

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
YAKIK RUMLEY : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 1112-112

At its meeting of March 1, 2018, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information it received from the staff of the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Recruitment, Preparation and Certification (Office), regarding Yakik Rumley (Rumley).

In September 2016, Rumley applied to the Office for a Supervisor certificate. That application was denied and he appealed the denial to the Board. At its September 15, 2017 meeting, the Board denied Rumley's appeal because he did not demonstrate three years of successful full-time teaching or educational services experience under an appropriate certificate. On December 7, 2017, Rumley appealed the denial of the Supervisor certificate to the Commissioner of Education.

In support of his appeal, Rumley included a letter, signed by Kristin Watson, purportedly the Human Resources director of the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ). The HCZ is a charter school in New York where Rumley maintained he worked as a Physical Education teacher. Upon further investigation, it was determined that Rumley forged the verification letter. According to the HCZ, the letter Rumley submitted to the Department of Education was not authorized or written by the HCZ. The HCZ also confirmed that Rumley was not employed there as a teacher, but rather as an Activity Specialist. The HCZ also confirmed that it does not have, nor did it ever have, a Human Resources Director by the name of Kristin Watson. The HCZ also stated that it never employed a person by the name of Kristin Watson.

After determining that the letter Rumley had submitted in support of his appeal was fraudulent, the Office investigated two employment verification letters purportedly from HCZ that Rumley had submitted with his initial application for certification. Justin Maker, the Director of Human Resources for HCZ, confirmed that the two letters Rumley had submitted were “fraudulent and do not come from official company records.”

Rumley currently holds a Teacher of Physical Education Certificate of Eligibility and a Teacher of Physical Education certificate. The Board previously suspended Rumley’s certificates for a period of two years and lifted the suspension on July 26, 2016.

Upon review of the above information, the Board voted at its meeting of April 13, 2018 to issue Rumley an Order to Show Cause as to why his certificates should not be revoked.

The Board sent Rumley the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on April 17, 2018. The Order provided that Rumley must file an Answer within 30 days. The certified mail copy was signed and returned, and the regular mail was not returned. Rumley did not respond. The Board sent Rumley a second notice attaching the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on June 7, 2018. The certified mail copy was returned as “Returned to Sender Unable to Forward” and the regular mail was not returned. Rumley filed an Answer on July 9, 2018.

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 December 13, 2022, the Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) assigned to the case returned it to the Board after Rumley failed to appear for a scheduled hearing on July 22, 2022. Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 1:1-3.3, the ALJ provided Rumley with 13 days to submit an explanation for her nonappearance. Rumley did not

submit an explanation or otherwise respond to that notice. At its meeting of January 26, 2023, the Board voted to retain the matter.

On March 3, 2023, the Board sent Rumley a notice by regular and certified mail providing him with an additional 15 days to respond before his Answer would be stricken from the record and the allegations in the Order to Show Cause would be deemed admitted. The certified mail copy was delivered and not returned; the regular mail was not returned. Rumley did not respond.

Thereafter, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(e), on May 30, 2023, the Board sent Rumley a hearing notice by regular and certified mail. Rumley was notified that his Answer was stricken from the record and he 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. Rumley was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. The certified mail copy was delivered and not returned; the regular mail was not returned. Once again, Rumley did not respond.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Rumley's submission of a forged verification letter and inaccurate employment information to the Commissioner to support his appeal of the Board's decision to deny him a Supervisor certificate constitutes conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. Since Rumley did not appear at his hearings, and his Answer was subsequently stricken from the record, at its meeting of January 19, 2024, the Board considered only the allegations in the Order to Show Cause. Moreover, since Rumley is deemed to have failed to file an Answer, the allegations contained in the Order to Show Cause

are deemed admitted. N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(c). Thus, since no material facts related to Rumley's conduct is in dispute, 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 Rumley engaged in unbecoming conduct.

The Board must now determine whether Rumley's conduct, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, represents conduct unbecoming a teacher, or other 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's long-standing belief is that teachers must serve as role models for their students. "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. A "violation of the implicit standard of good behavior which devolves upon one who stands in the public eye as an upholder of that which is morally and legally correct" may provide the basis for a finding of unbecoming conduct. *Bound Brook Bd. of Educ. v. Ciripompa*, 228 N.J. 4, 14 (2017) (quoting *Karins v. City of Atlantic City*, 152 N.J. 532, 555 (1998)) (internal quotation marks omitted). The "elastic" concept of "conduct unbecoming" includes "conduct which adversely affects the morale or efficiency" of the public entity or "which has a tendency to destroy public respect for . . . [public] employees and confidence in the operation of [public] services." *In re Emmons*, 63 N.J. Super. 136, 140 (App. Div. 1960) (internal quotations and citations omitted); *see also Bound Brook Bd. of Educ.*, 228 N.J. at 13. 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). In this instance, Rumley's submission of a forged verification letter and

inaccurate employment information demonstrated a lack of integrity and serious lapses in judgment. His conduct is unacceptable for a role model for students. Accordingly, the Board believes that the only appropriate sanction in this case is the revocation of his certificates.

Accordingly, on January 19, 2024, the Board voted to revoke Yakik Rumley's Teacher of Physical Education Certificate of Eligibility and Teacher of Physical Education certificate. On this 1st day of March 2024, the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that Rumley's certificates be revoked, effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Rumley 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

RS/LF

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.