

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
KEITH I. ALLEN : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 2425-138

At its meeting of December 6, 2024, 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 Keith I. Allen, including documents received from the Essex County Prosecutor’s Office (ECPO). Allen currently holds an Instructional Substitute credential, expiring October 31, 2026.

On or about May 5, 2022, Allen was charged with Unlawful Possession of Weapons (2nd degree), *N.J.S.A. 2C:39-5B(1)*, after he was arrested on an outstanding warrant and law enforcement found an unregistered handgun in his vehicle.

On February 27, 2023, Allen pled guilty to Unlawful Possession of Weapons (2nd degree), *N.J.S.A. 2C:39-5B(1)*. On June 5, 2024, OSP notified the Board that, as a result of his conviction for Unlawful Possession of Weapons (2nd degree), *N.J.S.A. 2C:39-5B(1)*, Allen was permanently disqualified from continued employment with any school or institution under the supervision of the Department of Education, in any position specified by law, pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1 et seq.* On July 19, 2024, he was sentenced to time served of seven (7) days and two (2) years of probation, along with fines and costs.

Upon review of the above information, the Board voted at its meeting of January 16, 2025, to issue Allen an Order to Show Cause as to why the certificates he holds should not be revoked. On January 17, 2025, the Board sent Allen the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail,

return receipt requested. The Order provided that Allen had thirty (30) days to respond pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B- 4.6(b)*. The certified mail copy was marked “Delivered” and the regular mail copy was not returned. Allen did not file a response.

On May 16, 2025, the Board sent Allen a second notice by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, providing him with an additional fifteen (15) days to respond to the Order to Show Cause pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(c)*. The certified mail copy was returned and marked “Unclaimed[,]” and the regular mail copy was not returned. Again, Allen did not file a response.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(e)*, the Board sent Allen a hearing notice by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, on August 4, 2025. The notice explained that because no answer was filed, there appeared to be no dispute as to material facts in this matter. Thus, Allen 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. Allen was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. The certified mail copy was marked “Delivered” and the regular mail copy was not returned.

On September 2, 2025, Allen notified the Board that he would like to appear before the Board to offer testimony on the sanction issue. However, he did not file a written response to the hearing notice. On December 12, 2025, Allen appeared before the Board and provided testimony that what happened was a mistake.

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 Allen 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 January 22, 2026, the Board considered only the allegations in the January 16, 2025 Order to Show Cause and the information received from the OSP, OLAAC, and ECPO. Because the allegations were deemed admitted, the Board concluded that no material facts related to Allen’s offenses were in dispute. And because no material facts related to Allen’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 Allen’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 Allen 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 Allen’s conviction for Unlawful Possession of Weapons (2nd degree), *N.J.S.A.* 2C:39-5B(1), violates the implicit standard of good behavior expected of public school teachers. Possessing a weapon illegally clearly demonstrates unbecoming conduct. 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. Here, OSP determined that Allen’s conviction permanently disqualifies him from public school employment. *See N.J.S.A.* 18A:6-7.1(c)(2) and (d). Thus, the Board finds that Allen engaged in conduct unbecoming an educator and provides the basis for the Board’s finding.

Having found that Allen 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 Allen’s breach in conduct of an educator is revocation of his certificates. Allen’s conduct of illegally possessing an unregistered handgun in his vehicle 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 conviction for Unlawful Possession of Weapons (2nd degree), *N.J.S.A.* 2C:39-5B(1), Allen is disqualified from public school employment. An educator who is not qualified for public school employment should not be able to hold himself out as a public educator. Thus, revocation of his certificates is the appropriate response in this matter.

Accordingly, on January 22, 2026, the Board voted to revoke Keith I. Allen's certificate. On this 6th day of March 2026, the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision, and it is therefore ORDERED that Allen's Instructional Substitute credential is hereby REVOKED, effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Allen 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.