



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT
OF **JUVENILE JUSTICE**

AVERY D. NILES, COMMISSIONER

A MESSAGE FROM THE **OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS**

Avery D. Niles, Commissioner

Jim Shuler, Director
Office of Communications



DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

3408 Covington Highway • Decatur, Georgia • 30032-1513
Telephone: (404) 508-7147 • Fax: (404) 508-7341

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CONTACT:

**Jim Shuler, Director
DJJ Communications
(404) 508-7238**

JimShuler@dj.j.state.ga.us

DJJ COMMISSIONER FIRES AUGUSTA YDC SCHOOL PRINCIPAL CREDENTIAL REVIEW REVEALS PRIOR ETHICS PROBE FOR GRADE CHANGING

(AUGUSTA - GA) Today, DJJ Commissioner Avery D. Niles announced another executive level staff dismissal at the Augusta YDC as part of his ongoing administrative probe to root-out serious policy violations and employee misconduct at the challenged Youth Development Campus. Today Commissioner Niles announced the dismissal of Augusta YDC School Principal Dr. Brenda James-Ford for withholding information about an ongoing investigation naming her in a pending ethics charge.

During a review of Dr. Ford's education credentials, DJJ Central Office discovered the newly hired Augusta YDC School Principal had failed to report a letter of reprimand she received for allegations of grade changing at another school district and the resulting ethics investigation still pending by the Professional Standards Commission.

"When DJJ interviewed and hired Dr. Ford in July -- and when she started in August -- Dr. Ford's teaching certificate originally showed no adverse actions against her education credentials," said Commissioner Niles. "But when our Central Office reviewed all current employees' education credentials in November, we discovered the pending ethics investigation against her was opened in May before she ever applied with DJJ."

Dr. Ford was terminated from her School Principal position at Augusta YDC for a violation of DJJ Professional Credential Policy for withholding teaching credential status change information from her employers at the Department of Juvenile Justice. Investigators have found no indications of grade changing at Augusta YDC related to Dr. Ford's limited period of employment at DJJ.

Since his appointment by the Governor in November, Commissioner Niles has emphasized get-tough warnings agency-wide on policy violations. Today's termination was among several in a recent series of sweeping personnel actions primarily designed to enforce safety and security reforms. The Commissioner promised the agency will fast-track similar terminations and use other corrective measures wherever needed.

"We've had a history of personnel changes at Augusta YDC and there are more to come until we get it right," said Commissioner Niles. The Commissioner has temporarily re-assigned DJJ's Regional Principal on-site at Augusta YDC to support the YDC's lead teacher. DJJ is currently advertising for a replacement candidate with plans to fill the school principal position by the end of the month.

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