13 and 16 years old with supervisory power over victim, Sexual Assault, victim between 13 and 15 years old, Criminal Sexual Contact, Endangering Sexual Conduct, Sexual Assault – Force/Coercion. Goodlin was indicted on Aggravated Sexual Assault – Victim between 13 and 16 years old with supervisory power over victim (1<sup>st</sup> degree), Sexual Assault, victim between 13 and 15 years old (2<sup>nd</sup> degree), Aggravated Criminal Sexual Contact (3<sup>rd</sup> degree), 2 counts of Criminal Sexual Contact (4<sup>th</sup> degree), Endangering Sexual Conduct with Child by Non-Caretaker (3<sup>rd</sup> degree), and Sexual Assault – Force/Coercion no Severe Personal Injury (2<sup>nd</sup> degree). On February 25, 2019, Goodlin pled guilty to two (2) counts of Sexual Assault-Force/Coercion (2<sup>nd</sup> degree). The OSP notified the Board that, as a result of his conviction, Goodlin is disqualified from public school employment pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1 et seq.*

Goodlin currently holds Teacher of Industrial Arts, Cooperative Industrial Education, Teacher of Preschool-Grade 3 Certificate of Eligibility, and Teacher of Elementary Grades K-8 Certificate. Upon review of the above information, the Board voted at its meeting of September 19, 2019 to issue Goodlin an Order to Show Cause as to why his certificates should not be revoked.

The Board sent Goodlin the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on September 24, 2019. The Order provided that Goodlin must file an Answer within 30 days. Goodlin filed an Answer on or about October 15, 2019.

In his Answer, Goodlin indicated that neither of the charges took place in the schools. He stated that he was a teacher in Elizabeth for 10 years and is proud that he took part in extracurricular activities and field trips to enhance student education. Goodlin also stated that he pled guilty to the charges, but the facts

were distorted and the “so-called victims committed perjury under oath as well as there [sic] lawyer.” Goodlin states that he does not plan to teach again due to his poor health and age. He indicates he had a perfect record as a nonviolent citizen and that he is a victim.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.6(e), on October 31, 2019, the Board sent Goodlin a hearing notice by regular and certified mail. The notice explained that it appeared that no material facts were in dispute. Thus, Goodlin 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 his certificates. It also explained that, upon review of the charges against him and the legal arguments tendered in his defense, the Board would determine if his disqualifying offense warranted action against his certificates. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Goodlin was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. The certified mail was signed for the regular mail was not returned. Goodlin did not respond to this notice.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Goodlin’s conviction and subsequent disqualification constitute conduct unbecoming a certificate holder. At its meeting of February 28, 2020, the Board considered the allegations in the Order to Show Cause as well as Goodlin’s Answer. The Board determined that no material facts related to Goodlin’s offense were in dispute since he pled guilty to two counts of Sexual Assault – Force/Coercion (2<sup>nd</sup> degree). Thus, the Board determined that summary decision was appropriate in this matter. *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.6(h).

The Board must now determine whether Goodlin’s conviction and resulting disqualification, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, represent just cause to act against his certificates 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 to be inappropriate role models for them. Individuals convicted of a crime such as Sexual Assault, 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 exemplars 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, Goodlin’s conviction for sexual assault demonstrates behavior that falls 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 himself out as a teacher. Thus, because the Legislature and the Commissioner consider Goodlin’s offense so significant and the Board must render its determination within the confines of his disqualification, it believes that the only appropriate sanction in this case is the revocation of Goodlin’s certificates.

Accordingly, on February 28, 2020, the Board voted to revoke Robert A. Goodlin’s Teacher of Industrial Arts, Cooperative Industrial Education, Teacher of Pre School – Grade 3 Certificate of Eligibility, and Teacher of Elementary Grades K-8 certificates. On this 14<sup>th</sup> day of May 2020, the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that the revocation of Goodlin’s certificates be effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Goodlin return his 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.