

IN THE MATTER OF	:	NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATE OF	:	STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
SANDRA I. GOMEZ	:	ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____	:	DOCKET NO: 2122-109

At its meeting of September 17, 2021, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information the Passaic County Prosecutor's Office and the Office of Student Protection (OSP) provided to the State Board of Examiners (Board) regarding Sandra I. Gomez (Gomez).

On June 3, 2021, Gomez waived indictment and an Accusation was entered for Bias Intimidation and Harassment after Gomez allegedly used a racial slur directed at victim A.B. while holding a crowbar in her hand. On June 29, 2021, Gomez received an Order of Postponement and entered a Pre-Trial Intervention (PTI) program for a period of 12 months along with medical/psychological counseling and fines and assessments.

Gomez currently holds a School Social Worker Certificate. Upon review of the above information, at its October 28, 2021 meeting, the Board voted to issue Gomez an Order to Show Cause as to why her certificate should not be revoked.

On November 2, 2021, the Board sent Gomez the Order to Show Cause via regular and certified mail. The Order provided that Gomez had 30 days to respond. On November 8, 2021, Gomez sent an email to the Board indicating that she is not a teacher and asked the Board to stop sending letters to her home. Board staff responded and advised that its records indicate Gomez holds a School Social Worker certificate, but if she continued to believe the communication was misdirected, to provide clarifying information.

On December 20, 2021, Gomez responded indicating that her certificate must be inactive because does not work for the State of New Jersey or a school system. She has been employed in the healthcare industry with her licensed social worker certificate. It appeared Gomez was

confused as to whether the school social worker certificate constituted a “teaching” certificate. In her communication, Gomez advised that she wanted to relinquish her certificate because she does not plan to use it in the future. Accordingly, the Board sent her an affidavit of relinquishment for consideration and advised that she was required to Answer the Order to Show Cause or could elect to execute the affidavit of relinquishment. No response was received for several months.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.6(e), on August 3, 2022, the Board sent Gomez 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 or respond to the last communication. Thus, Gomez 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 certificate. It also explained that, upon review of the charges against her and the legal arguments tendered in her defense, the Board would determine if Gomez’s offense warranted action against her certificate. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Gomez was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue.

In response, Gomez submitted an email dated September 3, 2022 wherein she reiterated that she did not want her school social worker certificate and did not plan to use the certificate in the future. She did not wish to appear before the Board for testimony.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Gomez’s conduct constitutes conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. Since Gomez failed to Answer the Order to Show Cause, the allegations therein are admitted. *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.6(c). Consequently, at its meeting of October 28, 2022, the Board considered only the allegations in the Order to Show

Cause and the information received from the prosecutor's office and OSP. The Board concluded that no material facts related to Gomez's offense were in dispute since she never denied that she 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 Gomez engaged in unbecoming conduct.

The Board must now determine whether Gomez' conduct, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, provides just cause to act against her certificate 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, 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). Gomez's actions of using a racial slur while holding a crowbar clearly demonstrate conduct that is unacceptable for a role model. The Board therefore concludes that the appropriate response to her breach is the revocation of her certificate.

Accordingly, on October 28, 2022, the Board voted to revoke Sandra I. Gomez's School Social Worker certificate. On this 9th day of December 2022, the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that Gomez's certificate is hereby revoked, effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Gomez return her certificate 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.

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.