

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
ROGER R. WOOD : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 667-02/02-328

At its meeting of February 21, 2002, the State Board of Examiners reviewed information received from the Division of Criminal Justice indicating that on February 4, 2000, Roger Wood had pled guilty to six counts of endangering the welfare of a child. On May 22, 2000, Wood was sentenced to four years of probation, ordered to undergo sex offenders specific therapy, comply with Megan's Law, including community supervision for life, ordered to have no contact with females under the age of 18, ordered to resign from the teaching profession, to surrender his certificates and never to apply again for a teaching position. Wood is currently the holder of a Teacher of Physical Science certificate issued in August 1974, Teacher of Mathematics certificate issued in December 1975 and a Teacher of Science certificate issued in April 1976. Upon review of the above information, at that February meeting, the State Board of Examiners voted to issue Wood an Order to Show Cause as to why his certificates should not be suspended or revoked.

The Board sent Wood the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on April 8, 2002. The Order provided that Wood's Answer must be filed within 20 days. Wood signed for and returned the certified mail copy and the regular mail copy was not returned. As Wood did not file an Answer to the Order, the Board sent him a second notice by regular and certified mail on March 12, 2003. Once again, he signed for and returned the certified copy and the regular mail copy was not returned. Wood did not file a response to the Order.

The threshold issue before the State Board of Examiners in this matter, therefore, is whether Wood's conviction constitutes conduct unbecoming a certificate holder. Since Wood

did not respond to the Order to Show Cause, the State Board of Examiners had no responsive pleading to consider in the hearing process. It is therefore ORDERED that the charges in the Order to Show Cause are deemed admitted for the purpose of this proceeding. N.J.A.C. 6:11-3.6(a)1.¹ Since Wood's conduct, which was predicated on the same conviction as was set forth in the Order to Show Cause, is admitted, the Board of Examiners must now decide whether that constitutes a sufficient basis to act against his certificates pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6:11-3.6(a)1. We find that it does.

The State Board of Examiners 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. 6:11-3.4. Furthermore, unfitness to hold a position in a school system may be shown by one incident, if sufficiently flagrant. Redcay v. State Board of Education, 130 N.J.L. 369, 371 (S. Ct. 1943), aff'd., 131 N.J.L. 326 (E & A 1944). "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. There can be no dispute that Wood's criminal conviction for six counts of endangering the welfare of a child negates any claim he can have to being a role model for students. Moreover, Wood's behavior is inexcusable for any individual, teacher or not. In fact, the court found Wood's acts sufficiently damaging that he has been barred from having any contact with females under the age of 18. The Board of Examiners is ever mindful of its duty to all of the students in New Jersey. Thus, the only proper response to Wood's breach is revocation.

¹ On January 20, 2004, the State Board of Education adopted a new administrative code governing professional licensure and standards. N.J.A.C. 6A:9-1 et seq. Although this decision was mailed after the effective date of the new code, the Board of Examiners' decision in this case predates the effective date of the new code and was therefore decided under the old code. All citations in this decision therefore are to the prior administrative code.

Accordingly, it is therefore ORDERED that Roger Wood's Teacher of Physical Science, Teacher of Mathematics and Teacher of Science certificates be revoked on this 12th day of June 2003. It is further ORDERED that Wood return his certificates to the Secretary of the State Board of Examiners, Office of Licensing, PO Box 500, Trenton, NJ 08625-0500 within 15 days of receipt of this decision.

Michael K. Klavon, Acting Secretary
State Board of Examiners

Date of Mailing: November 17, 2004

Appeals may be made to the State Board of Education pursuant to the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:6-28.