

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
CHRISTINA L. OWENS : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 2122-198

At its meeting of August 5, 2022, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information that the Dover School District (Dover) forwarded regarding Christina L. Owens. In accordance with *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.3(a)(2), Dover provided the State Board of Examiners (Board) with information regarding Owens. On May 9, 2022, Owens was accused of reporting to work under the influence of alcohol. On or about June 7, 2022, Owens was terminated from her teaching position with Dover.

Owens currently holds a Teacher of Elementary Kindergarten through Grade 8 Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing, issued June 2004; a standard Teacher of Elementary Kindergarten through Grade 8 certificate, issued September 2007; a Principal Certificate of Eligibility, issued August 2013; and a Supervisor certificate, issued August 2013. Upon review of the above information, at its September 16, 2022 meeting, the Board voted to issue Owens an Order to Show Cause as to why her certificates should not be revoked.

The Board sent Owens the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on September 20, 2022. The Order provided that Owens had 30 days to respond. Owens filed an Answer on December 6, 2022. The answer explained her conduct by providing some information on personal circumstances related to grief that resulted in her intoxication at school. Owens did not deny the conduct, but rather indicated she should have called out of work.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.6(e), on April 6, 2023, the Board sent Owens a hearing notice by email, regular and certified mail. The notice explained that there appeared to be no material facts in dispute. Thus, Owens was offered an opportunity to submit written arguments on the issue of whether the conduct addressed in the Order to Show Cause provided just cause to take action against her certificates as well as arguments with regard to the appropriate sanction in the event that the Board determined to take action against her certificates. It also explained that upon review of the charges against her and the legal

arguments tendered in her defense, the Board would determine if Owens's offense warranted action against her certificates. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Owens was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. The certified mail was received and signed, and the regular mail was not returned. Owens did not file a submission nor request to appear before the Board.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Owens's conduct constitutes conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. At its meeting of June 29, 2023, the Board considered the allegations in the Order to Show Cause as well as Owens's Answer. The Board determined that no material facts related to Owens's offense were in dispute since she admitted the conduct. 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 Owens engaged in unbecoming conduct.

The Board must now determine whether Owens's conduct, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, provides just cause to act against her certificates 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). Owens's conduct in reporting for work under the influence indicates a serious lapse in judgment. Owens failed to offer substantial information by way of mitigation and therefore the Board concludes that the appropriate response to her breach is a revocation of her certificates.

Accordingly, on June 29, 2023, the Board voted to revoke Christina L. Owens' Teacher of Elementary Kindergarten through Grade 8 Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing, standard

Teacher of Elementary Kindergarten through Grade 8 certificate, Principal Certificate of Eligibility, and Supervisor certificate. On this 4th day of August 2023, the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that Owens' certificates are hereby revoked, effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Owens return her certificates 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.