



New York State Education Department Charter School Office

Midterm Site Visit Protocol



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Purpose of the Midterm Site Visit

The purpose of a midterm site visit is to provide the school with an informative and comprehensive memo and formative feedback detailing how the school is progressing toward meeting the standards set forth in the [Charter School Performance Framework](#). The midterm site visit also serves to provide information used at the end of the charter term in determining the school's renewal outcome. We hope this site visit, and the ensuing Midterm Site Visit Memo, will help to continue the conversation between the Charter School Office (CSO) and the charter school around the Performance Framework and how we can both support high quality educational options for all students. This protocol was developed as part of the implementation of the CSO Monitoring Plan.

The Performance Framework is part of the [Board of Regents' Oversight Plan](#) that is described in the charter agreement for each Board of Regents-authorized school. It outlines performance benchmarks for school quality in three areas:

1. The school's academic success and ability to operate in an educationally sound manner;
2. The school's organizational viability and its ability to operate in a fiscally sound manner; and
3. The school's faithfulness to the terms of its charter and adherence to the applicable laws and regulations.

The 10 [Performance Framework](#) benchmarks should be used by charter schools for self-assessment and planning purposes and are used by the CSO to frame the renewal site visit.

The midterm site visit also provides an opportunity for the CSO to discuss Board of Regents standards pertaining to full-term, short-term, and non-renewals. Charter schools not meeting Performance Framework standards should make a serious evaluation of the ongoing efficacy of their educational model and may consider targeted improvement strategies, partnerships with other educational service providers, as well as not submitting a renewal application at the conclusion of the charter term. It is best practice to consider these improvement strategies as early in the charter term as possible and not in the last year of the school's charter term.

Midterm site visits are usually conducted at the mid-point of a school's charter term, generally in year three of a school's full five-year charter term. However, for those charter schools having short-term renewals, the midterm site visit may occur in years 1, 2, or 3 of that term. They are usually completed in one day. The CSO team conducting the site visit may be comprised of two or more members; and may interview school stakeholders, observe classroom instruction, review documents, and evaluate other aspects of the school's operations.

To provide the midterm memo and feedback, the CSO site visit team will gather evidence before and during the site visit of the school's performance relative to the Performance Framework benchmarks, identify trends that emerge from the evidence, and summarize its findings. The CSO team will also discuss strengths and challenges that arise from the review of the school's academic and enrollment data and submitted materials, address any questions the school may have, and review the Performance Framework with school leadership.

2019 Charter School Performance Framework Benchmarks

Educational Success	<p>Benchmark 1: Student Performance: The school has met or exceeded achievement indicators for academic proficiency, trends toward proficiency, similar schools, college and career readiness, and high school graduation, if applicable. Proficiency at the elementary/middle school level shall be defined as achieving a performance level of 3 or higher on Grade 3-8 state assessments in ELA, math, and science. At the high school level, passing shall be defined as obtaining a Regents exam score of 65 or higher.</p>
	<p>Benchmark 2: Teaching and Learning: School leaders have systems in place designed to cultivate shared accountability and high expectations and that lead to students’ well-being, improved academic outcomes, and educational success. The school implements research-based practices and has rigorous and coherent curriculum and assessments that are aligned to New York State Learning Standards for all students. Teachers engage in strategic practices and decision-making in order to address the gap between what students know and need to learn so that all students experience consistent high levels of engagement, thinking and achievement.</p>
	<p>Benchmark 3: Culture, Climate, and Student and Family Engagement: The school has systems in place to support students’ social and emotional health and to provide for a positive, safe, and respectful learning environment that prepares all students for college and career. Families, community members and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being. Families and students are satisfied with the school’s academics and the overall leadership and management of the school.</p>
Organizational Soundness	<p>Benchmark 4: Financial Condition: The school is in sound and stable financial condition as evidenced by performance on key financial indicators.</p>
	<p>Benchmark 5: Financial Management: The school operates in a fiscally sound manner with realistic budgets pursuant to a long-range financial plan, appropriate internal controls and procedures, and in accordance with state law and generally accepted accounting practices.</p>
	<p>Benchmark 6: Board Oversight and Governance: The board of trustees provides competent stewardship and oversight of the school while maintaining policies, establishing performance goals, and implementing systems to ensure academic success, organizational viability, board effectiveness and faithfulness to the terms of its charter.</p>
	<p>Benchmark 7: Organizational Capacity: The school has established a well-functioning organizational structure, clearly delineated roles for staff, management, and board members. The school has systems and protocols that allow for the successful implementation, evaluation, and improvement of its academic program and operations.</p>
Faithfulness to Charter & Law	<p>Benchmark 8: Mission and Key Design Elements: The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.</p>
	<p>Benchmark 9: Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention: The school is meeting or making annual progress toward meeting the enrollment plan outlined in its charter and its enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced priced lunch program; or has demonstrated that it has made extensive good faith efforts to attract, recruit, and retain such students. High schools are meeting persistence rates commensurate with the NYSED target.</p>
	<p>Benchmark 10: Legal Compliance: The school complies with applicable laws, regulations, and the provisions of its charter.</p>

Planning and Scheduling the Midterm Site Visit

The CSO site visit team lead will contact the school leader and board chair to discuss the site visit and required documentation.

School Leader Responsibilities

- Finalize a site visit date with the CSO site visit team lead.
- Review this Midterm Site Visit Protocol in its entirety; share with all stakeholders.
- Speak with school staff about the purpose of the midterm site visit and what to expect during the site visit; coordinate their involvement in focus groups and/or classroom observations.
- Discuss with the CSO site visit team lead the number and types of focus groups necessary; and determine the times that work best for all stakeholders. Examples of focus groups are school leadership, special populations staff, parents, board of trustees, and teachers.
- Work with the CSO site visit team lead on developing the site visit schedule and the classroom observation schedule (see samples below). You may be asked to create the schedule.
- Submit required documents to the CSO liaison, as indicated below.
- If you have any questions, contact your CSO site visit team lead.

Submitting Documents to the CSO Liaison

In order to get the best overview of the school, the CSO site visit team may request and will review documents prior to, during, and after the visit. Document reviews include those relevant to the school's performance and operations during the charter term, such as charter information, the most recent annual report, action plan, and site visit memos/reports from previous years.

Required documents :

1. **Surveys:** Submit school-developed teacher, parent, and/or student survey results.
2. **Updated Action Plan:** Along with the action plan, include a narrative (*you may add a progress column to the existing document*) for each benchmark describing progress toward strategy outcomes.
3. **Organizational Chart:** Submit ONLY a chart showing all key staff positions and their names, along with arrows to show the reporting structure. Lists will not be accepted.
4. **Master School Schedule:** Submit a schedule that lists every class (including ELL and SWD), grade or course, teacher, classroom number, and A/B days if applicable.
5. **Board Materials:** Submit the current strategic plan, the current BOT roster, and a narrative describing the board's self-evaluation process.
6. **Process Used to Evaluate School Leadership:** Submit a narrative.
7. **Process School Leadership Uses to Evaluate Teachers:** Submit a narrative.
8. **Progress and Efforts Made Toward Reaching Enrollment and Retention Targets:** Submit a narrative describing this information for the overall, SWD, ELL, and ED enrollment and retention. Also describe the process you use to evaluate the effectiveness of your efforts.
9. **Admissions and Waitlist:** Using data for the current school year, submit the number of new students who submitted an application for enrollment, the number of new students admitted, and the number of students currently on the wait list.
10. **Supplemental Benchmark 1 Data**
11. **Other Documents Requested by the CSO Liaison**

Preparing the Midterm Site Visit Schedule

The CSO site visit team lead will discuss with you the site visit activities and may ask that you create the schedule. This sample midterm site visit schedule is intended to be a flexible guide for the site visit and may be adjusted as needed.

Sample Midterm Site Visit Schedule

Time	Activity	Location
8:15 AM – 8:30 AM	CSO Team meets with school leader for orientation to the school	Conference room
8:30 AM – 9:30 AM	Leadership Focus Group	Conference room
9:45 AM – 10:45 AM	Classroom Observations	Schoolwide
11:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Board Focus Group	Conference room
12:05 PM – 12:45 PM	Classroom Observations	Schoolwide
12:45 – 1:45 PM	Lunch and Team Time	Conference room
1:45 PM – 2:45 PM	Special Populations Focus Group	Conference room
2:45 PM – 3:30 PM	Team Time	Conference room
3:30 PM – 3:45 PM	Closing	Conference room

Focus Group Interviews

During each focus group, the CSO site visit team lead describes the purpose, introduces members, and asks questions relevant to the Performance Framework. Focus groups may be comprised of school leadership, special populations staff, parents, board of trustees, and teachers.

Classroom Observations

Note: The CSO site visit team selects a representative sample of classrooms to observe.

- Please submit lesson plans for all classroom observations.
- The CSO site visit team will not conduct observations of short-term substitute teachers; but may observe classes taught by long-term substitute teachers.
- CSO site visit team members will observe classroom instruction together with the instructional leader for that subject area or grade level, whenever possible. Ideally, the instructional leader provides regular feedback to the teacher being observed. Generally, CSO site visit team members separate to observe different classrooms simultaneously.
- As per the Classroom Observation Worksheet (Appendix A), prior to each classroom observation, the instructional leader will frame the observation by responding to the pre-visit

prompt. Each classroom observation lasts approximately 15-20 minutes. After each classroom observation, the instructional leader responds to the post-visit prompt.

Conducting a Remote Midterm Site Visit¹

School leader responsibilities, including document submission and focus group coordination, remain the same as for an in-person, on-site midterm site visit. In addition:

- Confirm the online conferencing to be used: Zoom
- Prepare the virtual focus group and classroom observation schedule.
- Ensure that for virtual classroom observations:
 - Lesson plans for all classroom observations are submitted.
 - All students and teacher(s) will be within view during the virtual observation.

Sample Remote Midterm Site Visit Schedule
School provides this information to the CSO site visit team.

Time	Activity	Participants	Link/Meeting ID/Password
8:15 AM – 8:30 AM	CSO team meets with school leader for orientation to the school	xx	Join Zoom Meeting Sample Link Meeting ID: xxx xxx xxxx Passcode: xxxxxx
8:30 AM – 9:30 AM	Leadership Focus Group	xx	Join Zoom Meeting Sample Link Meeting ID: xxx xxx xxxx Passcode: xxxxxx
9:45 AM – 10:45 AM	Classroom Observations	xx	Join Zoom Meeting Sample Link Meeting ID: xxx xxx xxxx Passcode: xxxxxx
11:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Board Focus Group	xx	Join Zoom Meeting Sample Link Meeting ID: xxx xxx xxxx Passcode: xxxxxx
12:05 PM – 12:45 PM	Classroom Observations	xx	Join Zoom Meeting Sample Link Meeting ID: xxx xxx xxxx Passcode: xxxxxx
12:45 – 1:45 PM	Lunch and Team Time	xx	Join Zoom Meeting Sample Link Meeting ID: xxx xxx xxxx Passcode: xxxxxx
1:45 PM – 2:45 PM	Special Populations Focus Group	xx	Join Zoom Meeting Sample Link Meeting ID: xxx xxx xxxx Passcode: xxxxxx
2:45 PM – 3:30 PM	Team Time	xx	Join Zoom Meeting Sample Link Meeting ID: xxx xxx xxxx Passcode: xxxxxx
3:30 PM – 3:45 PM	Closing	xx	Join Zoom Meeting Sample Link Meeting ID: xxx xxx xxxx Passcode: xxxxxx

¹ Most midterm site visits will be conducted in-person and on-site.

Closing Meeting and Midterm Site Visit Memos

The midterm site visit ends with a brief closing meeting between the school leadership (which may include members of the board of trustees) and the CSO site visit team. In the closing meeting, the CSO site visit team lead may:

1. Identify additional information or documents that need to be reviewed in order to complete the assessment of performance;
2. Share preliminary high-level information based on the observations made during the site visit to ensure school leaders are aware of any serious issues;
3. Address remaining questions from school leadership; and
4. Review the process for finalizing the midterm site visit memo.

Following the midterm site visit, the CSO site visit team lead will send the school leader and the board chair a final draft midterm site visit memo for review. The school will then have an opportunity to submit factual corrections within a reasonable timeframe (typically one week). Once the CSO reviews the factual corrections submitted by the school, those determined to be acceptable will be incorporated in the memo, and a final memo will be provided to the school. Along with the final memo, the CSO site visit team lead will also send the school leader/board chair a 2025-2026 action plan template to complete if an updated version of the existing action plan was not submitted with the pre-review documents. The school may be asked to submit the action plan within three weeks of receipt of the template. This action plan will serve as a tool for the school and the CSO to continue discussions regarding the school's implementation of strategies used to meet all ten Performance Framework benchmarks.

NYSED Charter School Office

Appendix A: CSO Learning Classroom Observation Evidence Worksheet

School name:		Date:	CSO team observer name:		
Class title/subject area:		Grade:	Was a school rep observing with you?	School rep name:	School rep title:
Type of class: <input type="checkbox"/> Gen ED <input type="checkbox"/> ICT <input type="checkbox"/> SETTS/Resource Room <input type="checkbox"/> Stand-alone ENL <input type="checkbox"/> Pull-out/break-out room <input type="checkbox"/> Dual language <input type="checkbox"/> Other					
# of adults in the classroom:	Role(s): <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Lead teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Co-teacher(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching Asst. <input type="checkbox"/> SPED teacher <input type="checkbox"/> ENL Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Social Emotional Staff):				
Total number of students:	Duration of observation (minutes):				

PRE-OBSERVATION (with school administrator):

Ensure that lesson plans are available prior to observations.

Question to school staff member viewing with observer: **What should we expect to see in this classroom in terms of staffing, instruction, content, key design elements, differentiation, student engagement, and other norms for students and teachers while they are in this class?**

DURING OBSERVATION:

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Metric	Extent to which Metric is Observed	Additional Notes
A. Lesson is organized, preparation is evident (<i>i.e. lesson plans available, posted agenda or objectives, prepared materials, effective use of resources</i>) and follows the lesson plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Observed	
B. Students demonstrate awareness of class rules and procedures. Expectations are clear and students exhibit self-monitoring behavior.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Observed	
C. Students are learning ready (<i>e.g. available for check-in; dressed as expected by the school; on time; and have the tools necessary to engage in classwork</i>) the learning environment is safe and respectful; there are positive relationships between teacher and students, and among students.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Observed	

INSTRUCTION

Metric	Extent to which Metric is Observed	Additional Notes
D. Effectively communicates objective(s) to students. Teacher has command of content and appropriate pedagogy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Observed	
E. Assessment tools used to check for student understanding.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Observed	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual conferences <input type="checkbox"/> Peer review <input type="checkbox"/> Polls <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Homework <input type="checkbox"/> Rubrics <input type="checkbox"/> Exit tickets <input type="checkbox"/> Classwork <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Observations <input type="checkbox"/> Questions

F. Provides feedback to students based on learning objective. Teacher responses are immediate and targeted.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Observed	
G. Differentiates lesson to meet the needs of all students. Teacher uses a variety of learning modes.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Observed	
H. Questioning and discussion lead to critical thinking. There is a balance between teacher talk and student talk.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Observed	
I. Students are engaged rather than merely compliant and are actively participating in learning activities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Observed	
J. Class time is maximized for learning. Pacing is age and content appropriate.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Observed	

POST OBSERVATION (with school administrator):

Question to school staff member viewing with observer: **Was the observed instruction aligned with the school’s instructional model and key design elements?**

NOTES: List school’s approved key design elements (*Liaison*)