



11 Michigan charter school authorizers 'at risk' for suspension, education department announces

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LANSING -- More than a quarter of Michigan's charter school authorizers are "at risk" of being suspended, the Michigan Department of Education announced Monday.

Department officials **announced that 11 authorizers** may not be allowed to open new schools because of low academic performance and problems with contract transparency.

The 11 authorizers are Detroit Public Schools, Eastern Michigan University, the Education Achievement Authority, Ferris State University, Grand Valley State University, Highland Park Schools, Kellogg Community College, Lake Superior State University, Macomb Intermediate School District, Muskegon Heights Public Schools and Northern Michigan University.

State Superintendent Mike Flanagan promised to increase accountability for authorizers in the wake of media reports detailing problems with oversight of the state's charter schools, and has had several meetings with authorizers over the last month.

"We want all public schools to provide a quality education for Michigan's kids," Flanagan said in a statement. "I am using the authority provided me in state law to push for greater quality, transparency, and accountability for those who aren't measuring up as charter authorizers."

For each authorizer on the list, department officials measured the combined performance of all the schools set up by the authorizer against the state's top-to-bottom accountability list. All of the agencies named Monday were in the bottom 10 percent of academic performance statewide.

Several authorizers, including Eastern Michigan, the EAA and Grand Valley State, also had schools that had problems on their 2013 financial audits and some had issues with contracts that did not meet the state's requirements.

The education department is giving each authorizer an **October 22 deadline** to address the problems. If an

authorizer does not make progress in fixing the problems, Flanagan will suspend its ability to open new schools or expand existing schools for the next year.

"If an authorizer were to be suspended, it would not be a death sentence, and we're not closing down their existing charter schools," Flanagan said. "They wouldn't be out of business. They just won't be able to open any new charters until their deficiencies are fixed and the academic outcomes of their schools are improved."

Spokespeople from Eastern Michigan University and Ferris State University said they could not immediately comment on the news Monday morning, while messages were left with Grand Valley State University for comment.

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