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HOME/NEWS

Duval County teacher accused of hitting students with books

Beverly Howard no longer works for the school district.

By **Christopher J. Brooks** Mon, Apr 8, 2013 @ 6:00 pm | updated Tue, Apr 9, 2013 @ 2:56 am

A kindergarten teacher at Sheffield Elementary School was fired last week because, according to a Duval County Public Schools investigation, she had a history of hitting students with books.

Beverly Howard was terminated during the School Board meeting April 2. According to the investigation documents released Monday, a Sheffield parent visited the school and told assistant principal Lindsey Connor that Howard was hitting students regularly. Connor later interviewed students in Howard's class and their comments matched the parent's allegation.

One of the students interviewed told Connor, "she hits me with the book. She grabs my arm and hits me on the leg."

Howard could not be reached for comment.

The investigation documents show Connor discussed the hitting incidents with Howard. During the discussion, Howard told Connor, "I am not going to write a statement because I have never hit a student. I am not hitting [student's name]. Why would I do that in front of others? I can do what I need to do. I can contact my attorney. They don't scare me!"

Howard joined the school district in November 1977. She joined the Sheffield faculty in August 2006.

Before her firing, Howard had other items on her personnel file, including a 1995 incident where a principal overheard her yelling at a student saying "Get out before I throw you out." Howard denied that allegation. In a 2003 incident, it was alleged that she grabbed a student by the arm, choked him and caused him to vomit. The district's investigation back then was closed and labeled unable to prove or disprove.

More details were also released Monday about why former Baldwin Middle-High School principal Rhonda Motley was pulled out of the school.

Last month, Superintendent Nikolai Vitti reassigned Motley to assistant principal at Forrest High School. Denise Hall, former principal at Lee High, has taken the lead at Baldwin. Vitti told the Times-Union last month that Motley's removal stemmed from her failure to create "a safe and orderly learning environment for students."

According to the investigation documents, a guidance counselor was meeting with a student and parent in February when a school emergency drill sounded. The counselor determined that it was a drill and instructed the student and parent to cover the window and stay quiet.

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The documents stated that Motley came to the window, banged on the door and yelled "You're dead! If this was the real thing, you would have been shot."

Also in February, according to the documents, a female student at Baldwin reported to a science teacher that she had been raped by her uncle. The science teacher did not tell the school's administration. The student then told a social studies teacher and that teacher did report it to the administration. The investigation found that Motley should have disciplined the science teacher who didn't report the incident.

Two voicemail messages were left on Motley's cellphone Monday afternoon, but Motley could not be reached for comment.

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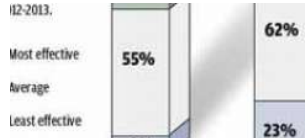
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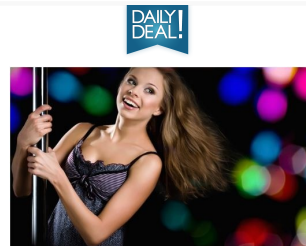
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Max mutt

Wednesday, April 10, 2013 @ 1:16 am

And Daniel : Sounds like teacher abuse to me. The kids should have their smart little sasses spanked raw.



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12712 points



Max mutt

Wednesday, April 10, 2013 @ 1:14 am

jaxgal : your frustration is well justified. Used to be the teacher was always right, the kid always wrong and the parents and teachers worked together. With true discipline and respectful kids these episodes rarely happened.



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12712 points

If I were Vitti, I would institute a parental contract to be signed at the beginning of every school year agreeing to discipline their child for class misbehavior with rapid corrective action or the child would be suspended or sent to remedial/corrective classes. What are the chances of that in todays pathetic "Don't hurt little Beyoncé's or Jamal's feelings" world? Not much.

JUST IN

Lawyers for U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown, chief of staff, want to move back trial
7:46pm

Homicide unit investigating situation on Jacksonville's Westside
7:41pm

City Council gives frosty reception to Hemming Park nonprofit's plea for \$150,000 to stay afloat
6:05pm

Jacksonville's Purple Heart Day celebration set for Aug. 6
3:05pm

Federal judge sets 2018 court date in liability case of El Faro operator
5:32pm

Barriers ordered taken down at general store; new owner put them up 2 days after taking ownership
2:31pm