

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
JON-LENARD GEORGE : ORDER OF SUSPENSION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 1415-218

At its meeting of April 17, 2015, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information the Department of Children and Families (DCF) had forwarded regarding Jon-Lenard George. In October 2014, DCF found that allegations of neglect had been established after George left his 5-year-old child unattended in a car while George went shopping. DCF closed the case after determining that the nature of the abuse or neglect was isolated or aberrational.

George currently holds a Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-5 Certificate of Eligibility, issued in November 2006, a Teacher of Elementary School With Subject Matter Specialization: Mathematics in Grades 5-8 Certificate of Eligibility, issued in November 2006, a Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-5 certificate, issued in June 2008 and a Teacher of Elementary School With Subject Matter Specialization: Mathematics in Grades 5-8 certificate, issued in June 2008. Upon review of the above information, at its meeting of May 21, 2015, the Board voted to issue George an Order to Show Cause as to why his certificates should not be suspended.

The Board sent George the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on May 26, 2015. The Order provided that George had 30 days to respond. The certified mail receipt was signed and returned and the regular mail copy was not returned. George did not respond. Thereafter, on July 6, 2015, the Board sent George another notice by certified and regular mail providing him an additional 15 days to respond to the Order to Show Cause. George filed a response on July 14, 2015. In that Answer, George stated that on the date in question, he was buying food for a family barbeque and his son asked if he could stay in the car while George “went inside briefly to get the items.” George stated that he made the mistake of letting his son remain in the car. (Answer, ¶ 3). George noted that after an investigation,

the matter was dismissed since it was an isolated incident. (Answer, ¶ 4). George added that he did not think the matter warranted the suspension of his certificates. (Answer, ¶ 5).

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.7(e)*, on July 17, 2015, the Board sent George a hearing notice by regular and certified mail. The notice explained that it appeared that no material facts were in dispute. Thus, George 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 George's offenses warranted action against his certificates. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. George 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. George did not respond.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter, therefore, is whether George's conduct constitutes conduct unbecoming a certificate holder. At its meeting of December 10, 2015, the Board considered the allegations in the Order to Show Cause and George's Answer. The Board determined that no material facts related to George's offense were in dispute since he did not deny that he had engaged in the alleged conduct. Thus, the Board determined that summary decision was appropriate in this matter. *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.7(h)*.

The Board must now determine whether George's conduct as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, represents just cause to act against his certificates pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.5*. The Board finds that it does.

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:9B-4.5*. "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. 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 matter, George’s conduct in leaving his five-year-old unattended in a car, however briefly, is conduct that indicates a lapse in judgment. However, because it was an isolated and aberrational event, and DCF closed the case, the Board believes that only suspension is warranted here. The Board therefore concludes that the appropriate response to George’s breach is a six month suspension of his teaching certificates.

Accordingly, on December 10, 2015, the Board voted to suspend Jon-Lenard George’s Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-5 Certificate of Eligibility, his Teacher of Elementary School With Subject Matter Specialization: Mathematics in Grades 5-8 Certificate of Eligibility and his Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-5 and Teacher of Elementary School With Subject Matter Specialization: Mathematics in Grades 5-8 certificates for a period of six months, effective immediately. On this 21st day of January 2016 the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that the suspension of George’s certificates be effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that George return his certificates 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.