

New Jersey Commissioner of Education

Final Decision

In the Matter of the Tenure Hearing of Paola Rodriguez, Board of Education of the City of Rahway, Union County

For the Petitioner, Margaret A. Miller, Esq.

No appearance by or on behalf of Respondent, Paola Rodriguez

This matter was opened before the Commissioner of Education on June 12, 2025, through tenure charges of incapacity and other just cause certified by Aleya Shoieb, Superintendent of the Rahway Public School District ("District"), together with supporting evidence against respondent, Paola Rodriguez, a tenured teaching staff member in the District's employ. The District provided respondent with written notice of such certification at the respondent's current known address, via regular and certified mail.

On June 16, 2025, the Commissioner directed the respondent via email and regular mail to file an answer to the charges. This communication provided notice to respondent that, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:3-5.3 and 6A:3-5.4*, an individual against whom tenure charges are certified "*shall have 15 days from the day such charges are filed with the Commissioner to file a written response to the charges with the Commissioner,*" and that failure to answer within the prescribed period would – absent granting of an extension for good cause shown – result in the charges being deemed admitted. A second notice was sent to the respondent on July 2, 2025, advising respondent that if an answer was not received by July 16, 2025, the Commissioner may issue a decision based on the allegations contained in the tenure charges. Respondent replied via email to the second notice,

requesting a 45-day extension of time to submit a response to the tenure charges, in part because she claimed to be attempting to secure legal counsel. The District objected to the extension. In light of the extension request and objection, a limited extension was granted, allowing respondent until August 7, 2025 to file her answer. Respondent was advised that if she retained counsel during the extended time period, further requests for extension from her attorney would be considered. No reply to the tenure charges was received from or on behalf of the respondent.

The certified tenure charges and statement of supporting evidence filed by the District in this matter indicate that the respondent was employed by the District as a tenured teacher. The charges indicate that the respondent has been absent from work since October 1, 2024 without approval. Respondent had previously exhausted all available paid and unpaid leave to which she was entitled, and a request for a further leave of absence was denied. Respondent nonetheless failed to return to work.

Deeming the allegations to be admitted and noting that the respondent has failed to respond to the charges certified against her, the Commissioner finds that the District's charges of incapacity and other just cause have been proven and warrant the respondent's dismissal. Accordingly, summary decision is hereby granted to the District, and the respondent is dismissed from her tenured position with the Rahway School District.

IT IS SO ORDERED.¹



COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

Date of Decision: September 8, 2025
Date of Mailing: September 8, 2025

¹ 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.