

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
LENNY WASHINGTON : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 2122-202

At its meeting of August 5, 2022, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information the Jackson School District, Office of Student Protection, Ocean County Prosecutor's Office, and the Department of Children and Families, Institutional Abuse Investigation Unit (IAIU) provided regarding Lenny Washington.

On or about June 24, 2022, IAIU completed an investigation into allegations of inappropriate contact with students involving Washington.

IAIU substantiated Sexual Abuse/Sexual Molestation against Washington after it found he engaged in sexual genital contact with a 14-year-old student and sent the student explicit video footage and multiple explicit photographs of himself on social media. The Ocean County Prosecutor's Office investigated the matter and determined that probable cause did not exist to issue a criminal complaint and the criminal case was closed.

Washington currently holds a Teacher of Psychology Certificate of Eligibility, Teacher of Students with Disabilities Certificate of Eligibility, and Teacher of Psychology standard certificate. Upon review of the above information, at its September 16, 2022 meeting, the Board voted to issue Washington an Order to Show Cause as to why his certificates should not be revoked.

The Board sent Washington the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on September 20, 2022. The Order provided that Washington had 30 days to respond. The certified

mail copy was signed for as received and the regular mail copy was not returned. Washington did not respond. Thereafter, on December 19, 2022, the Board sent another notice providing Washington an additional 15 days to respond to the Order to Show Cause. The certified mail copy was returned as “Unclaimed”, and the regular mail copy was not returned. Once again, Washington did not respond.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.6(e), on February 15, 2023, the Board sent Washington 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, Washington 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 certificates. It also explained that, upon review of the charges against him and the legal arguments tendered in his defense, the Board would determine if Washington’s offense warranted action against his certificates. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Washington was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. The certified mail copy was signed for as received and the regular mail copy was not returned. Once again, Washington did not file a response.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Washington’s conduct constitutes conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. At its meeting of April 13, 2023, the Board considered the allegations in the Order to Show Cause. The Board determined

that no material facts related to Washington's offense were in dispute since he never denied that he engaged in the alleged 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 Washington had engaged in unbecoming conduct.

The Board must now determine whether Washington's conduct, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, provides just cause to act against his 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). Washington's conduct in having sexual contact with a student clearly indicates a serious lapse in judgment. The Board therefore concludes that the appropriate response to his breach is the revocation of his certificates.

Accordingly, on April 13, 2023, the Board voted to revoke Lenny Washington's Teacher of Psychology Certificate of Eligibility, Teacher of Students with Disabilities Certificate of Eligibility, and Teacher of Psychology standard certificate. On this 18th day of May 2023 the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that Washington's

certificates are hereby revoked, effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Washington return his 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.