

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
JEFFREY P. ZELTT : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 1718-141

At its meeting of November 1, 2017, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information received from the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) and the Pennsylvania Commonwealth Professional Standards and Practices Commission regarding Jeffrey P. Zeltt. On April 28, 2017, Zeltt's Pennsylvania teaching certificate was suspended pending adjudication of criminal charges against him. Shortly thereafter, Zeltt pled guilty to Endangering the Welfare of Children, Corruption of Minors, Selling/Furnishing Liquor to Minors, Possession of Marijuana-Personal Use, Possession of Drug Paraphernalia and Distributing Small Amount of Marijuana-Not for Sale. Zeltt was sentenced to 5 to 23 months in prison and one year of probation upon release.

Zeltt currently holds Teacher of Mathematics and Teacher of Psychology certificates. Upon review of the above information, the Board voted at its meeting of December 8, 2017 to issue Zeltt an Order to Show Cause as to why his certificates should not be revoked.

On December 13, 2017, the Board sent Zeltt the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail. The Order provided that Zeltt must file an Answer within 30 days. The certified mail receipt was signed and returned and the regular mail copy was not returned. Zeltt did not file a response. On February 2, 2018, the Board sent Zeltt 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 mail copy was not returned. Zeltt did not file a response.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(e)*, on March 6, 2018, the Board sent Zeltt a hearing notice by regular and certified mail. The notice explained that the allegations in the Order to Show Cause were deemed to be admitted as a result of his failure to file an Answer. Thus, Zeltt 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 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 Zeltt's offense warranted action against his certificates. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Zeltt 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, Zeltt did not file a response.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Zeltt's conduct constitutes conduct unbecoming a certificate holder. Since Zeltt failed to respond to the Order to Show Cause, the allegations therein are deemed admitted. *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(c)*. Consequently, at its meeting of May 24, 2018, the Board considered only the allegations in the Order to Show Cause and the information it had received from NASDTEC and the Pennsylvania Commonwealth Professional Standards and Practices Commission. The Board concluded that no material facts related to Zeltt's offense were in dispute since he never denied that he had engaged in the conduct alleged. 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 Zeltt had engaged in unbecoming conduct.

The Board must now determine whether Zeltt'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-4.4*. 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-4.4*. "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, the Commissioner has long held that teachers serve as role models for their students. Furthermore, 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, Zeltt pled guilty to crimes endangering children and was sentenced to prison as a result. His conduct demonstrates behavior that falls far short of a role model. The Board therefore concludes that the appropriate response to Zeltt's breach is the revocation of his certificates.

Accordingly, on May 24, 2018, the Board voted to revoke Jeffrey P. Zeltt's Teacher of Mathematics and Teacher of Psychology certificates. On this 29th day of June 2018 the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that the revocation of Zeltt's certificates be effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Zeltt 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:
By 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.