

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATE OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
WILLIAM BELTRAN : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 1011-156

At its meeting of January 20, 2011, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information it had received from the Pittsgrove School District (Pittsgrove) regarding William Beltran. Pittsgrove reported that Beltran submitted falsified letters of recommendation to the district in order to obtain employment as a school psychologist. Beltran currently holds a School Psychologist certificate, issued in July 2000. Upon review of the above information, at its March 31, 2011 meeting, the Board voted to issue an Order to Show Cause to Beltran as to why his certificate should not be revoked.

The Board sent Beltran the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on April 4, 2011. The Order provided that Beltran must file an Answer within 30 days. Beltran responded on April 7, 2011. In his Answer, Beltran stated that his recommendation letters were not falsified, but rather, misidentified by the recommenders since they were written in support of his application for admission to a University program. (Answer, p. 1). He noted that he was in separation discussions with Millville when the allegations surfaced and that there were “hard feelings” with his colleagues prior to this matter. (Answer, p. 1). Beltran stated that he used the recommendations because they were generic and undated. (Answer, p. 1). Beltran also added that he was angry when Millville let him go due to budget cuts and he said things in anger to his colleagues which he regretted. (Answer, p. 1). He acknowledged that he was not surprised about the reprisal and expected it. (Answer, p. 1). In the remainder of his Answer, Beltran stated that he no longer uses these recommendations and no longer possessed them, having discarded them. (Answer, p. 1).

Since there were material facts in dispute, the Board transmitted the matter to the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) for hearing as a contested case. Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) Bruce M. Gorman heard the matter on April 17, 2013. The record closed on May 6, 2013, and the ALJ issued an

Initial Decision on May 20, 2013. *In the Matter of the Certificate of William Beltran*, Dkt. No. EDE 15473-12 (Initial Decision, May 20, 2013).

Two of the three purported authors of the recommendation letters testified that they never wrote, authorized or signed the letter that Beltran had submitted on their behalf. (Initial Decision, slip op. at 3-5). Additionally, Beltran stipulated that had the third individual testified, he, too, would have testified that he never wrote or authorized a letter of recommendation for Beltran and had written to the Board stating that fact. *Id.* at 5. By way of explanation, Beltran testified that he had been suffering from mental and emotional disorders in his last two years with Millville. *Ibid.* He indicated that he had had an adverse reaction to Prozac which left him “with delusions of grandeur, fits of rage, lack of concentration and paranoia.” *Ibid.* Beltran had no recollection of writing the letters, “”but conceded that he must have done so.” *Id.* at 6. He also acknowledged that he enclosed the three fake letters of recommendation when he submitted his application to Pittsgrove. *Ibid.* In assessing the appropriate penalty, ALJ Gorman noted that Beltran’s conduct “tended to destroy public respect for the delivery of government services and constituted behavior that was unsuitable and inappropriate under the circumstances.” *Id.* at 8. The ALJ also noted that Beltran’s sole excuse for his behavior was his own, unsupported assessment of his psychological condition at the time of his conduct. *Ibid.* Having concluded that Beltran’s conduct was unbecoming, ALJ Gorman ordered that Beltran’s certificate must be revoked. *Ibid.* Neither party filed Exceptions to the Initial Decision.

The Board must now determine whether to adopt, modify or reject the Initial Decision in this matter. At its meeting of July 25, 2013, the Board reviewed the Initial Decision. After full and fair consideration of the Decision, the Board voted to adopt the Initial Decision.

As noted above, the ALJ concluded that Beltran had created and submitted three fraudulent letters of recommendation in order to obtain public employment and should no longer be allowed to retain his certificate. (Initial Decision, slip op. at 6-8). The Board agrees. “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. Beltran’s fraud negates his position as a role model and undermines the notion of trust that is an essential quality necessary to teach children. The Board believes that the only appropriate response to Beltran’s breach is the revocation of his certificate. The Board therefore adopts the Initial Decision.

Accordingly, on July 25, 2013, the Board voted to adopt the Initial Decision and ordered to revoke Beltran’s certificate. On this 20th day of September 2013, the Board formally adopted its written decision to adopt the Initial Decision in this matter, and it is therefore ORDERED that William Beltran’s School Psychologist certificate be hereby revoked effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Beltran return his certificate to the Secretary of the State Board of Examiners, Office of Licensure, 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

Date of Mailing:

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