#### **New Jersey Commissioner of Education**

#### **Final Decision**

L.G., on behalf of minor child, D.G.,

Petitioner,

v.

Board of Education of the West Morris Regional High School District, Morris County,

Respondent.

#### Synopsis

*Pro se* petitioner L.G. sought permission to have her son, D.G., a junior at West Morris Central High School, register for IB-HL Calculus/Analysis 3 for the 2023-2024 school year. "IB" in the course name stands for "International Baccalaureate." Both the respondent Board's Program of Studies and the International Baccalaureate Organization mandate that IB/HL Calculus 3 be offered solely to students in Grade Twelve (12) who have satisfied the necessary prerequisites. Petitioner alleged that the Board's refusal to permit D.G. to register for the class was based on his age and therefore in violation of *N.J.A.C.* 6A:7-1.7(b)(2). A hearing in the matter was held on September 28, 2023 and the record closed thereafter on December 22, 2023.

The ALI found, *inter alia*, that: school board decisions are entitled to a presumption of correctness and will not be disturbed unless there is an affirmative showing that the decision was arbitrary, capricious or unreasonable; where board actions are challenged, the petitioner bears the burden of proof to show that the Board's actions were unlawful, arbitrary, capricious or unreasonable; in matters involving the exercise of a local board of education's discretion, the Commissioner's role is not to substitute his judgment for that of the board, but to determine whether there was a reasonable basis for the board's conclusions; here, petitioner's reliance on *N.J.A.C.* 6A:7-1.7(b)(2) to support her argument that the Board discriminated against D.G. based on his age when they denied his requested placement in IB-HL Calculus/Analysis 3 as a junior is without merit; the Board provided a rational basis for its policy to limit enrollment in IB/HL Calc 3 to twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>) grade students only; D.G. was entitled to take the course in the 2023-2024 school year, but D.G. and his family chose to enroll in "senior option" for this year, effectively negating his ability to enroll in the desired math course. The ALJ concluded that the Board's actions were not arbitrary, capricious, or unreasonable. Accordingly, the petitioner's appeal was denied.

Upon review, the Commissioner concurred with the ALJ's findings and conclusions. Accordingly, the Initial Decision of the OAL was adopted as the final decision in this matter, for the reasons stated therein. The petition was dismissed.

This synopsis is not part of the Commissioner's decision. It has been prepared for the convenience of the reader and has been neither reviewed nor approved by the Commissioner.

118-24

118-24 OAL Dkt. No. EDU 03332-23 Agency Dkt. No. 52-3/23

#### **New Jersey Commissioner of Education**

#### **Final Decision**

L.G., on behalf of minor child, D.G.,

Petitioner,

v.

Board of Education of the West Morris Regional High School District, Morris County,

Respondent.

The record of this matter and the Initial Decision of the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) have been reviewed and considered. The parties did not file exceptions.

Upon review, the Commissioner concurs with the Administrative Law Judge that the West Morris Regional High School District Board of Education's decision to deny D.G. the opportunity to enroll in IB-HL Calculus/Analysis 3 – a course limited to twelfth-grade students – as an eleventh-grade student was not arbitrary, capricious, or unreasonable and does not violate *N.J.A.C.* 6A:7-1.7(b)(2).

Accordingly, the OAL decision is adopted as the final decision in this matter, and the petition of appeal is hereby dismissed.

IT IS SO ORDERED.<sup>1</sup>

ACTING COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

Date of Decision: February 20, 2024 Date of Mailing: February 22, 2024

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> This decision may be appealed to the Appellate Division of the Superior Court pursuant to *N.J.S.A.* 18A:6-9.1. Under *N.J.Ct.R.* 2:4-1(b), a notice of appeal must be filed with the Appellate Division within 45 days from the date of mailing of this decision.



*State of New Jersey* OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW

**INITIAL DECISION** 

OAL DKT. NO. EDU 03332-23 AGENCY DKT. NO. 52-3/23

L.G. ON BEHALF OF MINOR CHILD, D.G.,

Petitioner,

V

WEST MORRIS REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT, BOARD OF EDUCATION, MORRIS COUNTY,

Respondent.

L.G., petitioner, pro se

**Danielle A. Panizzi**, Esq., for respondent, (Cleary, Giacobbe, Alfieri & Jacobs, LLC)

Record Closed: December 22, 2023 De

Decided: January 22, 2024

BEFORE ELISSA MIZZONE TESTA, ALJ:

# **STATEMENT OF THE CASE**

Petitioner, L.G., seeks to have the West Morris Regional High School District, Board of Education, Morris County ("BOE", "WMRHSD" or "respondent") permit her son D.G. to register for the next Calculus class in his pathway for the 2023-2024 school year; in particular, IB/HL Calculus/Analysis 3 (also referred to as "IB/HL Calculus III and IB/HL Calc III"). Petitioner alleges that the BOE's refusal to permit D.G. to register for the class is based on his age and thus, is in violation of N.J.A.C. 6A:7-1.7(b)(2). "IB stands for International Baccalaureate".

### **PROCEDURAL HISTORY**

On or about February 26, 2023, petitioner L.G. on behalf of her son, D.G. filed a *pro se* Petition with the New Jersey Department of Education ("NJDOE") Office of Controversies and Disputes seeking that the respondent should allow D.G. to register for the next math class in his pathway IB/HL Calculus/Analysis 3, for the 2023-2024 school year, recognizing that D.G. has completed the prerequisite course and has teacher recommendation to move on to IB/HL Calculus/Analysis 3 for the 2023-2024 school year, and WMRHSD should recognize that prohibiting any general education student from registering for a class due to age is a violation of New Jersey Administrative Code 6A:7-1.7(b)(2). Respondent filed an Answer to the Petition on April 12, 2023. The matter was transmitted to the Office of Administrative Law ("OAL") on April 13, 2023. A hearing was conducted on September 28, 2023. Post-hearing summation briefs were submitted by the parties and the record was closed based on the last submission date of December 22,2023.

### FINDINGS OF FACT

Based upon the testimonial and documentary evidence presented at the hearing, the following facts are undisputed and thus, I **FIND**:

The District's principal place of business is 10 South Four Bridges Road Chester, New Jersey 07930. Petitioner L.G., on behalf of minor child D.G., resides at 186 Old Turnpike Road, Port Murray, New Jersey 07865. D.G. is currently sixteen (16) years old and is an eleventh (11<sup>th</sup>) grade student at West Morris Central High School. During his ninth (9<sup>th</sup>) grade year in the 2021-2022 school year, D.G. successfully completed Geometry Honors and Algebra II Honors at West Morris Central High School. D.G. also completed College Calculus I through the County College of Morris Challenger

Program. He successfully passed an Accuplacer examination allowing him to skip Pre-Calculus Honors following the completion of the College Calculus I course. Accordingly, D.G. was placed in B.C. Calculus for the 2022-2023 school year and successfully completed the course. Because both the District Program of Studies and the International Baccalaureate Organization mandates that IB/HL Calculus III is offered to Grade Twelve (12) students only, the District denied D.G.'s request to enroll in the course as a Grade Eleven (11) student. D.G.'s decision to enroll in the District's "senior option" track is at his sole discretion. (Emphasis Added).

L.G. is D.G.'s mother and testified on her son's behalf. D.G. is currently a junior at WMRHSD. L.G. is a science teacher in the District. She testified with respect to D.G.'s academic trajectory in math courses at Central. Specifically, D.G. completed Geometry Honors and Algebra II Honors in ninth (9<sup>th</sup>) grade. He also completed College Calculus I in ninth (9<sup>th</sup>) grade via enrollment through the County College of Morris Challenger Program. Due to his mastery of these subjects, the District permitted D.G. to skip Pre-Calculus Honors after he successfully passed an end-of-course test.

Accordingly, D.G. took BC Calculus in tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) grade for the 2022-2023 school year. D.G. completed the course with a 98% average. L.G. testified that D.G. would like to become a quantum physicist. She further testified that the most competitive universities expect their applicants to have completed the highest level of course work in their school districts with respect to physics and mathematics. Because the highest level of mathematics that the District offers with respect to mathematics is IB/HL Calculus III, she requested that D.G. be placed in that course for his eleventh (11<sup>th</sup>) grade year. She testified that the District did not accept her request because the District offers IB/HL Calc III to Grade 12 students only. She testified that she disagreed with the District's decision to deny D.G.'s enrollment in the course, especially because he completed BC Calculus already, which is the prerequisite course for IB/HL Calc III. In her opinion, IB/HL Calc III should be offered to any general education student who has successfully completed the requisites, and "age should not matter." (Emphasis added). She testified that D.G. will be participating in "senior option" for the 2024-2025 school year, which means that he will be attending four (4) classes in the morning at Central and attending County College of Morris in the afternoons and evenings. She

testified that because he is exercising this option, he will not have room in his high school schedule to take a math class in twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>) grade. L.G. testified that this has "set up a hardship situation" because he will not be able to be an "ideal candidate" for ivy league schools without taking IB/HL Calc III. (Emphasis added). It is important to note that it is D.G.'s choice to participate in the senior option route; and at no time did the District advise or instruct D.G. to do so.

L.G. also testified that because D.G. is not a student in the IB program, the IB rules requiring that the IB/HL Calc III examination be taken in a student's twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>) grade year should not apply to D.G. She testified that the District's limits on remote links for students to take classes virtually in only specific circumstances are "age" and "socioeconomic" discrimination. L.G. testified that the fact that the IB/HL Calc III course is offered in-person at Mendham High School, the other District high school and not Central is a form of discrimination biased against those of us who cannot afford to reside in the more affluent zones of the District.

L.G. further conceded and stipulated to the fact that there is a difference between a "grade restriction" with respect to academic course offerings and an "age restriction." (Emphasis added). She confirmed that D.G. is sixteen years old, and the District has never relayed to her that he cannot take IB/HL Calc III due to the fact that he is sixteenbut rather because he is in Grade 11. She further admitted that she understood different grade levels encompass children of all different ages. For example, a 12<sup>th</sup> grade class can consist of ages from 16 through 19.

Additionally, with respect to D.G.'s courses and exercising his "senior option," L.G. testified that the District did not tell her specifically that D.G. would not be able to take IB/HL Calc III during his twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>) grade year, but rather, D.G. chose other classes aside from Calc III for his four District courses. She testified that if D.G. chose to take Calc III, it would eliminate another course selection that he wanted to take. (1Tr. 39:1-25). Specifically, she stated:

You're right that was our choice that the four classes that we have potentially picked definitely was our choice, right. And we chose not to pick the Calculus III for senior year.

(1Tr. 39:11-19). (Emphasis added).

The undersigned followed the District's cross-examination with several follow-up questions for purposes of clarification and completeness of the record.

- Q. Okay. So, the only reason why you're now seeking for your son to be in this AB Calculus III class which is only offered for 12<sup>th</sup> grades, while you're now seeking it for the 11<sup>th</sup> grade is because you've chose and your son has chosen to do the senior option, correct?
- A. Correct, yes. It sets up a hardship to where he can't get into it his 12th grade year.
- Q. Well, it's only a hardship because you chose a different pathway for your son, correct?
- A. Oh, I see. I see, okay.
- Q. Yes?
- A. Yes.

(1Tr. 43: 1-16).

Melissa Heike testified on behalf of the respondent. On July 1, 2023, Heike was appointed and continues to be employed as the District's Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction. Before being appointed as the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, Heike was employed as the District's Supervisor of Mathematics, Assistant Principal, and Supervisor of Curriculum, Instruction, and Evaluation. Throughout these roles, Heike has had continued oversight of the District's Math Department. As Math Supervisor, she was responsible for overseeing the mathematics curriculum and creating the District's Program of Studies, among other

roles. As Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, she oversees curriculum, professional development, and evaluation of all of the District's departments and teachers. She is a certified teacher of Mathematics, and has a New Jersey State Supervisor's Certificate, New Jersey State Principal's Certificate, and a provisional certificate for Chief School Administrator.

Heike testified that D.G. is currently a junior at West Morris Central High School for the 2023-2024 school year. Because the District is a regional high school district, the District has two high schools - Central and Mendham. Heike first became familiar with D.G. in November of 2021 of his freshman year when a guidance counselor reached out to her with respect to D.G.'s math placement. At the time, D.G. was an "incredibly bright student" enrolled in Geometry Honors and Algebra II Honors. (Emphasis added). L.G. had reached out to the District requesting that D.G. be placed in BC Calculus for his tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) grade year. (1Tr. 51:1-18). The District permitted D.G. to take the required Accuplacer Assessment to test out of pre-calculus for tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) grade. He achieved the required score and was accordingly placed into Advanced Placement Calculus BC for tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) grade. Heike testified that the College Board, which governs Advance Placement ("AP") classes, does not have a grade restriction for the course. So, D.G. was able to take the class as a sophomore.

Heike next spoke with L.G. in December 2022 of D.G.'s sophomore year. Heike advised L.G. that because IB/HL Calc III is only offered to twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>) grade students, the next appropriate course for D.G. would be placement in AP Statistics. She testified that because IB/HL Calc III is an International Baccalaureate class, the International Baccalaureate Organization mandates that the course be taken in the student's senior year. She testified that the Grade 12 Restriction has nothing to do with age, but it is rather defined by the number of credits a student has accumulated and their anticipated graduation year. She testified that pursuant to the West Morris Program of Studies, students must have completed BC Calculus first and are planning to take the IB exam in HL math. (R-2). Heike testified that IB/HL Calc III has been limited to Grade 12 students in the Program of Studies since the 2020-2021 school year when it was first offered. (R1 through R-5). She testified that because IB/HL Calc III is a higher-level course, it is completed in a two (2) year sequence. She testified that the 2019-2020

school year was the first year the IB/HL Calc III course appeared in the Program of Studies - when D.G. was in the seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) grade. She testified that at that time, D.G. was not even on the path for taking the IB/HL Calc III course, so he was not affected by the Grade 12 restriction.

Heike further testified that in February of 2023 of D.G.'s tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) grade year, L.G. reached out to Assistant Superintendent Ed Braun, and other District personnel including Heike and former Superintendent of Schools Michael Ben-David again respect to D.G.'s math placement for his junior year via e-mail. (P-7). She discussed that the members of the District's Administration determined through a three-pronged approach if D.G. could take the class remotely via the course offered at Central High School during his junior year. The District first assessed whether D.G. needed the course as a graduation requirement. D.G. had already completed his math requirements. The District then assessed whether IB/HL Calc III was a program requirement that he could not fulfill at Central Highschool. Since D.G. is not in the IB program, this reasoning did not apply. Finally, the District assessed whether D.G. had exhausted all of his course options available in person: he did not - as he had not yet taken AP statistics. She testified that absolutely none of the District's reasoning for D.G.'s math placement had to do with his age. He has always had and continues to have, the option to take the course in twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>) grade. She testified that D.G. would be able to take the class virtually during twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>) grade because he would then have exhausted all of his course offerings in math.

Heike testified that with respect to D.G.'s decision to exercise his "senior option" for twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>) grade, there may be scheduling concerns that he would need to prioritize which classes are important to him to take - since you can only take four (4) classes within the District. She testified that she has seen scenarios where students must choose between courses that are scheduled during the same time period.

It is necessary for me to assess and weigh the credibility of the witnesses for the purposes of making factual findings as to the disputed facts. Credibility is the value that a finder of the facts gives to a witness's testimony. It requires an overall assessment of the witness's story in light of its rationality, internal consistency, and the manner in

which it "hangs together" with the other evidence. <u>Carbo v. Unites States</u>, 314 F.2d 718, 749 (9th Cir. 1963). "Testimony to be believed must not only proceed from the mouth of a credible witness but must be credible in itself," in that "[i]t must be such as the common experience and observation of mankind can approve as probable in the circumstances." <u>In re Perrone</u>, 5 N.J. 514, 522 (1950). A trier of fact may reject testimony as "inherently incredible," and may also reject testimony when "it is inconsistent with other testimony or with common experience" or it is "overborne" by the testimony of other witnesses. <u>Congleton v. Pura-Tex Stone Corp.</u>, 53 N.J. Super. 282, 287 (App. Div. 1958). Similarly, "[t]he interests, motive, bias or prejudice of a witness may affect his credibility and justify the [trier of fact], whose province it is to pass upon the credibility of an interested witness, in disbelieving his testimony." <u>State v. Salimone</u>, 19 N.J. Super. 600, 608 (App. Div.), <u>certif. denied</u>, 10 N.J. 316 (1952) (citation omitted). The choice of rejecting the testimony of a witness, in whole or in part, rests with the trier and finder of the facts, and must simply be a reasonable one. <u>Renan Realty Corp. v.</u> <u>Dep't of Cmty. Affairs</u>, 182 N.J. Super. 415, 421 (App. Div. 1981).

In evaluating the testimony and evidence, I found L.G. and Heike to be forthright and credible witnesses. They both gave detailed, candid, and sincere testimony regarding their knowledge of the issue, and which I accept as **FACT**.

## LEGAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In general, a board of education's actions are entitled to a presumption of lawfulness and good faith... Where board actions are challenged, the challenger bears the burden of proving that such actions were unlawful, arbitrary, capricious or unreasonable. <u>Schuster v. Bd. of Educ. Montgomery Twp.</u>, 96 N.J.A.R.2d (EDU) 670, 676 (citing <u>Schnick v. Westwood Bd. of Educ.</u>, 60 N.J. Super. 448 (App. Div. 1960, and <u>Quinlan v. North Bergen Bd. of Educ.</u>, 73 N.J. Super. 40, 46 (App. Div. 1962)). This standard has been defined by the New Jersey courts as follows:

In the law, arbitrary and capricious means having no rational basis. ... Arbitrary and capricious action of administrative bodies means willful and unreasoning action, without consideration and in disregard of circumstances. Where

there is no room for two opinions, action is not arbitrary or capricious when exercised honestly and upon due consideration, even though it may be believed that an erroneous conclusion has been reached... Moreover, the court should not substitute its judgement for that of an administrative or legislative body if there is substantial evidence to support the ruling. [Piccoli v. Bd. of Educ. of <u>Ramapo Indian Hills Regional School District</u>, OAL Dkt. EDU 1839-98 (January 22, 1999 (citing, <u>Bayshore Sewage Co. v.</u> <u>Dept. of Envir. Protection</u>, 122 N.J. Super. 184, 199-200 (Ch. Div. 1973), <u>aff'd</u> 131 N.J. Super. 37 (App. Div. 1974) (emphasis added).

Absent a clear showing of abuse of discretion, the Commissioner will not substitute his own judgment for that of the Board of Education. <u>Massaro v. Bd. of Educ</u> of the Borough of Bergenfield, 1965 S.L.D. 84, 85 In <u>Kopera v. Bd. of Educ. of West</u> Orange, 60 N.J. Super. 288, 294 (App. Div. 1960the Appellate Division stated the wellestablished rule that action of the local board [of education] which lies within the area of its discretionary powers may not be upset unless patently without rational basis or induced by improper motives. <u>See also, G.M. v. Roselle Park Borough Bd. of Educ.</u>, 95 N.J.A.R.2d (EDU) 107, 109 (where the Commissioner adopted the decision of the ALJ when in a challenge to board action, the ALJ stated, it is the management prerogative of boards of education that will not be usurped or assumed by the Commissioner of Education absent a definitive showing of bad faith or arbitrary actions taken in bad faith without a rational basis.)

As long as the record reflects a rational basis for the action, as well as an absence of bad faith, the board's action shall be upheld. <u>See Red Bank Teachers Ass'n v. Bd. of Educ. of Red Bank</u>, OAL Dkt. EDU 5328-80 (April 30, 1981) <u>adopted</u> Comm. Ed. (June 15, 1981 (where the ALJ upheld a board's approval of a new Mastery Learning curriculum as a valid exercise of managerial prerogative that was rationally determined.); <u>G.M.</u>, 95 N.J.A.R. 2d (EDU) 107 (where the ALJ found the board's decision to change geographic boundaries for kindergarten pupil placement, with a goal of evenly distributing the pupils at different schools within the district, to be a reasonable exercise of authority).

To support her claims that the District somehow discriminated against D.G. with respect to his math placement, Petitioner relies on <u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:7-1.7(b)(2) which provides, in pertinent part:

Each district board of education shall ensure the school district's curriculum and instruction are aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. The district board of education also shall ensure its curriculum and instruction address the elimination of discrimination by narrowing the achievement gap, by providing equity in educational programs, and by providing opportunities for students to interact positively with others regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender, religion, disability, or socioeconomic status, by:

... 2. Ensuring courses shall not be offered separately on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation gender, religion, disability, or socioeconomic status.

## <u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:7-1.7(b)(2).

Although petitioner claims that the District's decisions with respect to D.G.'s math placement constitute "age discrimination," the District provided sound, rational bases at hearing to support its choice to limit IB/HL Calc III to twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>) grade students in its Program of Studies. Indeed, Heike testified that the District must adhere to the protocols and regulations of the International Baccalaureate Organization, which mandates that IB/HL Calc III be taken in a student's senior year. Most importantly, the petitioner conceded and stipulated to the fact that there is a difference between a "grade restriction" with respect to academic course offerings and an "age restriction". Indeed, D.G. is sixteen (16) years old, and the District has never relayed to the petitioner that he cannot take IB/HL Calc III due to the fact that he is sixteen. Rather, he simply must wait - just as every other student in the District irrespective of their age- to complete the course during his twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>) grade year. To wit, both petitioner herself and Heike testified that the District has never communicated that D.G. was thwarted from his pathway to take the course during his eleventh (11<sup>th</sup>) grade year is without merit.

Heike testified that the 2019-2020 school year was the first year the IB/HL Calc III course appeared in the Program of Studies - when D.G. was in the seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) grade - well before D.G. was on the path to taking IB/HL Calc III.

Heike's testimony further demonstrated the District's rational basis for denying petitioner's request for D.G. to enroll in IB/HL Calc III during his junior year. Through her testimony, Heike explained that although D.G. attends West Morris Central High School, D.G. IB/HL Calc III is offered virtually at West Morris Mendham High School. Aside from the fact that IB/HL Calc III is limited to twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>) grade students, the District used a three-pronged approach to reason that: 1) there was no imminent need for D.G. to be enrolled in the course for junior year as he has already completed his math requirements; 2) D.G. is not enrolled in the IB program - and thus, he was not required to be enrolled in course at Central to meet IB program requirements; and 3) D.G. had not exhausted all of his in-person math requirements, as he did not yet take AP Statistics. Petitioner's "age discrimination" claims are baseless in fact. Moreover, she unfairly presumes that the District's exercise of its legitimate managerial prerogatives is prejudicial. Although petitioner claims that the District's decision to limit IB/HL Calc III to twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>) grade students poses a hardship to D.G. because he will only be able to take four (4) courses in-person at the District next year, it is of no moment to the District that D.G. decided to enroll in "senior option" for the 2023-2024 school year. It is not disputed that West Morris is an extremely competitive school district, and many students are faced with difficult decisions with respect to course scheduling and prioritizing certain classes to appeal to universities as they move forward in their respective academic careers.

I **CONCLUDE** that petitioner failed to present evidence that the District acted in violation of N.J.A.C. 6A:7-1.7(b)(2) with respect to D.G.'s math placement. The District's determination to limit the course to Grade Twelve (12) students and thereby deny D.G.'s enrollment in the course for his Grade Eleven (11) year is not arbitrary, unreasonable, or capricious. D.G. may take the course in the 2023-2024 school year.

## <u>ORDER</u>

Based on the foregoing, it is hereby **ORDERED** that petitioner's appeal is **DENIED**.

I hereby FILE this initial decision with the COMMISSIONER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION for consideration.

This recommended decision may be adopted, modified or rejected by the **COMMISSIONER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION,** who by law is authorized to make a final decision in this matter. If the Commissioner of the Department of Education does not adopt, modify or reject this decision within forty-five days and unless such time limit is otherwise extended, this recommended decision shall become a final decision in accordance with <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 52:14B-10.

Within thirteen days from the date on which this recommended decision was mailed to the parties, any party may file written exceptions with the **COMMISSIONER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, ATTN: BUREAU OF CONTROVERSIES AND DISPUTES, 100 Riverview Plaza, 4th Floor, PO Box 500, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0500,** marked "Attention: Exceptions." A copy of any exceptions must be sent to the judge and to the other parties.

January 22, 2024

DATE

ELISSA MIZZONE TESTA, ALJ

<u>January 22, 2024</u>

Date Mailed to Parties: sej

Date Received at Agency:

January 22, 2024

# APPENDIX

# LIST OF WITNESSES

## For Petitioner:

L.G.

For Respondent:

Melissa Heike

# LIST OF EXHIBITS IN EVIDENCE

## For Petitioner:

None.

# For Respondent:

- R-1 Page 35 of the 2023-2024 Program of Studies
- R-2 Page 38 of the 2022-2023 Program of Studies
- R-3 Page 40 of the 2021-2022 Program of Studies
- R-4 Page 40 of the 2020-2021 Program of Studies
- R-5 Page 39 of the 2019-2020 Program of Studies