

IN THE MATTER OF                   :     NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
  
THE CERTIFICATES OF           :             STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS  
  
VANESSA A. MORRISON       :             ORDER OF REVOCATION  
  
\_\_\_\_\_ :             DOCKET NO: 1718-263

At its meeting of April 11, 2024, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information from the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Recruitment, Preparation and Certification (Office of RPC) regarding Vanessa A. Morrison. Morrison currently holds a Substitute credential, expiring September 2027.

Morrison was the holder of a previous substitute credential that had been issued in February 2017. In September 2017, Morrison was charged with Possession of a Weapon with Unlawful Purpose (3rd degree), *N.J.S.A. 2C:39-5b*; Unlawful Possession of a Weapon (4th degree), *N.J.S.A. 2C:39-5c*; and Aggravated Assault (2nd degree), *N.J.S.A. 2C:12-1b*. It was alleged that she hit a victim in the head with a 6-inch glass cup with a weighted bottom, causing injuries. On May 1, 2018, Morrison pled guilty to Disorderly Conduct, *N.J.S.A. 2C:33-2a*.

At its meeting on November 1, 2018, the Board issued Morrison an Order to Show Cause why her certificates should not be revoked based on her conduct and conviction. Morrison submitted an Answer to the Order to Show Cause, and because it appeared that material facts were in dispute, the matter was transmitted to the Office of Administrative Law (OAL). On July 23, 2019, the OAL returned the file to the Board after Morrison failed to appear for a hearing on June 18, 2019. Pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 1:1-3.3*, the OAL provided Morrison with 13 days to submit an explanation for her nonappearance. Morrison did not submit an explanation or otherwise respond to that notice. At its meeting of November 1, 2019, the Board voted not to retransmit the matter to OAL.

On November 4, 2019, the Board sent Morrison a notice by regular and certified mail

providing her with an additional 15 days to respond before her Answer would be stricken from the record and the allegations in the Order to Show Cause would be deemed admitted. Morrison did not respond.

On December 31, 2019, the Board sent Morrison a hearing notice by regular and certified mail, offering her 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 credential. Morrison was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. The certified mail receipt was signed and returned, and the regular mail copy was not returned. Morrison did not respond.

At its meeting on June 26, 2020, the Board voted to revoke Morrison's Substitute credential, and on July 30, 2020, the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision ordering the revocation of her credential. On August 12, 2020, the Board sent Morrison the Board's Order of Revocation by regular and certified mail.

On or about August 18, 2022, Morrison submitted an application for another substitute credential through the New Jersey Department of Education. As part of her application, Morrison digitally submitted an Oath of Allegiance/Verification of Accuracy (Oath) form. On that form, Morrison answered "No" to the question "Have you ever had an education or other professional certificate, license or credential revoked, suspended, invalidated, or denied for cause in New Jersey or any other state or jurisdiction?" However, as noted above, the Board had revoked her 2017 Substitute credential on July 30, 2020. Because Morrison failed to disclose the prior action on her certificate, she was issued a substitute credential, on September 19, 2022, expiring in September 2027.

On or about July 4, 2023, Morrison submitted an application for a Teacher of Middle School with Subject Matter Specialization: Science in Grades 5-8 Limited Certificate of Eligibility.

On the Oath form, Morrison again answered “No” to the question “Have you ever had an education or other professional certificate, license or credential revoked, suspended, invalidated, or denied for cause in New Jersey or any other state or jurisdiction?” This application expired on December 31, 2023 and no certificate issued.

Upon review of the above information, the Board voted, at its May 23, 2024 meeting, to issue Morrison an Order to Show Cause as to why her credential should not be revoked. The Board sent Morrison the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, on May 24, 2024. Morrison responded on May 28, 2024, via two emails, stating that her criminal record had been expunged on February 11, 2022, prior to her August 18, 2022 application. She further stated that she thought she disclosed that her previous license was revoked on both of her applications. However, her responses failed to include an answer responding to each allegation in the Order to Show Cause.

On August 14, 2024, the Board sent Morrison another notice by certified and regular mail providing her with an additional 15 days to respond to the Order to Show Cause pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(c)*, noting that if an answer responding to each allegation in the Order to Show Cause was not submitted, the allegations in the Order to Show Cause would be deemed admitted. On August 18 and 30, 2024, Morrison responded via email, simply forwarding her May 28, 2024 email.

On October 31, 2024, a hearing notice was sent to Morrison, stating that the allegations in the Order to Show Cause were deemed admitted as a result of her failure to file an Answer. The notice also provided her with the opportunity to file a written submission on the issue of whether her conduct provided cause for the Board to take action against her certificates and, if so, the appropriate sanction. She was also provided with the opportunity to appear before the Board to offer testimony on the sanction issue. On November 11, 2024, Morrison acknowledged receipt of the letter and stated the Board should refer to the document attached to her previous email.

On November 12, 2024, the Board sent Morrison a letter stating it was in receipt of her correspondences dated May 28, 2024, August 18 and 30, 2024, and November 11, 2024, and that submission of expungement documents and/or a general denial will not be accepted as an Answer to the Order to Show Cause. The Board also provided her additional time, until December 15, 2024, to file an Answer specifically admitting or denying the allegations in each enumerated paragraph of the Order to Show Cause and if not, the allegations in the Order to Show Cause would be deemed admitted, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(c)*. On November 12, 2024, Morrison acknowledged receipt of the letter and asked when her license would be revoked. Further, on November 14, 2024, she sent a second correspondence asking if she can be granted a new license if her credential is revoked. However, in neither email did she specifically admit or deny the allegations in the enumerated paragraphs of the Order to Show Case.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(e)*, the Board sent Morrison a hearing notice by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, on January 28, 2025. The notice explained that there appeared to be no dispute as to material facts in this matter. Thus, Morrison 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 credential. Morrison was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue.

On February 28, 2025, Morrison submitted a written statement for the Board's consideration and advised that she did not want to appear before the Board. On May 5, 2025, the Board sent Morrison a letter stating that the Board would consider this matter without oral argument at its meeting on May 22, 2025.

The Board has the authority to "issue appropriate certificates to teach or to administer" and "may revoke the same under rules and regulations prescribed by the State board." *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-*

38; *see also N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-3.2 and -4.4*; *Morison v. Willingboro Bd. of Educ.*, 478 N.J. Super. 229 (App. Div. 2024), *cert. denied* 258 N.J. 143 (July 11, 2024). The Board may take action against a 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*; *see also Morison*, 478 N.J. Super. at 246, 248 (the Board is responsible for protecting schoolchildren from improper teacher conduct and may suspend or revoke an educator’s continued ability to serve as a teacher at any public school based on unbecoming conduct).

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Morrison’s actions here constitute conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. Because Morrison failed to respond to the Order to Show Cause, the allegations are deemed admitted. *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(c)*. Consequently, at its meeting of May 22, 2025, the Board considered only the allegations in the Order to Show Cause and the information received from the Office of RPC. Because the allegations were deemed admitted, the Board concluded that no material facts related to Morrison’s conduct were in dispute. And because no material facts related to Morrison’s conduct are in dispute, the Board determined that summary decision was appropriate in this matter. *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(h)*.

The Board finds that Morrison engaged in conduct unbecoming of an educator. Unbecoming conduct is defined as “conduct ‘which adversely affects the morale or efficiency of the [department]’ or ‘has a tendency to destroy public respect for [government] employees and confidence in the operation of [public] services.’” *Bound Brook Bd. of Educ. v. Ciripompa*, 228 N.J. 4, 13 (2017) (quoting *In re Young*, 202 N.J. 50, 66 (2010), *Karins v. Atl. City*, 152 N.J. 532, 554 (1998)). “[A] finding of unbecoming conduct ‘need not be predicated upon the violation of any particular rule or regulation, but may be based merely upon the 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 legal correct.’” *Id.* at 13-14 (quoting *Karins*, 152 N.J. at 555). “It focuses on the morale, efficiency, and public perception of an entity, and how those concerns are harmed by

allowing teachers to behave inappropriately while holding public employment.” *Id.* at 14. “The touchstone of the determination lies in the certificate holder’s ‘fitness to discharge the duties and functions of one’s office or position.’” *Young*, 202 N.J. at 66 (citing *In re Grossman*, 127 N.J. Super. 13, 29 (App. Div. 1974)).

Here, the Board finds that Morrison failed to disclose the Board’s 2020 revocation of her previous Substitute credential on her certification application in 2022. Further, Morrison failed to disclose the Board’s 2020 revocation of her previous Substitute credential on her certification application in 2023. Morrison’s fraudulent conduct in submitting an inaccurate document in an application for certification is unambiguous evidence of conduct unbecoming an educator. Thus, the Board finds that Morrison engaged in conduct unbecoming an educator and provides the basis for the Board’s finding.

Having found that Morrison engaged in unbecoming conduct, the Board must now determine the appropriate penalty to be applied. In doing so, the Board considers the “nature and gravity of the offenses under all the circumstances involved, any evidence as to provocation, extenuation or aggravation,” and any “harm or injurious effect” on the maintenance of discipline and the proper administration of the school system. *In re Fulcomer*, 93 N.J. Super. 404, 422 (App. Div. 1967). “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. Fitness to teach depends on a broad range of factors, including the teacher’s impact and effect upon the students, because a “teacher works in a sensitive area in a schoolroom” and “shapes the attitude of young minds toward the society in which they live.” *Grossman*, 127 N.J. at 30 (*quoting Adler v. Bd. of Educ. of City of New York*, 342 U.S. 485 (1952)). Importantly, unfitness to hold a position in a school system may be shown by one incident if sufficiently flagrant. *Fulcomer*, 93 N.J. Super. at 421; *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, the Board concludes that the appropriate response to Morrison's breach in conduct of an educator is revocation of her credential. Morrison's conduct in failing to disclose not once, but twice, the Board's previous revocation of her credential is not conduct of a role model for students. The egregiousness of her conduct in blatantly denying she has ever been denied certification cannot be overlooked or easily excused. Thus, revocation of her credential is the appropriate response in this matter.

Accordingly, on May 22, 2025, the Board voted to revoke Vanessa Morrison's Substitute credential, that was issued in September 2022. On this 26th day of June 2025, the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision, and it is therefore ORDERED that Morrison's credential is REVOKED, effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Morrison return her paper certificate, if issued, 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:**  
**By 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.