

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATE OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
GEORGE J. HOPKINS : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 2021-183

At its meeting of July 30, 2021, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) and the Pennsylvania Professional Standards and Practices Commission (“Pennsylvania”) forwarded regarding George J. Hopkins. On April 30, 2019, Pennsylvania immediately suspended Hopkins’ educator certificates after he was charged with criminal sexual assault in Pennsylvania. On September 24, 2020, Hopkins pled *nolo contendere* to Indecent Assault - Without Consent of Victim and was sentenced to two (2) years of probation.

In New Jersey, Hopkins currently holds a Teacher of Social Studies Certificate. Upon review of the above information, at its September 17, 2021 meeting, the Board voted to issue Hopkins an Order to Show Cause as to why his certificate should not be revoked.

The Board sent Hopkins the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on September 22, 2021. The Order provided that Hopkins had 30 days to respond. The certified mail card was returned as received and the regular mail was not returned. Hopkins did not respond.

Thereafter, on November 10, 2021, the Board sent Hopkins 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 again returned as received and the regular mail copy was not returned. Hopkins did not file a response.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(e)*, on December 2, 2021, the Board sent Hopkins 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, Hopkins 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 certificate. It

also explained that, upon review of the charges against him and the legal arguments tendered in his defense, the Board would determine if Hopkins' offense warranted action against his certificate. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Hopkins was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. The certified mail copy was returned as received and the regular mail copy was not returned. Hopkins did not file a response.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Hopkins' conduct constitutes conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. At its meeting of January 21, 2022, the Board considered the allegations in the Order to Show Cause, the information received from NASDTEC and Pennsylvania. The Board concluded that no material facts related to Hopkins' offense were in dispute since he did not deny the alleged conduct 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)*. After reviewing the allegations, the Board found that Hopkins engaged in unbecoming conduct.

The Board must now determine whether Hopkins' conduct, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, provides just cause to act against his 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). Hopkins' actions in being suspended¹ in Pennsylvania after being charged with criminal sexual assault and thereafter pleading *nolo contendere* to Indecent Assault – Without Consent of Victim, as well as being sentenced to two (2) years

¹ After issuing the Order to Show Cause, the Board was informed through NASDTEC that on June 11, 2021 Pennsylvania revoked Hopkins' educator certificates because of his conviction for Indecent Assault.

of probation, clearly indicate a serious lapse in judgment. The Board therefore concludes that the appropriate response to his breach is the revocation of his certificate.

Accordingly, on January 21, 2022, the Board voted to revoke George J. Hopkins' Teacher of Social Studies Certificate. On this 4th day of March 2022, the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that the revocation of Hopkins' certificate be effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Hopkins return his 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.