

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
ERIN (SULLIVAN) GAWRONSKI : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 2425-154

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 Erin (Sullivan) Gawronski, including documents received from the Somerset County Prosecutor’s Office (SCPO). Gawronski currently holds an Elementary School Teacher in Grades K-8 Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing, issued May 2001, and a Standard Elementary School Teacher in Grades K-8 certificate, issued April 2002.

On or about May 7, 2023, Gawronski was charged with two counts of Assault by Auto/Causing Serious Bodily Injury (3rd degree), *N.J.S.A. 2C:12-1C(2)*, and one count of Assault by Auto/Causing Bodily Injury (4th degree), *N.J.S.A. 2C:12-1C(2)*. It was alleged that Gawronski crossed the centerline into oncoming traffic, sideswiped a 1999 Mercury Tracer, and then struck a 2017 Subaru head-on while she was under the influence of a controlled dangerous substance (“CDS”). The toxicology report on Gawronski revealed positive findings for Alprazolam, 11-Hydroxy Delta-9 THC, Delta-9 Carboxy THC, Delta-9 THC, Benzoylecgonine, Alprazolam, Alpha-Hydroxyalprazolam, Delta-9 Carboxy THC - Total, Benzoylecgonine, and Cocaine. Three of the victims from the motor vehicle crash were extricated and transported to the hospital, and Gawronski was also transported to a separate hospital. At the time of the crash, Gawronski’s vehicle was actively equipped with an interlock device.

On March 25, 2024, Gawronski pled guilty to two counts of Assault by Auto/Causing Serious Bodily Injury (3rd degree), *N.J.S.A. 2C:12-1C(2)*, and one count of Assault by Auto/Causing Bodily Injury (4th degree), *N.J.S.A. 2C:12-1C(2)*.

On March 28, 2024, OSP notified the Board that, as a result of her convictions for Assault by Auto/Causing Serious Bodily Injury (3rd degree), *N.J.S.A. 2C:12-1C(2)*, and Assault by Auto/Causing Bodily Injury (4th degree), *N.J.S.A. 2C:12-1C(2)*, Gawronski is permanently disqualified from employment with any school or institution under the supervision of the Department of Education pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1 et seq.*

On May 24, 2024, Gawronski was sentenced to three (3) years of non-custodial probation and ordered to undergo random and weekly urine monitoring as directed by Probation, continue undergoing substance abuse treatment and attend Alcoholics Anonymous, and pay fines and costs. The Judgment of Conviction noted that Gawronski also had a 2017 conviction for Driving While Intoxicated, *N.J.S.A. 39:4-50*.

Upon review of the above information, the Board voted at its meeting of January 16, 2025, to issue Gawronski an Order to Show Cause as to why the certificates she holds should not be revoked. On January 17, 2025, the Board sent Gawronski the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested. The Order provided that Gawronski had thirty (30) days to respond pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(b)*. The certified mail copy was marked "Unclaimed," and the regular mail copy was not returned. Gawronski did not file a response.

On May 16, 2025, the Board sent Gawronski 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 marked

“Unclaimed,” and the regular mail copy was not returned. Again, Gawronski did not file a response.

On October 29, 2025, the Board sent Gawronski another notice to a separate address in Metuchen. The certified mail copy was marked “Delivered, Left with Individual,” and the regular mail copy was not returned. Again, Gawronski did not file a response.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.6(e), the Board sent Gawronski a hearing notice by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, on December 10, 2025. The notice explained that because no answer was filed, there appeared to be no dispute as to material facts in this matter. Thus, Gawronski 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 certificates. Gawronski was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. The certified mail copy was marked “Delivered, Left with Individual,” and the regular mail copy was not returned. On January 5, 2026, Gawronski filed a response via email.

In her response, Gawronski claims that she was “not intoxicated” and “did not set out to hurt anyone.” However, she acknowledged that “they did find d[r]ugs in [her] system from when [she] had previously used them days before.” She admitted that she was charged with three counts of assault by vehicle. She claims that it was a “very difficult time in [her] life and that [she has] maintained complete sobriety since May 9, 2023.” Although acknowledging it was a very bad traffic accident, she did not understand why her certificates “would be revoked due to a car accident.” She ended her response by stating “[i]f you feel the need to take away my license, by

all means take it. I think it's ridiculous and I'm not responding any further."

On January 6, 2026, the Board sent Gawronski a notice, by email, regular mail, and certified mail return receipt requested, advising that she needed to respond specifically to each allegation admitting or denying each paragraph of the Order to Show Cause and that if a response was not received by February 6, 2026, the allegations in the Order to Show Cause would be deemed admitted. The certified mail copy was marked "Unclaimed," and the regular mail copy was not returned. Gawronski did not file a response.

On March 5, 2026, the Board sent Gawronski another hearing notice, by email, regular and certified mail, return receipt requested. The certified mail copy was marked "Delivered, Left with Individual," and the regular mail copy was not returned. Gawronski 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 Gawronski 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 21, 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 SCPO. Because the allegations were deemed admitted, the Board concluded that no material facts related to Gawronski's offenses were in dispute. And because no material facts related to Gawronski'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 Gawronski'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 Gawronski 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 crossing the center line of travel while under the influence of

illicit drugs and causing a three-vehicle crash and serious bodily injury to multiple occupants clearly demonstrates unbecoming conduct, and that this conduct, along with Gawronski's conviction for Assault by Auto/Causing Serious Bodily Injury (3rd degree), *N.J.S.A.* 2C:12-1C(2), and Assault by Auto/Causing Bodily Injury (4th degree), *N.J.S.A.* 2C:12-1C(2), violates 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. Here, OSP determined that Gawronski's convictions permanently disqualifies her from public school employment. *See N.J.S.A.* 18A:6-7.1(c)(2) and (d). Thus, the Board finds that Gawronski engaged in conduct unbecoming an educator and provides the basis for the Board's finding.

Having found that Gawronski 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 Gawronski’s breach in conduct of an educator is revocation of her certificates. Gawronski’s conduct of driving while under the influence of illicit drugs and causing a three-vehicle crash and serious bodily injuries to multiple occupants by crossing the center line demonstrates she is unfit to discharge the duties and functions as a public-school teacher, and demonstrates strong evidence that revocation is appropriate. Allowing her 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 her convictions for Assault by Auto/Causing Serious Bodily Injury (3rd degree), *N.J.S.A. 2C:12-1C(2)*, and Assault by Auto/Causing Bodily Injury (4th degree), *N.J.S.A. 2C:12-1C(2)*, Gawronski 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 her certificates is the appropriate response in this matter.

Accordingly, on May 21, 2026, the Board voted to revoke Gawronski’s certificates. On this 25th day of June 2026, the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision, and it is therefore ORDERED that Erin Gawronski’s Elementary School Teacher in Grades K-8 Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing and Standard Elementary School Teacher in Grades K-8

certificate are hereby REVOKED, effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Gawronski return her 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.