

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS  
STAVROS SISKAS : ORDER OF REVOCATION  
\_\_\_\_\_ : DOCKET NO: 2122-158

At its meeting of April 7, 2022, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed certified tenure charges from the Rutherford School District Board of Education (Rutherford) against Stavros Siskas for unbecoming conduct and other just cause for failing to report his arrest for Possession of Controlled Dangerous Substances, providing inaccurate information about the circumstances surrounding that arrest, setting a firmware password on his district issued computer, and other varied employment concerns.

On February 25, 2022, the Arbitrator assigned to the case pursuant to *N.J.S.A.* 18A:6-16 found that Rutherford demonstrated the truth of the charges and dismissed Siskas from his tenured employment. *In the Matter of the Tenure Hearing of Stavros Siskas*, Dkt. No. 130-8/21 (Arbitrator's Decision, February 25, 2022). The matter was referred to the New Jersey State Board of Examiners (Board) for review.

The charges allege that Siskas was arrested on April 9, 2021 for possession of crystal methamphetamine and fabricated the circumstances of his arrest to administration. Further, Siskas set a firmware password on a district-issued laptop without the consent of the administration, thereby restricting the administration from being able to access the laptop and resulting in elimination of the hard drive. Finally, the charges allege that Siskas exhibited unbecoming conduct throughout the 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020 school years after he violated board policies and procedures, resulting in two performance plans and increment withholding.

The Arbitrator assigned found that regardless of the underlying circumstances related to Siskas' purchase and use of methamphetamine violating criminal law, such conduct constitutes conduct unbecoming a professional educator or guidance counselor. *See* Arbitration Decision at p. 8-11. Further, the Arbitrator found that Siskas "compounded his poor judgment by repeatedly lying to District officials about the circumstances of his arrest, the substances he possessed and used, and about his role in installing computer software that more probably than not disabled a Board laptop in his possession." *Id.* at p. 10-11.

The Arbitrator further found that there was credible testimony to support a finding that the Board met its burden of proof to establish that Siskas installed the firmware. *Id.* at p. 12-13. Also, the Arbitrator concluded that Rutherford demonstrated that the penalty of dismissal is "neither arbitrary nor capricious." *Id.* at p. 16.

Siskas currently holds a Teacher of Elementary Grades K-8 Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing, Teacher of Preschool-Grade 3 Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing, Teacher of Students with Disabilities Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing, Teacher of Elementary Grades K-8 Certificate, Teacher of Preschool-Grade 3 Certificate, Teacher of Students with Disabilities Certificate, and School Counselor Certificate. Upon review of the above information, at its May 19, 2022 meeting, the Board voted to issue Siskas an Order to Show Cause as to why his certificates should not be revoked.

The Board sent Siskas the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on May 22, 2022. The Order provided that Siskas had 30 days to respond. Siskas submitted an Answer wherein he disagreed with the arbitration decision. He indicated that he was a confidential informant and that is the reason he provided inaccurate information to administration. *See* Answer at ¶ 2. He

further disagreed with how the arbitrator conducted the tenure hearing and stated he was never convicted of possession of a controlled substance. *Id.* at ¶ 3. Siskas further disagrees that he set a firmware password and alleged it was the district technician who deleted the hard drive. *Id.* at ¶ 4 and 6.

In conclusion, Siskas' Answer alleges that the arbitrator was biased and did not conduct due diligence by reaching out to the prosecutor or judge. *Id.* at ¶ 7. He further disagrees that he was convicted of crimes and his record is free of any crimes. He has never jeopardized the life of a child and the incident at issue did not take place on school grounds. *Id.* at ¶ 8.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.6(e), on September 22, 2022, the Board sent Siskas a hearing notice by regular and certified mail. The notice explained that it appeared that no material facts were in dispute. Thus, Siskas 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 the Board would determine if Siskas' offense warranted action against his certificates. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Siskas was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. The certified mail card was returned with signature and the regular mail was not returned. Siskas did not file a response.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Siskas's conduct constitutes conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. At its meeting of January 26, 2023, the Board considered the allegations in the Order to Show Cause as well as Siskas' Answer. The

Board determined that it was constrained by collateral estoppel to accept the facts as found in the tenure hearing and therefore no material facts related to Siskas's offense were in dispute. *See In the Matter of the Certificates of Richard Barnes-Bey*, Dkt. No. 1314-194 (Bd. Of Examiners September 17, 2015) (Collateral estoppel applies to facts established in a prior tenure hearing for Board revocation proceedings). 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 Siskas' conduct, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, provides just cause to act against his certificates 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. In this case, the record established that Siskas failed to report his arrest, provided inaccurate information about the arrest, set a firmware password on his district computer, among other varied concerns. Siskas' arguments regarding the veracity of the tenure hearing are not relevant as the tenure arbitration decision was not appealed or overturned. Accordingly, the Board can rely upon the factual findings in the Arbitration decision. Based upon same, the appropriate response in this matter is revocation.

Accordingly, on January 26, 2023, the Board voted to revoke Stavros Siskas' Teacher of Elementary Grades K-8 Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing, Teacher of Preschool-Grade 3 Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing, Teacher of Students with Disabilities Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing, Teacher of Elementary Grades K-8 Certificate, Teacher of Preschool-Grade 3 Certificate, Teacher of Students with Disabilities Certificate, and

School Counselor Certificate. On this 3<sup>rd</sup> day of March 2023 that the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that Siskas's certificates are hereby revoked, effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Siskas 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.