

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
RONALD ZALESKI : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 1011-214

At its meeting of June 16, 2011, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information regarding Ronald Zaleski. Zaleski surrendered his teaching certificates in Pennsylvania in January 2006 in lieu of discipline after pleading guilty to ten counts of Possession of Child Pornography and three counts of Dissemination Photo/Film of Child Sex Acts. On January 13, 2006, Zaleski was sentenced to between 11 months fifteen days and 23 months in prison on the dissemination counts and up to five years' probation on the possession counts. In New Jersey, Zaleski currently holds a Teacher of Reading certificate, issued in March 1964 and a Reading Specialist certificate, issued in April 1986. Upon review of the above information, at its July 28, 2011 meeting, the Board voted to issue Zaleski an Order to Show Cause.

The Board sent Zaleski the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on August 2, 2011. The certified mail copy was returned as unclaimed and the regular mail copy was not returned. The Order provided that Zaleski must file an Answer within 30 days. Zaleski did not file an Answer. Thereafter, on October 7, 2011, the Board sent Zaleski another notice by certified and regular mail providing him an additional 15 days to respond to the Order to Show Cause. The certified mail receipt was signed and returned. The regular mail copy was not returned. Zaleski did not respond to the second notice.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9-17.7(e)*, on November 4, 2011, the Board sent Zaleski a hearing notice by regular and certified mail. The notice explained that it appeared that no material facts were in dispute. Thus, Zaleski 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 determined to take action against his certificates. It also explained that upon review of the charges against him and the legal arguments tendered in his defense, the Board would determine if Zaleski's conduct warranted action against his certificates. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Zaleski 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. Zaleski did not file a response.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter, therefore, is whether Zaleski's conviction and the surrender of his Pennsylvania licenses constitute conduct unbecoming a certificate holder. Since Zaleski failed to respond to the Order to Show Cause or the hearing notice, at its meeting of January 19, 2012, the Board considered only the allegations in the Order to Show Cause. The Board determined that no material facts related to Zaleski's offenses were in dispute since he never denied that he had been convicted of the offenses charged and had been sentenced accordingly. Nor did he deny that he had surrendered his Pennsylvania teaching certificates in lieu of discipline. Thus, the Board determined that summary decision was appropriate in this matter. *N.J.A.C. 6A:9-17.7(h)*. It is therefore ORDERED that the charges in the Order to Show Cause are deemed admitted for the purpose of this proceeding.

The Board must now determine whether Zaleski's conviction and the surrender of his Pennsylvania certificates, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, provide just cause to act against his certificates pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9-17.5*. The Board finds that they do.

The Board 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. 6A:9-17.5*. "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. Zaleski’s acts of Possession of Child Pornography and Dissemination Photo/Film of Child Sex Acts are inexcusable for any individual, teacher or not.

The Commissioner has long held that teachers serve as role models for their students. Clearly, a teacher convicted of Possession of Child Pornography and Dissemination Photo/Film of Child Sex Acts cannot claim status as a role model to anyone. Zaleski’s conviction therefore warrants revocation. *In the Matter of the Certificates of Kevin Jordan*, Dkt. No. A-0155-08T3 (App. Div. October 5, 2009) (Unpublished Opinion).

Accordingly, on January 19, 2012, the Board voted to revoke Ronald Zaleski’s Teacher of Reading and Reading Specialist certificates. On this 1st day of March 2012 the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that the revocation of Zaleski’s certificates be effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Zaleski return his certificates 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.