

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
BUREAU OF CONTROVERSIES AND DISPUTES

IN THE MATTER OF THE TENURE HEARING OF)	
)	
OMAR LITTLE, RESPONDENT)	FINAL
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF EAST ORANGE)	OPINION
NEW JERSEY BOARD OF EDUCATION)	AND
)	AWARD
DKT NO. 311-9/24)	

Before: Robert T. Simmelkjaer, Esq.
Arbitrator

APPEARANCES

FOR THE RESPONDENT

Pro Se

FOR THE DISTRICT

Madelaine P. Hicks, Esq., Antonelli Kantor Rivera, P.C.

BACKGROUND

Pursuant to the Arbitrator's Interim Opinion and Award issued on April 8, 2025, the District was ordered as follows:

Interim Award

- 1) The Respondent, Omar Sharif Little, shall be reinstated to his position as a teacher of Music Technology in Career Technical Education at the East Orange Campus High School, effective April 14, 2025.
- 2) The Respondent shall be reinstated in accordance with the reasonable accommodations, with restrictions, set forth in Dr. John R. Bach's, M.D. letter of March 14, 2025 clearing Respondent's Return to Work, effective March 18, 2025.
- 3) For the remainder of the 2024-2025 school year, the District will conduct classroom observations of the Respondent's performance as a teacher, with an accommodation. The District will conduct a minimum of one (1) formal and one (1) informal observation per week. On or before June 30, 2025, the District will report to the Arbitrator its assessment of Mr. Little's performance as a classroom teacher of Music Technology from April 14th through June 30, 2025 as well as his compliance with District Attendance policies.
- 4) The Arbitrator will retain jurisdiction until June 30, 2025 to receive the District's report.
- 5) Shortly after receiving the District's report and the Respondent's response thereto, the Arbitrator will issue his final award.

OPINION

On or about May 15, 2025, the East Orange School District sent the Arbitrator an initial set of classroom observations made by Mr. Little's supervisors at the East Orange Campus High School. Respondent, Omar Little, was observed in his capacity as a tenured teacher of Music (Audio) Technology in Career Education.

The Respondent was observed on April 24, 2025 utilizing the Danielson Framework for evaluating teacher performance administered by the District. The evaluation criteria included three Domains: Domain 1: Planning and Preparation; Domain 2: Learning Environments; Domain 3: Learning Experiences: *Each Domain was further subdivided into components such as Domain 1: Planning and Preparation and encompassed: 1a: Applying Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy; 1b: Knowing and Valuing Students; 1c: Setting Instructional Objectives; 1d: Using Resources Effectively; 1e: Planning Coherent Instruction; 1f: Designing and Analyzing Assessments. Each component included critical attributes (i.e., behavioral evidence that the students have demonstrated the requisite skills or knowledge). For each component, teachers received a Component/Rubric Score of 1-4, corresponding to: highly effective, effective, partially effective or ineffective. ("HEPI")

The Respondent received a Summative Rating of 3.29 (Teacher Practice 2.703/3.4 and Student Growth Objective 0.585/0.6) placing him in the category of an Effective Teacher.

With respect to Respondent's Absentee Report since the Arbitrator's Interim Award on April 8, 2025, Respondent has been absent on twelve (12) days through June 30, 2025. The District has not, at this juncture, addressed Respondent's recent absentee record. On its face, the Respondent's absences

* It would appear that the fourth domain in the Danielson Framework (i.e., Professional Responsibilities) was omitted in Respondent's evaluation given his later than normal evaluation with less than one year of service.

do not appear to have exceeded the 15 sick days and 3 personal days each certified staff member is allocated each year. (Tr. @ 25).

Based on Respondent's teacher performance and Absentee Report for the 2024-2025 school year, the Arbitrator is persuaded that Respondent has the potential to continue his service as a tenured teacher during the 2025-2026 school year without incurring excessive absences. Given the Respondent's teaching performance with an accommodation, the Arbitrator finds ample evidence to dismiss the Charges of Excessive Absenteeism and Abandonment of Position.

The Arbitrator is further persuaded that his prior excessive absences were a result of his polyneuropathy condition which has been mitigated by the reasonable accommodation proposed by Respondent's physician and facilitated by the District. In the event that Respondent's absences become excessive during the 2025-2026 school year, the District may prefer new charges.

FINAL AWARD

The charges filed by the East Orange Board of Education against Omar Little, dated September 3, 2024, (Dkt. No. 311-9/24) are dismissed and the Board's request to revoke his tenure protections under N.J.S.A. 18A:6, N.J.S.A. 18A:6-11, N.J.S.A. 18A:6-16 and N.J.A.C. 6A:3-5.1 is denied. Respondent shall be continued in his position of a tenured teacher of Music Technology, effective July 1, 2025.

August 4, 2025


Robert T. Simmelkjaer
Arbitrator

STATE OF NEW JERSEY}
COUNTY OF BERGEN}

On the 4th day of August 2025 before me came Robert T. Simmelkjaer to me known as the person who executed the foregoing instrument which is his Award.

Dated: 8/4/2025


Notary Public

JUNGSUB YOON
Commission # 50197608
Notary Public, State of New Jersey
My Commission Expires
June 13, 2027

