

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS

JUSTIN P. ARLINGTON : ORDER OF REVOCATION

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At its meeting of November 1, 2024, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information from the Office of Student Protection (OSP) and the Passaic County Prosecutor's Office (PCPO) regarding Justin P. Arlington. Arlington currently holds a Teacher of English as a Second Language (ESL) Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing (CEAS), issued in June 2000; a Teacher of Students with Disabilities CEAS, issued in June 2000; a Standard Teacher of ESL certificate, issued in August 2022; and a Standard Teacher of Students with Disabilities certificate, issued in August 2022.

On or about April 19, 2024, Arlington waived indictment and requested to be tried upon the charge of Arson – Reckless Danger to Building/Structure (3rd degree), *N.J.S.A. 2C:17-1b(2)*. It was alleged that he purposely started a fire at a residence located at a private residence in Clifton, New Jersey, thereby recklessly placing a building or structure of another in danger of damage or destruction.

On June 10, 2024, Arlington received an Order of Postponement and was entered into the Pre-Trial Intervention program (PTI) for a period of twelve (12) months, along with no contact with the victim, community service if not employed full time or in school, and fees and penalties.

Upon review of the above information, the Board voted at its December 6, 2024 meeting to issue Arlington an Order to Show Cause as to why his certificates should not be revoked. The Board sent Arlington the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, on December 12, 2024. The Order provided that Arlington had 30 days to respond pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B- 4.6(b)*.

On December 27, 2024, Arlington, through counsel, submitted an Answer to the Order to Show Cause. In his answer, Arlington stated that he is not seeking to avoid responsibilities for his actions, or create a justification, and is deeply remorseful and will never engage in such conduct again. *See Answer*, p.2. He relayed a history with an occupant of the home in question, a former high school friend, who allegedly sent harassing text messages and embarrassing photoshopped picture(s) to Arlington's mother and sister and then "bragged about doing so on social media." *Ibid.* Arlington claimed he was "angry and upset" and wanted to "get back" at his former friend by embarrassing him in front of his family. *Id.* at p.3. He relayed that he had read about a "prank" where a box of feces was left on the steps or porch of someone's house and lit on fire and that when the person went to stamp out the flames they would be stepping on feces and admitted that he did leave a bag at a residence and lit it on fire. *Ibid.* He states that he admitted everything to the police regarding this "innocent prank" for which he "had no bad intent other than what he viewed as harmless revenge[.]" *Ibid.*

Pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(e)*, on March 21, 2025, the Board sent Arlington a hearing notice by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested. The notice explained that there appeared to be no dispute as to material facts in this matter. Thus, Arlington 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. Arlington was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue.

On March 28, 2025, Arlington's counsel advised the Board that Arlington elected to proceed without an attorney and would rely on the previous submission. On May 22, June 18, and June 23, 2025, Arlington submitted additional documentation and requested to appear before the Board. Specifically, he submitted a PTI dismissal order, a summative review for the 2025-2026

school year, recommendation letter, reappointment letter for the 2025-2026 school year, and his employment contract. On August 8, 2025, Arlington appeared before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. His testimony to the Board included that his criminal charges were dismissed after he successfully completed his PTI. He also stated that his district rehired him for the 2025-2026 school year with the knowledge of this incident.

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, 237 (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 (explaining 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 Arlington’s actions constitute conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. Arlington did not dispute the allegations in the Order to Show Cause. Consequently, at its meeting of September 19, 2025, the Board considered only the allegations in the Order to Show Cause, the information received from OSP and PCPO, and Arlington’s hearing submission. Because the allegations were not disputed, the Board concluded that no material facts related to Arlington’s offenses were in dispute. And because no material facts related to Arlington’s conduct were 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 Arlington 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) (citing *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 (quoting *In re Grossman*, 127 N.J. Super. 13, 29 (App. Div. 1974)).

Here, the Board finds that actions of starting a fire at a residence and recklessly placing a building or structure of another in danger of damage or destruction, especially when occupant(s) were present inside at the time, clearly demonstrate conduct that is unacceptable for a role model and violates the implicit standard of good behavior expected of a public school teacher. Thus, the Board finds that Arlington engaged in conduct unbecoming an educator and provides the basis for the Board’s finding.

Having found that Arlington 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). Central to this evaluation is the understanding that “[t]eachers... 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 Arlington’s breach in conduct of an educator is revocation of his certificates. Arlington’s conduct in setting fire at a residence with occupant(s) inside demonstrates he is unfit to discharge the duties and functions as a public school teacher. His reckless and careless conduct risked not only damage to property, but also placed others at serious risk of harm. Worse still, he claimed this serious conduct was nothing more than a “prank,” demonstrating his lack of understanding and remorse. None of the documents submitted by Arlington compel a different result. These documents—a PTI dismissal order, summative review for the 2025-2026 school year, recommendation letter, reappointment letter, and employment contract—do not negate the seriousness of his actions in purposely starting a fire at a residence while occupant(s) were present. Allowing Arlington to maintain certification to teach in a public school would have a negative impact on the proper administration of the school system. Thus, revocation of his certificates is the appropriate response in this matter.

Accordingly, on September 19, 2025, the Board voted to revoke Justin P. Arlington’s Teacher of ESL CEAS, Teacher of Students with Disabilities CEAS, Standard Teacher of ESL certificate, and Standard Teacher of Students with Disabilities certificate. On this 30th day of October 2025, the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision, and it is therefore ORDERED that Arlington’s certificates are REVOKED, effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Arlington return his paper certificates, 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.



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.