

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATE OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
MONIQUE C. JONES : ORDER OF SUSPENSION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 2122-163

At its meeting of April 7, 2022, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information the Camden County Prosecutor's Office and the Office of Student Protection (OSP) forwarded regarding Monique C. Jones. On or about October 6, 2019, Jones was arrested and charged with Cruelty and Neglect of Children (4th degree) after she allegedly left a two (2) year old child for whom she had care, custody, and control, alone in a car for 20 minutes with the car windows rolled up. On January 20, 2020, Jones received an Order of Postponement and was accepted into a Pretrial Intervention program (PTI) for 36 months.

Jones currently holds a Teacher of Music Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing. Upon review of the above information, the Board voted at its meeting of May 19, 2022 to issue Jones an Order to Show Cause as to why her certificate should not be revoked.

The Board sent Jones the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on May 22, 2022. The Order provided that Jones must file an Answer within 30 days. Jones filed an Answer, which she dated May 25, 2022.

In her Answer, Jones admitted to the allegations in the Order to Show Cause but noted that she has been dedicated to completing her community service and followed all requirements. She states that she has always loved teaching and it is not just a job to her. She has been working in retail, but she wants a career.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.6(e), on August 3, 2022, the Board sent Jones a hearing notice by regular and certified mail. The notice explained that it appeared that no material facts were in dispute. Thus, Jones 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 her offense warranted action against her

certificate. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Jones was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. Jones submitted a copy of the pretrial intervention order of dismissal but did not indicate she wanted to appear before the Board.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Jones' conduct and conviction constitute conduct unbecoming a certificate holder. At its meeting of October 28, 2022, the Board considered the allegations in the Order to Show Cause as well as Jones' Answer. The Board determined that no material facts related to Jones' offense were in dispute since she did not deny that she engaged in the conduct alleged in the Order to Show Cause. Thus, the Board determined that summary decision was appropriate in this matter. *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(h)*.

The Board must now determine whether Jones' conduct, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, represents 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). In this matter, Jones' actions of leaving a young child in an unsupervised vehicle for over 20 minutes evinces a serious lapse in judgment. Nonetheless, Jones is working and has diligently completed her criminal court requirements, expresses remorse for the situation, provided a basis for life circumstances that resulted in the conduct, and successfully completed PTI. The Board therefore concludes that the appropriate response to Jones' breach is a one year suspension of her certificate.

Accordingly, on October 28, 2022, the Board voted to suspend Monique C. Jones' Teacher of Music Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing, for a period of one year. On this 9th day of December 2022, the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that Jones's certificate is hereby suspended for a period of one year, effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Jones 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.