



News Release

Office of the Superintendent, P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909, Phone: 517.241.0494, Fax: 517.335.4565

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 8, 2002

Contact: T.J. Bucholz

(517) 241-4395

New Hope For Children In Inkster Public Schools

Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Watkins thanked Governor John Engler today for his quick action in appointing a financial manager for the Inkster Public Schools.

Watkins recommended three individuals for consideration as Inkster's financial manager to Engler on July 29. Engler appointed W. Howard Morris as financial manager for the Inkster Public Schools, effective immediately.

"We are extremely pleased that the Governor moved very quickly to appoint Mr. Morris as the Inkster Schools financial manager before the start of the school year," Watkins said. "This move will ensure that the children of Inkster will have their education needs met when the school doors open for the year. We are very confident in Mr. Morris' ability to effectively manage the Inkster Public Schools."

In addition, Watkins has repeatedly asked Inkster Public Schools and Edison Schools Inc. to submit to him - the last request was for both parties to send to the Department of Education by the end of business today - plans for several areas he has concerns with, including staff-to-student ratios, implementing a full curriculum for the students of Inkster, and safety of district educational facilities.

Watkins also said he laments having to invoke Public Act 72 - the Local Government Fiscal Responsibility Act - in Inkster Schools, but simply had no other alternative.

"Unfortunately, P.A. 72 is the only tool available to the state of Michigan that addresses the serious and distressing issues facing the Inkster Public Schools," Watkins said. "Focus for this entire issue should not be on adults - but on what is best for children of Inkster."

CHRONOLOGY LEADING TO INVOKING P.A. 72

February 27, 2002 - Watkins appoints joint fact-finding team in conjunction with Dr. Marlene Davis, Superintendent of Wayne Regional Education Service Agency (RESA) to address several outstanding issues in the Inkster Public Schools.

March 28, 2002 - Michigan Department of Education and Wayne RESA issue joint fact finding team report regarding the state of Inkster Public Schools.

April 22, 2002 - Watkins holds public forum in Inkster School District to listen to more than 600 concerned community residents.

May 16, 2002 - Watkins issues letter to Engler declaring a "serious financial problem" in Inkster Public Schools.

June 13, 2002 - Engler appoints five member fact-finding team as per P.A. 72 statute.

July 18, 2002 - Gubernatorial fact-finding team holds public hearing requested by Inkster Board of Education in Lansing.

July 29, 2002 - Watkins issues letter to Engler urging appointment of financial manager.

August 8, 2002 - Engler names W. Howard Morris as financial manager for the Inkster Public Schools.