

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
SAMANTHA M. KRAKOWER : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 2122-176

Samantha M. Krakower (Krakower) is the holder of a Teacher of Health and Physical Education Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing, issued June 2020.

At its meeting of May 19, 2022, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information it received from the Department of Education (DOE) - Office of Student Protection (OSP) and the DOE - Office of Legal Affairs, Accountability & Compliance (OLAAC), including documents obtained from the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) – Institutional Abuse Investigation Unit (IAIU), regarding Krakower.

On or about April 21, 2021, Krakower was charged with Sexual Assault by a Supervisor, *N.J.S.A. 2C:14-2C(3)*; Criminal Sexual Contact, *N.J.S.A. 2C:14-3B*; and Endangering – Sexual Conduct with Child, *N.J.S.A. 2C:24-4A(1)*. It was alleged that she had sex with a student under the age of 18.

IAIU conducted an investigation into the allegations and issued a report on July 7, 2021, determining that the allegations of Sexual Abuse – Sexual Molestation/Penetration against Krakower were Substantiated.¹ Specifically, in its report, the IAIU found that Krakower engaged in a sexual relationship with seventeen (17) year old student, O.M. IAIU also found that sexual/genital contact did occur between Krakower and O.M. Further, the student admitted to the conduct that occurred over a period of several months. On January 26, 2022, a grand jury issued a no bill on the criminal charges.

¹ Krakower later appealed the IAIU findings and the matter settled for a finding of “Established.”

After reviewing the above information, at its June 30, 2022 meeting, the Board voted to issue an Order to Show Cause (OSC) to Krakower as to why her certificates should not be revoked. On July 25, 2022, Krakower filed an Answer to the OSC. *See Answer*.

In her Answer, Krakower denied the allegations, claiming they were “patently false[.]” *Id.* at ¶ 3. Krakower also denied that IAIU was notified of the allegations, that IAIU began an investigation, and that IAIU released its findings. *Id.* at ¶ 4. Further, Krakower denied that IAIU found that she engaged in a sexual relationship with a then 17-year-old student outside school grounds on numerous occasions and that the allegations of Sexual Abuse – Sexual Molestation/Sexual Penetration were Substantiated against her. *Id.* at ¶ 5. As there were material facts in dispute, the Board transmitted the matter to the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) for a hearing as a contested case on September 2, 2022.

On April 6, 2026, Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) Joann Lasala Candido issued an Initial Decision in this case. *In the Matter of the Certificates of Samantha Krakower*, OAL Dkt. No. EDE 07563-22 (Initial Decision, April 6, 2026). A Hearing was held on September 10, 2025 and November 24, 2025. *Id.* at 2. Four witnesses testified on behalf of the Board – Irek Taflinski, senior investigator for the IAIU; H.M., father of O.M.; Charles Kalender, principal of Leonia High School; and Edward Bertolini, Superintendent of Leonia School District during the 2020-2021 school year. *Id.* at 2-4. Krakower testified on behalf of herself. *Id.* at 4-5. The ALJ found that the witnesses who testified on behalf of the Board were forthright and credible and did not harbor any motive or bias. *Id.* at 5. However, the ALJ found that Krakower, “although candid and forthright as to her relationship with O.M., was inconsistent with her statements during the criminal investigation.” *Ibid.*

The ALJ found as fact that O.M. was a virtual student during the 2020-2021 school year, O.M. was not a student in any of Krakower's classes, that Krakower admitted to having an ongoing sexual relationship with O.M. from October 2020 through April 2021, and that H.M., O.M.'s parent, contacted Krakower in October 2020 via phone and asked Krakower to leave his daughter alone. *Id.* at 6. Based on these facts, the ALJ found that the "Board has more than met their burden of proving that Krakower violated district policy and the implicit standard of good behavior to warrant revocation[.]" *Id.* at 13.

Specifically, the ALJ found that it is undisputed that Krakower engaged in a sexual relationship with a student for more than seven months, and by so doing violated district policies regarding staff conduct. *Id.* at 11. As to Krakower's contentions that she was not provided with the district policies nor trained regarding the policies, the ALJ found her arguments were "contested by the extremely credible testimony of both Mr. Kalender and Mr. Bertolini." *Id.* at 12. The ALJ concluded that the violation of district "policies, both in conduct and failure to report, undoubtedly amounts to conduct unbecoming a teacher." *Ibid.* The ALJ reasoned that Krakower's "actions were inappropriate, irresponsible and unprofessional, and engaging in such behavior represents a significant departure from what the public has the right to expect from those who teach children." *Id.* at 13. Further, the ALJ reasoned that "Krakower's ongoing reliance on O.M.'s consent as an excuse for her conduct and her failure to characterize the relationship as wrong or regrettable at that time was demonstrative of precisely the kind of extremely poor judgment that has the tendency to destroy the public's respect and confidence in teachers and the operation of the school system." *Ibid.* The ALJ found that the penalty warranted was revocation of her certificates. *Ibid.* No exceptions or reply exceptions were filed.

The Board must now determine whether to adopt, modify, or reject the Initial Decision in this matter. At its meeting of May 21, 2026, the Board reviewed the Initial Decision. After full and fair consideration of the Initial Decision, the Board voted to adopt the Initial Decision.

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(a); *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 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.” *IMO Tenure of Sammons*, 1972 *S.L.D.* 302, 321 (Comm’r. Decision, June 12, 1972). 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.

As noted above, after determining the undisputed material facts in the record, the ALJ found that there was sufficient evidence presented by the Board demonstrating that Krakower engaged in conduct unbecoming when she, in violation of district policies, engaged in a sexual relationship with a student for more than seven months. There is no doubt that the ALJ was in the best position to render credibility determinations in this matter and Krakower has not filed exceptions to the Initial Decision. Accordingly, the Board will defer to the ALJ’s credibility findings and adopts the ALJ’s findings of fact. *N.J.A.C.* 1:1-18.6(c).

The Board agrees with the ALJ that Krakower’s actions here fall far short of the high standard of conduct expected of an educator. Specifically, Krakower’s actions of engaging in a sexual relationship with a 17-year-old student in her district is egregious conduct for a school teacher. Further, such conduct violates the public’s trust in public school employees and demonstrates that she is ill-suited to be a role model for students. As noted above, Krakower’s arguments that she was neither provided with the district policies nor trained regarding the policies were refuted by the Board’s credible witnesses. Thus, the Board finds that Krakower committed unbecoming conduct.

The Board also agrees with the ALJ that Krakower’s conduct here warrants revocation of her certificates. As noted above, the ALJ found that revocation of her certificates was warranted based on Krakower’s inappropriate, irresponsible, and unprofessional conduct that was a significant departure from role model behavior expected of an educator, and Krakower’s continued reliance on the student’s consent to the relationship demonstrated extremely poor judgment.

Krakower's behavior here is inexcusable for a teacher and revocation of her certificates is warranted. Thus, the ALJ's initial decision finding that Krakower committed unbecoming conduct warranting revocation of her certificates was proper.

Accordingly, on May 21, 2026, the Board voted to adopt the Initial Decision. On this 25th day of June 2026, the Board formally adopted its written decision to adopt the Initial Decision in this matter and it is therefore ORDERED that Samantha Krakower's Teacher of Health and Physical Education Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing is hereby REVOKED, effective immediately.



Kimberly A. Gatti, Acting Secretary
State Board of Examiners

Date of Mailing:
via email ,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.