

Dr. Vickie Markavitch:

I am not opposed to charter schools and understand that they are now part of the fabric of Michigan Public Education. I was and still am, however, opposed to uncapping the number of charter schools without demonstrated evidence of their quality and transparent use of public money. We need to protect parent choice for both charters and community governed schools – one set of choices should not diminish another set of choices. We could do this by ensuring a level playing field in things like serving special education students and in funding formulas that recognize cost differences between schools that serve just elementary grades, schools that serve K-12, or schools that are cyber-based. Given that Michigan has the highest percentage of for-profit charters in the nation, I believe we should study their impact on overall education before blindly expanding them.

All schools receiving public funds should be held accountable for student learning. Accountability should not rest entirely on state or national tests, but should also include multiple measures for student growth that are locally developed, as well as adopted, to reflect the unique contexts of each community. Student learning needs to be viewed in context of daily school work, classroom participation, quizzes and tests, research projects, and other performance based measures. We should not make important educational decisions about children, teachers or schools based on tests given once a year that measure narrow portions of what students have learned and measure that learning in only one way. Even for college placement, teacher grades are found to be more accurate predictors of college success than either the ACT or SAT. State and national tests have a place in accountability, but it is to see how the system is doing, not a single classroom or child. Those larger scale tests should be used to benchmark a state's standards, a district's curriculum, or where a large student population stands against other large populations of students. A good accountability system needs both kinds of measures but also needs to use those measures appropriately.