

18-23

State Board of Examiners Dkt No. 1920-130

Agency Dkt. No. 3-4/22A

## **New Jersey Commissioner of Education**

### **Final Decision**

In the Matter of the Certificates of  
Richard N. Leonard, State Board of Examiners,  
New Jersey Department of Education.

Order of Suspension by the State Board of Examiners, March 7, 2022

For the Respondent-appellant, David W. Fasset, Esq.

For the Petitioner-Respondent State Board of Examiners, Hasibul Haque, Deputy  
Attorney General (Matthew J. Platkin, Attorney General of New Jersey)

The Commissioner has reviewed the record and the papers filed in connection with appellant Richard N. Leonard's appeal of the Order of the State Board of Examiners (Board), dated March 7, 2022, revoking his two Teacher of Social Studies Certificates.

Appellant maintained two Teacher of Social Studies Certificates, which were issued in 1972. Between 1973 and 1986, appellant taught Social Studies at West Essex Junior High School in North Caldwell and also served as a substitute teacher in the public schools of Caldwell, Glen Ridge, and Roseland. In addition to employment as a teacher, appellant has also held a real estate broker's license and owned and operated a realty business, Arcadia Realtors, in Roseland, New Jersey. From 1973 to 2019, appellant also served as an elected public official, serving as Councilman and the Mayor of Roseland. It is from appellant's service as an elected public official that the Board of Examiner's revocation proceedings originate.

On February 24, 2015, appellant attended a Roseland Council meeting where the Council considered a motion to recommend a redevelopment plan, which included a parcel of real property located at 165 Eagle Rock Avenue that is adjacent to property owned and operated by appellant and his real estate company, Arcadia Realtors. The proposed plan included the construction of a parking lot which would directly benefit appellant's realty business. The motion was passed with appellant voting against the motion. As appellant admitted, he should have abstained from voting on that motion because the property to be redeveloped was located next to his realty business and the plan would confer a benefit to his realty business.

On or about May 15, 2018, appellant was charged with a single count of violating *N.J.S.A. 2C:5-2A(1)*, Conspiracy to Commit a Violation of *N.J.S.A. 2C:30-2A*, Official Misconduct. Pursuant to the Affidavit of Probable Cause, which was executed by an Officer of the Essex County Prosecutor's Office in support of the charge, it was alleged that appellant made a statement in front of the Roseland Council and Borough employees that appellant would continue voting no against ordinances that would benefit 165 Eagle Rock Avenue until the owner of 165 Eagle Rock Avenue agreed to perform snow removal on appellant's business parking lot.

On January 31, 2019, appellant entered a plea of guilty to the charge of conspiracy to commit official misconduct. As part of his plea, appellant admitted that as a councilman for the Township of Roseland, he conspired with his corporation to obtain a benefit for the corporation for an amount under \$200.00. On September 26, 2019, appellant was sentenced to a term of probation for one year and was ordered to pay various penalties and assessments. As

conditions of probation, appellant was to remain offense free and to complete thirty hours of community service. Additionally, as part of the plea agreement and sentencing, appellant forfeited his right to public employment and was forever disqualified from holding any office or position of honor, trust or profit under the State of New Jersey or any of its administrative or political subdivisions. The original judgment of conviction incorrectly stated that appellant was sentenced on a second-degree charge, when in fact it was a third-degree charge. As such, on November 8, 2019, the Court entered an amended judgment of conviction without altering the sentencing of appellant.

After the entry of appellant's guilty plea, but prior to his sentencing, on February 8, 2019, the Criminal History Review Unit of the New Jersey Department of Education's Office of Student Protection (OSP) received notice of appellant's guilty plea and transmitted information regarding the same to the Office of Certification & Induction, indicating that appellant was disqualified from employment as a teacher pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18:6-7.1 et seq.* On December 13, 2019, the OSP forwarded the disqualification from employment in public schools to the Board, enclosing a copy of the un-amended judgment of conviction.

Thereafter, on January 27, 2020, the Board issued an Order to Show Cause as to why appellant's certificates should not be revoked. On February 17, 2020, appellant filed an answer to the Order to Show Cause, which also included information – the amended judgment of conviction – which clarified that appellant had been convicted of a third-degree offense, not a second-degree offense. The Order to Show Cause and the answer thereto were put into abeyance by the Board because appellant had indicated that he was appealing the OSP's

determination that he was disqualified from public school employment pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1 et seq.* As this disqualification formed part of the allegations of the original Order to Show Cause, the Board determined that the resolution of the appeal was appropriate before the Board could move forward on the Order to Show Cause.

On January 6, 2021, appellant, through counsel, withdrew his appeal of the determination of the OSP that he was disqualified from public school employment pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1*. On January 27, 2021, the Board advised appellant's counsel that the Order to Show Cause would be moved from abeyance and requested that counsel file an Answer. Appellant, through counsel, advised the Board that there was an error in the original Order to Show Cause relating to the Judgment of Conviction, specifically the grading of the offense to which appellant plead guilty. Accordingly, on June 24, 2021, the Board vacated the original Order to Show cause and issued a new, corrected Order to Show Cause. Appellant filed an Answer on July 30, 2021, wherein he admitted to the charges and that he pleaded guilty to the downgraded third-degree offense and was sentenced to noncustodial probation for one year. Appellant further admitted that the downgraded third-degree conviction automatically disqualifies him from public school employment pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 2C:51-2(d)* but argued that it does not disqualify him under *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1* or warrant revocation of his teaching certificate.

On September 8, 2021, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B:4.6(e)*, the Board sent appellant a hearing notice indicating that there were no material facts in dispute but offering appellant the 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 certificate. Appellant filed a written response on October 8, 2021, and he appeared before the Board and provided testimony on December 16, 2021. In addition to providing live testimony, appellant was given the opportunity to provide additional documents for the Board to review as part of the hearing.

In its March 8, 2022 Order, the Board concluded that appellant's conduct provided just cause to take action against his certificate pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.4*. The Board noted that the purpose of the Criminal History Review Statute was to protect public school pupils from contact with individuals who the Legislature deemed to be a poor example, and individuals convicted of crimes such as conspiracy fall squarely within this category. The Board further found that appellant had abandoned his appeal of the OSP disqualification and indicated that the Board's decision was consistent with the OSP determination. Finally, the Board concluded that an individual whose offense is so serious that he is barred from service in public schools should not be permitted to retain the certificate that authorizes such service. Accordingly, the Board revoked appellant's teaching certificate.

On appeal, appellant argues that *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1* does not identify conspiracy to commit third-degree official misconduct under *N.J.S.A. 2C:30-2* as an offense triggering disqualification from public employment. As such, appellant contends that the Board's finding that *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1* disqualifies him from public employment is clearly erroneous and, by itself, requires reversal. Appellant claims that his withdrawal of his appeal of the OSP's disqualification decision was made without prejudice to challenging the Board's proposed revocation of his teaching certificates. In essence, appellant argues that though he is

disqualified from all public employment, including employment with a public school, pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 2C:51-2(d)*, he is not specifically disqualified by *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1*, despite his withdrawal of his appeal of the OSP's determination that he was disqualified.

Appellant further contends that, due to the Board's mistaken belief that his conviction fell within *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1*, the Board failed to independently assess his conduct and the circumstances surrounding it. Appellant also argues that the Board ignored the opinion of the Superior Court and the prosecution that his disqualification from public employment under *N.J.S.A. 2C:51-2* did not disqualify him from maintaining his teaching certificates.

Lastly, appellant argues that his conduct does not constitute just cause for revocation of his teaching certificate. He argues that nothing in his conduct suggests any inefficiency, incapacity, conduct unbecoming a teacher, or other just cause for revocation pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.4*. Specifically, he argues that the evidence establishes that he voted against the redevelopment plan in good faith, and on its merits, because he believed it to be against the public interests. Appellant claims that the criminal complaint against him was politically motivated and that his political opponents retaliated against him by manufacturing a false allegation.

After a comprehensive review, the Commissioner finds that the record adequately supports the Board's determination that appellant engaged in unbecoming conduct and there was just cause to revoke appellant's certificates. In reviewing appeals from decisions of the Board, the Commissioner may not substitute her judgment for that of the Board so long as appellant received due process and the Board's decision is supported by sufficient credible evidence in the record. Further, the Board's decision should not be disturbed unless appellant

demonstrates that it is arbitrary, capricious, or unreasonable. *N.J.A.C. 6A:4-4.1(a)*. With regard to reviewing a sanction imposed by the Board, the Appellate Division has defined the standard as determining whether the “punishment is so disproportionate to the offense, in light of all the circumstances, as to be shocking to one’s sense of fairness.” *In re Certificates of Benjamin Norton*, 2016 *N.J. Super. Unpub. LEXIS 2291*, \*6-7 (internal citations and quotations omitted).

Initially, the record reflects that appellant was afforded the necessary due process throughout the proceedings before the Board prior to the suspension of his certificates. Specifically, prior to moving forward with the Order to Show Cause issued on January 27, 2020, appellant was afforded the opportunity to appeal the OSP’s determination that his guilty plea and judgment of conviction disqualified him public school employment pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1*. The Board granted him the opportunity to pursue the appeal of the OSP’s determination and held the Order to Show Cause in abeyance pending said appeal. Additionally, in response to information provided by appellant, the Board corrected the original Order to Show Cause, which listed a second-degree offense, by issuing and allowing appellant the opportunity to respond to an Amended Order to Show Cause which listed a third-degree offense. Lastly, despite the Board determining that there were no material facts in dispute, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(e)*, appellant was offered the opportunity to submit written submissions as well as appear for in person testimony, which was considered by the Board. As such, it is the Commissioner’s determination that appellant received due process in this matter.

As to the record before the Board, the following facts are uncontroverted. First, appellant was a certificate holder, specifically holding two certificates as a Teacher of Social

Studies going back to the early 1970s. Second, on or about May 15, 2018, appellant was charged with a single count of violating *N.J.S.A. 2C:5-2A(1)*, Conspiracy to Commit a Violation of *N.J.S.A. 2C:30-2A*, Official Misconduct, a crime of the second degree. Third, on September 26, 2019, appellant entered a guilty plea to a downgraded charge of violating *N.J.S.A. 2C:5-2A(1)*, Conspiracy to Commit a Violation of *N.J.S.A. 2C:30-2A*, a crime of the third degree. Fourth, appellant testified and admitted the factual basis of his guilty plea that as a councilman for the Township of Roseland, he conspired with his corporation to obtain a benefit for the corporation in an amount under \$200.00. Fifth, as a result of his guilty plea, appellant was sentenced to a year of probation, thirty hours of community service, various monetary penalties and assessments, forfeited his right to public employment and was forever disqualified from holding any office or position of honor, trust, or profit under the State of New Jersey or any of its administrative or political subdivisions, pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 2C:51-2(d)*. Sixth, the OSP found that appellant's guilty plea and conviction disqualified him from public school employment pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1*, and appellant voluntarily withdrew his appeal of this determination. These facts adequately support the Board's determination that appellant engaged in conduct unbecoming and that a revocation of his teaching certificates is the appropriate penalty.

The majority of appellant's arguments take issue with the Board's reliance upon the OSP's determination that appellant was disqualified from employment in public schools pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1*. He argues at length that the crime to which he pled guilty and was sentenced was not enumerated in *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1* and thus could not be relied upon by the Board. However, the correctness of the OSP's decision to disqualify appellant pursuant to



*N.J.S.A.* 18A:6-7.1 is not at issue here. Appellant abandoned his appeal of the OSP's determination of disqualification, leaving the Board with the uncontested determination of disqualification pursuant to *N.J.S.A.* 18A:6-7.1, which adequately supports the Board of Examiner's determination and their order of revocation.

The Commissioner disagrees with appellant that the Board relied solely on *N.J.S.A.* 18A:6-7.1 to support its decision. Nevertheless, to address appellant's argument that the Board should have looked at and independently assessed his particular conduct when making a determination as to whether his conduct warranted revocation of his certificates, it is clear that the record before the Board adequately supports a finding of conduct unbecoming and just cause, both of which warrant the revocation of his teaching certificates. Appellant's brief and submissions appear to be an attempt to re-litigate the criminal charges to which appellant freely and voluntarily pleaded guilty, ignoring the fact that appellant, under oath, admitted to conspiring with a corporation to commit the crime of official misconduct.

The Board may revoke or suspend the certificates of a certificate holder for demonstrated inefficiency, incapacity, conduct unbecoming a teacher, or other just cause. *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.4. "Other just cause shall include, but be not limited to, offenses within the terms of the forfeiture statute, *N.J.S.A.* 2C:51-2, or the disqualification statute, *N.J.S.A.* 18A:6-7.1." *Id.* Here, appellant has admitted, and it is uncontroverted, that he voluntarily pleaded guilty to a crime which is within the terms of the forfeiture statute, *N.J.S.A.* 2C:51-2. As a result, he forfeited his right to public employment and is forever disqualified from holding any office or position of honor, trust or profit under the State of New Jersey or any of its administrative or political subdivisions. Although appellant argues that the prosecutor and the Superior Court

consented to and found that he was not to lose his teaching certificates, he has presented no authority for the proposition that the Board and the Commissioner are bound by the Superior Court and the prosecutor's assessment. The issuance and revocation of certificates falls firmly within the Commissioner's jurisdiction, not that of the Superior Court.

It is clear that the Legislature, when passing the forfeiture statutes, including *N.J.S.A. 2C:51-2*, intended to hold those in positions of public trust to the highest standards of conduct, and breaching that trust would result in forfeiture. As set forth in the Board's order of revocation, 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 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). As noted in the Board's Order, appellant's conviction demonstrates behavior that falls incredibly short of a role model and the high standards to which educators are held. Indeed, his behavior has resulted in him having to resign his position as a Councilman and he is forever barred from any position of employment or public trust with the State of New Jersey. It would be illogical for the Commissioner to conclude that conduct resulting in a bar from all positions of public trust does not also warrant the revocation of his teaching certificates.

Accordingly, the decision of the State Board of Examiners revoking appellant's teaching certificates is affirmed. Appellant's Teacher of Social Studies certificates are hereby revoked.<sup>1</sup>

  
ACTING COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

Date of Decision: January 23, 2023

Date of Mailing: January 25, 2023

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<sup>1</sup> This decision may be appealed to the Appellate Division of the Superior Court pursuant to *N.J.S.A.* 18A:6-9.1. Under *N.J.Ct.R.* 2:4-1(b), a notice of appeal must be filed with the Appellate Division within 45 days from the date of mailing of this decision.

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
THE CERTIFICATE OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS  
RICHARD N. LEONARD : ORDER OF REVOCATION  
\_\_\_\_\_ : DOCKET NO: 1920-130

At its meeting of December 13, 2019, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information provided by the Essex County Superior Court and the Office of Student Protection (OSP) regarding Richard N. Leonard (Leonard). Leonard was charged with Conspiracy to Engage in Conduct Constituting a Crime – Official Misconduct Unauthorized Use of Official Function (2<sup>nd</sup> degree), following allegations that he agreed not to take official action as a member of the Roseland Council for a benefit that exceeded \$200 in value. Leonard pled guilty to Conspiracy to Engage in Conduct Constituting a Crime – Official Misconduct Unauthorized Use of Official Function (3<sup>rd</sup> degree) and was sentenced on November 8, 2019 to probation for a period of one year along with other terms and conditions, including forfeiture of public employment. The OSP notified the Board that, as a result of his conviction, Leonard is disqualified from public school employment pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1 et seq.* Leonard currently holds a Teacher of Social Studies Certificate.

On January 23, 2020, the Board issued an Order to Show Cause to Leonard. On March 9, 2020, the Board placed the matter in abeyance because Leonard indicated he was appealing the OSP's disqualification determination. This disqualification is part of the allegations in the Order to Show Cause, and thus resolution of this appeal was appropriate before the Board could move forward on the Order to Show Cause.

On or about January 6, 2021, Leonard withdrew the pending appeal of OSP's disqualification. Accordingly, the OSP's determination of disqualification pursuant to *N.J.S.A.*

18A:6-7.1 stands. On January 27, 2021, the Board sent Leonard's counsel a notice that the matter would be moved from abeyance and requested that counsel file an Answer in this matter.

The Board was advised that there was an error in the Order to Show Cause relating to the Judgment of Conviction; it required correction before moving forward in the matter. Accordingly, on June 25, 2021 the Board vacated the original Order to Show Cause and issued a new, corrected, Order to Show Cause.

The Board sent Leonard the corrected Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on July 1, 2021. The Order provided that Leonard had 30 days to respond. Leonard filed an Answer on July 30, 2021. In that Answer, Leonard admitted to the charges and indicated that the prosecution downgraded it to a 3<sup>rd</sup> degree conspiracy to engage in official misconduct. *See* Answer at ¶ 3. He further stated that he pled guilty to the downgraded third-degree charge and was sentenced to noncustodial probation for one year. *Id.* He states that on May 13, 2020, after 7 months of probation, Leonard was discharged from PTI after he performed 70 hours of community service, which was more than double the 30 hours required by his sentence. *Id.*

Leonard admits that his third-degree conviction automatically disqualifies him from holding public school employment under N.J.S.A. 2C:51-2d but does not disqualify him under N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1. Further, it does not warrant revocation of his teaching certificate. *Id.* at ¶ 3, 4 and 5.

Leonard states that the allegations of the Order to Show Cause are derived from allegations three (3) years ago when he was a Councilman in Roseland, New Jersey. *Id.* at ¶ 7. Leonard voted against a motion to recommend a proposed Payment in Lieu of Taxes redevelopment plan for property located next to his realty business, allegedly because the owner of the redevelopment property refused to provide snow plowing services to him/his business. Leonard admits that he

should have abstained from voting on the motion but denies that he voted against it because of a desire for snow plowing services or any other benefit to him or his business. *Id.* Further, he states that his opposing vote was not motivated by monetary or other benefit to him or his business. *Id.* at ¶ 9. He also indicates that the council attorney nor any other council member advised him to abstain. *Id.* at ¶ 10.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.6(e), on September 8, 2021, the Board sent Leonard a hearing notice by regular and certified mail. The notice explained that there were no material facts in dispute. Thus, Leonard 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 certificate. 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 offense warranted action against his certificate. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Leonard was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. Leonard filed a written response on October 8, 2021 and requested to appear before the Board.

In that response, Leonard argued that although his conviction “automatically disqualified him from holding public employment generally under N.J.S.A. 2C:51-2d, it did not disqualify him from holding public school employment specifically under N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.” *See* Hearing Submission at p. 1. He states that the Court in his criminal matter found that Leonard’s public employment disqualification does not disqualify him from maintaining his teacher certificates. *Id.*

He further states that the allegations against him were false and brought over three years after the vote. He says they were “proven to be politically motivated, brought by Mr. Leonard’s

political opponents in retaliation for his disclosing antisemitic and racist comments made by those opponents.” *Id.* at p. 2. Leonard devoted his entire professional life to public service and support of public education. He is 72 years old and has not taught since 1986 and has no plans to return to teaching. Nevertheless, he wishes to maintain his certificate in recognition of his career. *Id.*

Leonard also submits detailed information on his personal and professional history. *Id.* at p. 3-4. He provides information on the circumstances surrounding the alleged conduct. *Id.* at p. 4-13. Leonard argues that his conduct does not warrant action against his certificate because his conduct was a single act almost 7 years ago; the conduct was unrelated to teaching in the classroom; it was a momentary lapse of judgment and not a pattern of misconduct; he is not disqualified from public school employment pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1; and the Court in his criminal matter affirmatively found that the disqualification should not disqualify him from maintaining his teacher certificate. *Id.* at p. 18-19. Finally, Leonard states that he believes no sanction against his educator certificate is warranted, but any sanction should be less than revocation. *Id.* at p. 20.

The hearing was scheduled for the Board’s December 16, 2021 meeting. Mr. Leonard appeared with his counsel, David W. Fassett, Esquire. Mr. Fassett began the hearing by indicating that he would not reiterate what is in his submissions, but that Leonard wished to speak on his behalf. Prior to the hearing, Counsel for Leonard provided additional documents for the Board to review as part of Leonard’s hearing.

Leonard appeared and began by stating that he wanted the Board to know who he was as a person. He wants to give back and is involved in Goodwill and Habitat for Humanity. He spent time discussing his personal ventures and history, his beliefs and the importance of teaching and giving back.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Leonard's conduct constitutes conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. At its meeting of January 21, 2022, the Board considered the allegations in the Order to Show Cause, the Answer, as well as Leonard's Hearing Response and testimony. The Board determined that no material facts related to Leonard's offense were in dispute since he pled guilty to Conspiracy – Agree/Engage in Conduct Constituting a Crime (3<sup>rd</sup> degree). Moreover, as a result his conviction, Leonard is disqualified from public school employment pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1 et seq.* Thus, the Board determined that summary decision was appropriate in this matter. *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(h)*. After reviewing the allegations, the Board found that Leonard engaged in unbecoming conduct.

The Board must now determine whether Leonard's conduct, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, provides just cause to act against his certificate pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.4*. The Board finds that it does.

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 poor example for them. Individuals convicted of crimes such as Conspiracy 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 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, Leonard's conviction demonstrates behavior that falls short



of a role model. Leonard argues that he is not disqualified under N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1; nevertheless, he abandoned the appeal of that determination in January 2021. He cannot now argue the merits of that appeal before this Board and seek a different outcome. Accordingly, the disqualification from OSP stands and the Board takes its action consistent with that determination.

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 Leonard's offense so significant, the Board believes that the only appropriate sanction in this case is the revocation of his certificate.

Accordingly, on January 21, 2022, the Board voted to revoke Richard N. Leonard's Teacher of Social Studies Certificate. On this 4<sup>th</sup> day of March 2022, the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that Leonard's certificate is hereby revoked, effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Leonard return his certificate 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.