

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CREDENTIAL OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
EDWARD MCCRAY III : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 1415-186

At its meeting of April 17, 2015, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information received from the Middlesex and Union County Vicinages of the Superior Court of New Jersey and the Criminal History Review Unit (CHRU) regarding Edward McCray III. On February 27, 2015, McCray was convicted of Burglary and Resisting Arrest in Union County. On March 2, 2015, McCray pled guilty to Theft By Unlawful Taking in Middlesex County and the court ordered that “his right to be employed as a substitute teacher” be forfeited. The CHRU notified the Board that, as a result of his convictions, McCray was disqualified from public school employment pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1 et seq.* McCray currently holds a Substitute Credential which expires in July 2018.

McCray did not challenge the accuracy of his criminal history record before the Commissioner of Education. Upon review of the above information, the Board voted at its meeting of May 21, 2015 to issue McCray an Order to Show Cause as to why his credential should not be revoked.

The Board sent McCray the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on May 26, 2015. The Order provided that McCray must file an Answer within 30 days. The certified mail copy was returned as “Unclaimed” and the regular mail copy was not returned. McCray did not file a response. Thereafter, on July 6, 2015, the Board sent McCray another notice by certified and regular mail providing him an additional 15 days to respond to the Order to Show Cause. The certified mail copy was returned as “Unclaimed” and the regular copy was not returned. McCray did not respond.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.7(e)*, on July 27, 2015, the Board sent McCray a hearing notice by regular and certified mail. The notice explained that it appeared that no material facts were in dispute. Thus, McCray 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 credential. 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 credential. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. McCray 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, McCray did not respond.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether McCray's conviction and subsequent disqualification constitute conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. Since McCray failed to respond to the Order to Show Cause or the hearing notice, at its meeting of October 30, 2015, the Board considered only the allegations in the Order to Show Cause. The Board determined that no material facts related to McCray's offense were in dispute since he never denied that he had been convicted of the offense charged and been subsequently disqualified. Thus, the Board determined that summary decision was appropriate in this matter. *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.7(h)*. 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. 6A:9B-4.7(c)*.

The Board must now determine whether McCray's convictions and resulting disqualification, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, represent just cause to act against his credential pursuant to *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.5. 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 a danger. Individuals convicted of crimes such as Burglary, resisting Arrest and Theft By Unlawful Taking fall squarely within in this category. The strong legislative policy statement is also in accord with the Commissioner's long-standing belief that teachers must serve as role models 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, McCray's multiple convictions demonstrate behavior that falls far 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 McCray's offenses so significant, the Board believes that the only appropriate sanction in this case is the revocation of his credential.

Accordingly, on October 30, 2015, the Board voted to revoke Edward McCray III's Substitute Credential. On this 10th day of December 2015 the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that the revocation of Edward McCray's credential be effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that McCray return his credential 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:

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