

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
DEBORAH LASHER : ORDER OF SUSPENSION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 2526-124

At its meeting of October 30, 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 Deborah Lasher, including documents received from the Cape May County Prosecutor’s Office (CCPO). Lasher currently holds a Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-8 Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing (CEAS), issued June 2005; a Teacher of Middle School with Subject-Matter Specialization: English Language Arts in Grades 5-8 CEAS, issued October 2005; a Teacher of Students with Disabilities Certificate of Eligibility, issued February 2011; and a Teacher of Students with Disabilities CEAS, issued June 2015.

On or about January 27, 2025, Lasher was charged with Theft by Unlawful Taking (3rd degree), *N.J.S.A. 2C:20-3A*, and Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance (CDS) (3rd degree), *N.J.S.A. 2C:35-10A(1)*. It was alleged that Lasher admitted to stealing the prescription drug Alprazoam over the course of four months while employed as a pharmacy technician at a CVS pharmacy.

On May 21, 2025, Lasher received an Order of Postponement and she was entered was admitted into the Pretrial Intervention (PTI) program for a period of six (6) months. As a condition to PTI, she was ordered to undergo random drug screening, pay \$76.48 in restitution, and pay costs and fees amounting to \$1,225.00.

Upon review of the above information, the Board voted at its meeting of December 12,

2025, to issue Lasher an Order to Show Cause as to why the certificates she holds should not be revoked. The Board sent Lasher the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, on December 16, 202. The Order provided Lasher had 30 days to respond pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B- 4.6(b)*. On December 18, 2025, Lasher submitted an Answer to the Order to Show Cause. *See Answer*.

In her Answer, Lasher admitted she was charged with Theft by Unlawful Taking (3rd degree), *N.J.S.A. 2C:20-3A*, and Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance (CDS) (3rd degree), *N.J.S.A. 2C:35-10A(1)*. *Ibid*. She also admitted that she “unlawfully t[ook] Alprazolam (Xanax) at [her] time with CVS.” *Ibid*. She claimed that she completed PTI and that the charges were dismissed. She also admitted that this incident was “an error in judgement” and claimed that she “was attempting to resolve headache issues, for which [she is] under doctor’s supervision, and was not receiving sufficient relief.” *Ibid*. She also claims she “take[s] full responsibility” for her actions and acknowledges they were “an improper attempt to resolve a medical condition” she has and that she is “now under a different doctor’s care for [her] headaches, and [she is] receiving much more significant relief[.]”. *Ibid*.

Pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(e)*, the Board sent Lasher a hearing notice by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, on March 5, 2026. The notice explained that there appeared to be no dispute as to material facts in this matter. Thus, Lasher 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. Lasher was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue.

On March 6, 2025, Lasher submitted a written response and a copy of the October 21, 2025 PTI Order of Dismissal. She also requested to appear before the Board. *See Written Submission*. The Order of Dismissal ordered the dismissal of the criminal charges against her following successful completion of PTI. In her response, Lasher admitted to her “wrongdoing” and “error of judgment” and expressed her “immense sense of regret, remorse, and embarrassment over what [she had] done.” *Ibid*. She claimed she acted in a “period of desperation in an attempt to treat a chronic headache disorder[.]” She also claims she has “accepted the consequences of [her] actions, and [has] gone through the judicial system of the State of New Jersey and [has] completed the Pre-Trial Intervention Program assigned to her.” *Ibid*. On May 21, 2026, Lasher appeared before the Board and provided testimony.

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; *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 Lasher’s actions here constitute conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. Lasher did not dispute the allegations in the Order to Show Cause. Consequently, at its meeting of June 25, 2026, the Board considered only the allegations in the December 12, 2025 Order to Show Cause and the information

received from the OSP, OLAAC, and CCPO. Because the allegations were not disputed, the Board concluded that no material facts related to Lasher's offenses were in dispute. And because no material facts related to Lasher'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 Lasher 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 stealing prescription medicine from a pharmacy while working as a pharmacy technician is a violation of the implicit standard of good behavior expected of public-school teachers and has the tendency to destroy public respect for teachers and confidence in the public school system. Thus, the Board finds that Lasher engaged in conduct unbecoming an educator and provides the basis for the Board's finding.

Having found that Lasher 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 Lasher’s breach in conduct of an educator is a suspension of her certificates. Lasher was forthcoming and admitted she stole the prescription drugs, which is a serious offence. However, based on the information and evidence she provided in her Answer and Written Submission and the attached documentation, the Board finds that a revocation of her certificates is not warranted.

Specifically, Lasher demonstrated that she successfully completed her PTI resulting in the criminal charges being dismissed. Further, she demonstrated mitigation evidence of remorse for her actions, and that she has taken specific steps to ensure her conduct is not repeated, including

seeking further medical care. For these reasons, the Board finds that a six-month suspension of Lasher's certificates is the appropriate response in this matter.

Accordingly, on June 25, 2026, the Board voted to suspend Lasher's certificates. On this 7th day of August 2026, the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision, and it is therefore ORDERED that Deborah Lasher's Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-8 CEAS, Teacher of Middle School with Subject-Matter Specialization: English Language Arts in Grades 5-8 CEAS, Teacher of Students with Disabilities Certificate of Eligibility, and Teacher of Students with Disabilities CEAS are hereby SUSPENDED for a period of six months, effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Lasher 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.