

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS

JASON MANZELLA : ORDER OF REVOCATION

_____ : DOCKET NO: 2425-314

At its meeting of August 8, 2025, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information from the Department of Education (DOE) – Office of Legal Affairs, Accountability & Compliance (OLAAC) and DOE - Office of Student Protection (OSP) regarding Jason Manzella, including documentation obtained from the Hampton Virginia Police Department (HVPD). Manzella currently holds a Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-6 Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing (CEAS), issued June 2015; a Teacher of Students with Disabilities CEAS, issued January 2016; a Standard Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-6 certificate, issued June 2017; and a Standard Teacher of Students with Disabilities certificate, issued June 2017.

On July 18, 2024, Manzella was charged with Taking Indecent Liberties with a Child Under 15 (Felony, Class 5), Va. Code Ann. § 18.2-370, and Use of Communications Systems to Facilitate Certain Offenses involving Children (Felony, Class 6), Va. Code Ann. § 18.2-374.3. It was alleged that Manzella communicated with who he thought was a 14-year-old female on the social media platform Whisper, wherein he asked for before and after shower photos, discussed sexual acts and about meeting up to have sexual contact, and that he spoke to her over the telephone.

On March 20, 2025, Manzella pled guilty to Taking Indecent Liberties with a Child Under 15 (Felony, Class 5), Va. Code Ann. § 18.2-370, and Use of Communications Systems to Facilitate Certain Offenses involving Children (Felony, Class 6), Va. Code Ann. § 18.2-374.3. Also, on

March 20, 2025, Manzella received a suspended prison sentence of two years.

On March 25, 2025, OSP notified the Board that as a result of his convictions for Taking Indecent Liberties with a Child Under 15 (Felony, Class 5), Va. Code Ann. § 18.2-370, and Use of Communications Systems to Facilitate Certain Offenses involving Children (Felony, Class 6), Va. Code Ann. § 18.2-374.3, Manzella is permanently disqualified from continued employment with any school or institution under the supervision of the Department of Education.

Upon review of the above information, the Board voted at its meeting of September 19, 2025, to issue Manzella an Order to Show Cause as to why the certificates he holds should not be revoked. On September 23, 2025, the Board sent Manzella the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested. The notice provided that Manzella had thirty (30) days to respond pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B- 4.6(b)*. The certified mail copy was signed and returned, and the regular mail copy was not returned. Manzella did not file a response.

On November 21, 2025, the Board sent Manzella a second notice by regular and certified mail, providing him with an additional fifteen (15) days to respond. The certified mail copy was marked “Unclaimed,” and the regular mail copy was not returned. Again, Manzella did not file a response.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(e)*, the Board sent Manzella a hearing notice by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, on February 5, 2026. The notice explained that because no answer was filed, there appeared to be no dispute as to material facts in this matter. Thus, Manzella 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. Manzella was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. The certified mail copy was signed and returned, and the regular mail copy was not returned. Manzella did not file a response or request to appear before the Board.

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).

Because Manzella 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 June 25, 2026, the Board considered only the allegations in the September 19, 2025 Order to Show Cause and the information received from the OSP, OLAAC, and HVPD. Because the allegations were deemed admitted, the Board concluded that no material facts related to Manzella’s offenses were in dispute. And because no material facts related to Manzella’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 threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Manzella’s actions here constitute conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. Based on the undisputed

facts in this matter, the Board finds that Manzella 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 by communicating with an individual he though was a 14-year-old female on a social media platform, asking her for before and after shower photos, and discussing sexual acts and meeting up to have sexual contact, Manzella violated the implicit standard of good behavior expected of public school teachers. Further, in enacting the Criminal History Review statute, *N.J.S.A.* 18A:6-7.1 *et seq.*, the Legislature sought to protect public school pupils from contact with individuals whom it deemed to be a danger. The strong legislative policy statement is also in accord with the Commissioner’s long-standing belief that teachers must serve as role models for their students. OSP determined that Manzella’s convictions for Taking Indecent

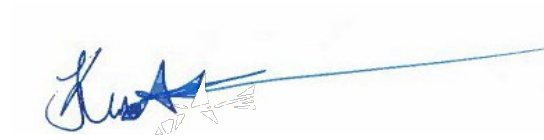
Liberties with a Child Under 15 (Felony, Class 5), Va. Code Ann. § 18.2-370, and Use of Communications Systems to Facilitate Certain Offenses involving Children (Felony, Class 6), Va. Code Ann. § 18.2-374.3 disqualify him from public school employment. *See N.J.S.A.* 18A:6-7.1(c)(2) and (d). Thus, the Board finds that Manzella engaged in conduct unbecoming an educator and provides the basis for the Board’s finding.

Having found that Manzella 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.” *IMO Tenure of Sammons*, 1972 *S.L.D.* 302, 321 (Comm’r. Decision, June 12, 1972). 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 Manzella’s breach in

conduct of an educator is revocation of his certificates. Manzella's conduct of engaging in sexually explicit communications with an individual he thought was underage, as outlined above, is not conduct of a role model for children. Rather, his conduct demonstrates he is unfit to discharge the duties and functions as a public-school teacher, and demonstrates strong evidence that revocation is appropriate. Allowing him to maintain certification to teach in a public school would have a negative impact on the proper administration of the school system. Further, the record established that, as a result of his convictions for Taking Indecent Liberties with a Child Under 15 (Felony, Class 5), Va. Code Ann. § 18.2-370, and Use of Communications Systems to Facilitate Certain Offenses involving Children (Felony, Class 6), Va. Code Ann. § 18.2-374.3, Manzella is disqualified from public school employment. An educator who is not qualified for public school employment should not be able to hold herself out as a public educator. Thus, revocation of his certificates is the appropriate response in this matter.

Accordingly, on June 25, 2026, the Board voted to revoke Manzella's certificates. On this 7th day of August 2026, the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision, and it is therefore ORDERED that Jason Manzella's Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-6 Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing (CEAS), Teacher of Students with Disabilities CEAS, Standard Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-6 certificate, and Standard Teacher of Students with Disabilities certificate are hereby REVOKED, effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Manzella 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.



Kimberly A. Gatti, Acting 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.