

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
THE CERTIFICATE OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS  
STEPHANIE P. ESPANA : ORDER OF REVOCATION  
\_\_\_\_\_ : DOCKET NO: 1819-117

The Office of Student Protection (OSP) and the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office (Hudson) provided information to the State Board of Examiners (Board) regarding Espana. On April 1, 2018, Espana was arrested and charged with Burglary and Stalking for breaking into the home of the victim, a public official. On June 19, 2018, Espana received an Order of Postponement and was accepted into a Pre-Trial Intervention program for a period of 12 months. She was also ordered to have no contact with the victim and his wife and to continue mental health treatment, as directed.

As a result of the above conduct, on June 28, 2019, via a previous decision on a separate order to show cause, the Board voted to suspend Espana's certificate for a period of one year. Shortly after this suspension order, on July 29, 2019, Espana was charged with Stalking (4<sup>th</sup> degree) and a disorderly person's harassment offense after she sent the same victim over 15 emails of a graphic and sexual nature within the timeframe of several hours.

Prior to adjudication of the July 2019 charges, on February 5, 2022, Espana was again charged with Stalking (3<sup>rd</sup> degree), Harassment (disorderly persons offense) and Contempt – Violation of a Restraining Order (4<sup>th</sup> degree) after she contacted the wife of the victim in the criminal charges above.

On June 13, 2022, with regard to the February 2022 charges, Espana pled not guilty to an Accusation by way of temporary insanity and was scheduled for a *Krol* hearing in December 2022. Espana pled guilty to the Stalking charges from July 2019.

The Board's previous suspension of Espana's certificate has concluded so she currently holds a valid Teacher of Spanish Certificate of Eligibility. Upon review of the above information, at its October 28, 2022 meeting, the Board voted to issue Espana another Order to Show Cause as to why her certificate should not be revoked in light of the new criminal conviction.

The Board sent Espana the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on December 13, 2022. The Order provided that Espana had 30 days to respond. The certified mail receipt was returned and marked “unclaimed”, and the regular mail copy was not returned. Espana did not file a response.

Thereafter, on February 15, 2023, the Board sent Espana another notice by certified and regular mail providing her an additional 15 days to respond to the Order to Show Cause. The certified mail receipt was returned and marked “unclaimed”, and the regular mail copy was not returned. Espana did not file a response.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(e)*, on April 4, 2023, the Board sent Espana 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, Espana 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. Espana was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. The certified mail receipt was returned and marked “unclaimed”, and the regular mail copy was not returned. Once again, Espana did not file a response.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Espana’s conduct constitutes conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. Since Espana 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 June 29, 2023, the Board considered only the allegations in the Order to Show Cause and the information received from Hudson County and the OSP. The Board concluded that no material facts related to Espana’s offense were not in dispute since she never denied that she had engaged in the alleged conduct and she pled guilty to the stalking charge. 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 Espana had engaged in unbecoming conduct.

The Board must now determine whether Espana's 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). Espana's actions in emailing a victim 15 graphic, sexual emails after she was ordered not to have any contact with the victim, clearly demonstrate conduct that is unacceptable for a role model. The Board therefore concludes that the appropriate response to her breach is a revocation of her certificate.

Accordingly, on June 29, 2023, the Board voted to revoke Stephanie P. Espana's Teacher of Spanish certificate. On this 4<sup>th</sup> day of August 2023, the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that Espana's certificate is hereby revoked, effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Espana 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.