



Brian P. Kemp, Governor

Tyrone Oliver, Commissioner



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **DJJ Youth Celebrate Academic Achievement**

**Decatur, GA** – The Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) held its annual winter high school commencement ceremony for youth attending the Georgia Preparatory Academy on December 20 at the Rockdale Regional Youth Detention Center in Conyers, Georgia. DJJ Commissioner Tyrone Oliver presented 15 High School Diplomas, 31 General Equivalency Degrees (GED) and two Technical Certificates of Credit to qualifying students.

“I am extremely proud of the hard work and perseverance demonstrated by our youth,” said Commissioner Tyrone Oliver. “It takes great dedication to embark on a path to higher education. We remain committed to providing youth with an education that empowers life-long learners to reach their potential and become college and career-ready.”

The Department of Juvenile Justice is the 181st school district in Georgia. Within the school system, there is a middle and high school called Georgia Preparatory Academy and a GED program called Pathway to Success. Georgia Preparatory Academy and Pathway to Success are located at 29 campuses within Regional Youth Detention Centers, Youth Development Campuses, and Education Transition Centers across Georgia.

DJJ operates the Georgia Preparatory Academy with a curriculum that meets the education standards set forth by the Georgia Department of Education for all public schools. During the 2018-2019 school year and first semester of the 2019-2020 school year, DJJ issued 53 High School Diplomas, 100 GEDs and 70 Technical Certificates of Credit.

“I am delighted to present diplomas to our graduates,” said Dr. Monica Henson, DJJ Deputy Superintendent of Schools. “Their accomplishments are even more impressive in light of their circumstances. The goal of Georgia Preparatory Academy, Pathways to Success, and all the education programs of the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice is to prepare our young people to succeed as productive members of adult society. These graduates represent our hope for the future.”

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**GPA Graduation**

Following graduation, each student who remains in a DJJ secure facility is enrolled in the Connections Graduate Program (CGP), which is designed to prepare the youth for college or a career. CGP instructors specialize in educational and employability development.

Guest speaker, Dr. Rashad Richey from radio station WAOK-Atlanta, provided encouraging words to the graduates. "It meant so much for me to be a part of this moment in their lives and I hope that something I said takes root and grows inside their soul," said Richey. "Beyond just their academic ability, they have a real support system here through family and institutionally. This was the absolute best graduation I have spoken at in 2019."

Students participating in last week's commencement ceremony are from DJJ secure facilities in Atlanta, Augusta, Bibb, Bob Richards, Columbus, Eastman, Gainesville, Macon, Metro, Milledgeville, Muscogee, Rockdale, Savannah, Sumter, Terrell, and Waycross.

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