

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS  
KATIE M. ADAMS : ORDER OF REVOCATION  
\_\_\_\_\_ : DOCKET NO: 1819-171

At its meeting of March 8, 2019, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information the Gloucester County Prosecutor's Office and the Office of Student Protection (OSP) forwarded regarding Katie M. Adams (Schroeder). In November 2016, Adams was charged with shoplifting from Kohls. The charge was later conditionally dismissed in January 2017. In August 2017, Adams was charged with Burglary, Theft by Unlawful Taking, and Receiving Stolen Property after she entered a residential property without permission and took jewelry, money, gift cards and electronics belonging to the property owner. On July 23, 2018, Adams pled guilty to one count of Theft by Unlawful Taking (3<sup>rd</sup> degree). On October 26, 2018, Adams was sentenced to one year of probation. She was also ordered to pay \$4000 restitution and continue with substance abuse treatment.

Adams currently holds a Teacher of English Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing and a Teacher of English certificate. Upon review of the above information, at its April 12, 2019 meeting, the Board voted to issue Adams an Order to Show Cause as to why her certificates should not be revoked.

The Board sent Adams the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on April 15, 2019. The Order provided that Adams had 30 days to respond. The certified mail card was signed and returned and the regular mail was not returned. Adams did not respond. Thereafter, on May 22, 2019 the Board sent another notice providing Adams 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. Once again, Adams did not respond.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.6(e), on June 12, 2019, the Board sent Adams 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 her failure to file an Answer. Thus, Adams 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 her certificates. It also explained that, upon review of the charges against her and the legal arguments tendered in her defense, the Board would determine if Adams' offense warranted action against her certificates. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Adams was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. Neither the certified or regular copies were returned. Once again, Adams did not file a response.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Adams' conduct constitutes conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. Since Adams 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 September 19, 2019, the Board considered only the allegations in the Order to Show Cause and the information received from the Prosecutor's Office and the OSP. The Board concluded that no material facts related to Adams's offense were in dispute since she never denied that she had engaged in the alleged conduct. Thus, the Board determined that summary decision was appropriate in this matter. *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.6(h). After reviewing the allegations, the Board found that Adams engaged in unbecoming conduct.

The Board must now determine whether Adams's conduct, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, provides just cause to act against her certificates 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 inappropriate role models for them. Individuals convicted of a crime such as Assault by Auto, 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 exemplars 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, Ettz's conviction demonstrates behavior that falls short of a role model.

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 Adams' offense so significant and the Board must render its determination within the confines of her disqualification, it believes that the only appropriate sanction in this case is the revocation of Adams' certificates.

Accordingly, on September 19, 2019, the Board voted to revoke Katie M. Adams' Teacher of English Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing and Teacher of English certificates. On this 1st day of November 2019 the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that Adams' certificates are hereby revoked, effective immediately. It is

further ORDERED that Adams return her 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.

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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.