



# MUSKEGON HEIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Contact:

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## **Emergency Manager issues layoff notices to 1( 8 MHPS employees**

MUSKEGON, MI: Muskegon Heights Public Schools Emergency Manager (EM) Don Weatherspoon issued layoff notices to 148 employees of the district effective Friday, June 8. Staff were handed a letter as they left work today. The letter cited “urgent financial circumstances surrounding the district.”

In the letters, Weatherspoon wrote that he “regretted the uncertainty which results from the notice...” but that the “action is being taken to provide the flexibility required to accomplish the reorganization of the School District.”

While teacher aides, support staff, and some administrators received layoff notices, some administrators and teachers were given notices of non-renewal which refer to their individual employment contracts. According to Weatherspoon the intent of both letters is the same, however employment laws require the different wording.

Representatives from Michigan Works will be on site at Muskegon Heights Public Schools after the close of school on May 18 to assist staff with filing for unemployment benefits.

The actions taken by Weatherspoon are outlined in his fourth order posted to the district’s website at <http://www.mhpsnet.org/EM.htm>.

Muskegon Heights Public Schools have been wrestling with rising expenses, funding reductions, soaring health care costs, and declining enrollment which exhausted their fund balance and led to a deficit nearing 12 million dollars. In December 2011, MHPS Board of Education members requested an Emergency Manager from the State of Michigan. In April, based on the recommendation of a state review team, Governor Snyder appointed Weatherspoon to serve as Emergency Manager of the district under Public Act 4.

Public Act 4 of 2011, also known as the Local Government and School District Fiscal Accountability Act, is the primary State law under which State officials are given the power to intervene in units of local government that experience severe financial stress or financial emergencies. The EM’s role is to analyze the district’s financial position and make necessary changes to help the district recover from its financial stress.

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