

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS  
ANTOINETTE M. TERLIZZI : ORDER OF SUSPENSION  
\_\_\_\_\_ : DOCKET NO: 2021-158

At its meeting of May 13, 2021, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information it received regarding Antoinette M. Terlizzi. The Belleville Board of Education (Belleville) certified tenure charges against Terlizzi for unbecoming conduct, incapacity, and/or other just cause including insubordination after she exhibited behavior that “deviated from normal mental health.”

In the tenure charges, Belleville alleged Terlizzi reported that her cell phone and computer were hacked; she alleged that her supervisor “sent a man to her house to check her cables;” she also maintained a notebook which purportedly showed how a number that called her phone corresponded to the word “anonymous” based on the letters on the phone; the notebook also contained various numbers and “code breaking lines of information”. Moreover, Terlizzi reported to her supervisor that on her way to work one day she encountered a black creature with wings which had a penis like appendage which could be used to spew vapor; she spun in circles while speaking with administrators; smacked the Superintendent’s hand to prevent him from placing his fingers in his mouth; complained about desks in her room being switched out at night; complained that IT workers placed wired bugs in her chair and on student desks, among other concerning behavior. As a result of these behaviors, Belleville directed Terlizzi to undergo a psychiatric examination. She failed to report for the examination.

Terlizzi currently holds a Teacher of Italian Certificate of Eligibility and a Teacher of Italian Certificate. After reviewing the above information, at its June 25, 2021 meeting, the Board voted to issue an Order to Show Cause (OSC) to Terlizzi as to why her certificates should not be revoked.

The Board sent Terlizzi the OSC by regular and certified mail. Terlizzi responded on August 27, 2021. Based upon the Answer, there were material facts in dispute. Accordingly, on September 2, 2021, the Board transmitted the matter to the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) for hearing as a contested case. On December 16, 2022, Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) Thomas R. Betancourt issued an Initial Decision

in the case. *In the Matter of the Certificates of Antoinette M. Terlizzi*, Dkt. No. EDE 08114-21 (Initial Decision, December 16, 2022).

After reviewing the record and rendering credibility assessments of both Terlizzi and all witnesses, ALJ Betancourt found that the Board failed to prove that Terlizzi did anything set forth in the tenure charges other than refusing to submit to a requested examination and smacking an administrator's hand. *See* Initial Decision at p. 18. ALJ Betancourt determined that a reasonable penalty for the conduct was a suspension for a period of 3 months.

The Deputy Attorney General (DAG or Deputy) representing the Board filed Exceptions and Terlizzi filed a reply. The Board obtained an extension from OAL to consider the initial decision and exceptions. The extension required that the Board render its final decision by January 30, 2023.

The Board must now determine whether to adopt, modify or reject the Initial Decision in this matter. At its meeting of January 26, 2023, the Board reviewed the Initial Decision. After full and fair consideration of the Initial Decision the Board voted to adopt it in its entirety.

“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. There is no doubt that the ALJ is in the best position to render credibility determinations in this matter. Accordingly, the Board will defer to those findings.

As noted above, after assessing the evidence and credibility of the witnesses, ALJ Betancourt concluded that the Board failed to establish by a preponderance of the evidence that Terlizzi did “anything set forth in the tenure charges or the OTSC, other than refusing to submit to a justifiable requested examination, and in smacking Mr. Tomko's hand.” *See* Initial Decision at p. 18. Accordingly, ALJ Betancourt determined that a suspension of 3 months is warranted. After reviewing the entire record, the Board agrees with the ALJ's assessment in light of the credibility determinations.

At its January 26, 2023 meeting, after full and fair consideration of the Decision and submissions, the Board voted to adopt the Initial Decision. There is no doubt that the ALJ is in the best position to render credibility determinations in this matter and the Board defers to those findings.

Terlizzi was unwilling to consent to an extension beyond January 30, 2023. On January 30, 2023, the Board sent the parties a letter advising of the Board's January 26, 2023 action to adopt the initial decision.

Accordingly, on January 26, 2023, the Board voted to adopt the Initial Decision and ordered the suspension for 3 months of Terlizzi's certificates. On this 3<sup>rd</sup> day of March 2023, the Board formally adopted this written decision adopting the Initial Decision in this matter and it is therefore ORDERED that Antoinette M. Terlizzi is hereby suspended for a period of 3 months, effective immediately.

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Rani Singh, Secretary  
State Board of Examiners

RS/KAG/cf

**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.