

IN THE MATTER OF	:	NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATE OF	:	STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
SONIA NUNEZ	:	ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____	:	DOCKET NO: 1920-131

At its meeting of December 13, 2019, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information it received regarding Sonia Nunez. The National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification and the New York State Department of Education (New York) provided information to the Board regarding Nunez.

On February 28, 2019, New York revoked Nunez's educator license(s) after she was convicted of Petty Larceny in the New Rochelle City Court, Criminal Part. Nunez admitted under oath that between June 8, 2015 and May 9, 2016 at the Columbus Elementary School in the City of New Rochelle, New York, she intentionally stole approximately \$4,525 from the City School District by writing checks payable to herself and by taking cash from the school's petty cash safe.

Nunez applied for the Teacher of Spanish certificate in the State of New Jersey in March 2019, which is shortly after her New York license(s) were revoked and she was convicted of Petty Larceny. With her New Jersey application she completed the required Oath of Allegiance form and submitted the Criminal History Information Form and Additional Information Form. The forms failed to indicate that she had her New York educator license(s) revoked and/or that she was convicted of Petty Larceny in New York.

Nunez currently holds a Teacher of the Spanish certificate. After reviewing the above information, at its January 23, 2020 meeting, the Board voted to issue an Order to Show Cause to Nunez as to why her certificate should not be revoked.

The Board sent Nunez the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on January 27, 2020. The Order provided that Nunez must file an Answer within 30 days. Nunez responded

on March 7, 2020. In her Answer, Nunez indicated that the allegations provide an improper perception of her and her work with children. She acknowledges that she was wrong; she admits that she “borrowed and replaced” the \$4,500 before any accusation was made. She also indicates that others accused her of other misuse of money; the district did not conduct a proper interview of her or discuss the allegations. She provided letters of support from colleagues and supervisors.

Since there were material facts in dispute, the Board transmitted the matter to the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) for hearing as a contested case on March 9, 2020. After multiple phone conferences, the Board’s counsel filed a Motion for Summary Decision. On February 15, 2022, Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) Elissa Mazzone Testa issued an Initial Decision on Summary Decision, concluding that Nunez’s conduct and criminal conviction, and her lack of candor to the Board, provide an independent basis for revocation of her certificate. Summary Decision was granted to the Board and it was ordered that Nunez’s teacher certificate be revoked. *See* Initial Decision, at p. 11-12.

Nunez did not file exceptions. The Board must now determine whether to adopt, modify or reject the Initial Decision in this matter. At its meeting of April 7, 2022, the Board reviewed the Initial Decision on Motion for Summary Decision (“Initial Decision). After full and fair consideration of the Initial Decision, the Board voted to adopt the Initial Decision.

“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. The Initial Decision notes that Nunez admitted to the conduct, but provided some information or background in attempt to mitigate the penalty. Accordingly, the ALJ determined there were no material facts in dispute. ALJ Testa concluded that Nunez’s “conduct demonstrates that she is unfit to remain in the classroom and necessitates the attendant revocation of her Teaching Certificate.” *Id.* at 11.

Nunez did not dispute the facts; she indicated in her opposition to the Summary Decision motion that she lied but did so out of fear that she would lose her teaching position. The Board agrees with the ALJ that Nunez's act of "deliberately converting funds from the school district where she served as Principal; her subsequent conviction for petit larceny and the revocation of her New York Teaching Certificates; and her intentional non-disclosure of the aforementioned on her New Jersey application constitutes unbecoming conduct and provides just cause for the revocation of her certificate." *Id.* at p. 8. The Board agrees that the appropriate penalty in this matter is the revocation of her certificate.

Accordingly, on April 7, 2022, the Board voted to adopt the Initial Decision and ordered the revocation of Nunez's certificate. On this 19<sup>th</sup> day of May 2022, the Board formally adopted its written decision to adopt the Initial Decision in this matter and it is therefore ORDERED that Sonia Nunez's Teacher of Spanish Certificate is hereby revoked, effective immediately. It is further ordered that Nunez 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.

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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.