

METRO

One year on the job, 13 years in rubber room earns perv teacher \$1M

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NOT FRETTING A BIT: Aryeh Eller is not allowed to teach music after a first year that brought allegations of sexual harassment of girls.

He worked just one year as a full-time teacher in New York. But he has collected nearly \$1 million for 13 years for doing almost nothing.

Aryeh Eller, 46, a former music teacher at Hillcrest HS in Queens, is the longest-sitting “rubber room” teacher in the city. He was yanked from the classroom in 1999 and confessed to repeated sexual harassment of female students, according to a 2000 investigative report.

But a hearing officer who decides whether tenured teachers can be fired dismissed the case, ruling that Eller wasn’t told his rights. The Department of Education, considering him unfit for teaching, put him in a holding room for a decade.

A classical guitarist who performs in local concerts, Eller has seen his salary rise to \$85,000 due to automatic longevity increases under the teachers’ contract.

Since his 1999 suspension, he has collected \$943,000, plus health and pension benefits — and the total will hit \$1 million this year.

Girls started complaining about Eller’s unwelcome comments and touching soon after he was hired full time in 1998, following two years as a substitute.

Schools Investigator Ed Stancik alleged many instances of loony and lecherous behavior, among them:

* Eller turned off the classroom lights during a movie, danced with open arms and touched a girl’s shoulder. “I screamed,” she told probers.

* He told another girl she had “a beautiful face and body” and said the way she dressed “disturbs him — he had a hard time teaching.” One day, he pulled her into an empty room and blurted, “I love you.”

* He asked one to lift her shirt to show her butt. “God bless, you have a nice ass,” he gushed.

* He admitted a “crush” on a girl, telling her she was “well developed” and “would make a good wife.” He hugged her “very tightly” and confided that “he wouldn’t just fall in love with any girl . . . and that age doesn’t matter.”

The Board of Education failed to investigate the complaints in 1998, sending Eller for a medical exam and then back to class. Meanwhile, he gained tenure — and job protections.

Stancik slammed “a missed opportunity to remove a problem teacher.”

The city tried to fire Eller in 2000. A year later, the case was tossed.

“Sometimes arbitrators make bad decisions,” said DOE spokeswoman Connie Pankratz.

Now the “rubber” baron can’t be fired, but the DOE won’t let him near kids.

“We will not allow our students to be put in harm’s way,” Pankratz said. “This is another example of why the law must be changed to allow the chancellor to fire teachers who act inappropriately towards students.”

The United Federation of Teachers said it supports “automatic termination” of anyone found guilty of sexual misconduct — but said the chancellor should not “unilaterally” decide guilt over “an independent hearing officer who has weighed all the evidence.”

Eller reports to a “Queens office,” Pankratz said. He and four others who are deemed dangerous — but can’t be fired — make up to \$100,000 a year doing “data entry, answering phones, and paperwork.” Prior “permanently reassigned” teachers have stuck around until retirement age and beyond.

Eller did not return messages. A baby sitter at his Rego Park apartment said he was going through a divorce and had moved out.

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