



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY  
12234

# OFFICE OF INNOVATIVE SCHOOL MODELS

## Site-Visit Protocol 2010-2011

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## **Table of Contents**

Overview and Purpose of the Site-Visit - Page 2

Conducting the Site-Visit – Pages 3-4

Required Documentation – Pages 4-5

Reporting – Page 6

Focus Questions – Pages 6-8

Examples of Site-Visit Schedules – Pages 8-9

Responsibilities of the School Leader – Page 10

Work Flow and Timelines – Page 11

Site-Visit Code of Conduct – Page 12

### **Overview and Purpose of the Site-Visit**

The primary purpose for the site-visit is to provide information to the State Education Department (NYSED) and the school related to the school's operations, such as curriculum planning, assessment, staff development, and performance evaluation. The site-visits and subsequent reports are not intended to provide technical assistance or other advice. The visit is also not intended to directly assist schools in making decisions about how to improve academic programs or operations. Rather, the purpose of the visit is to gather and document evidence about the school's performance for accountability purposes.

Visits are usually completed in one day, but may be adjusted due to the size, location or specific conditions of a particular school. For example, charter school renewal visits may be focused on charter school specific performance expectations (See Attachment A). They are one of the means by which NYSED documents performance and progress over time. Teams vary in size, yet are usually 2 to 4 persons. Team members will talk with teachers, administrators, parents and students. They will visit classrooms to observe instruction, and review documents and materials.

NYSED assumes that the school leader will act as the coordinator and liaison for site-visits. However, the school has the option of designating another person to assume this role.

The following represents a general overview of the site-visit, as well as some of the required documents to be made available before and during the visit.

## **Conducting the Site-Visit**

### On-site School Visits

The visit and the resulting report are guided by the following structure:

<b>A. Introduction and morning orientation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team introduces itself to school leadership.</li> <li>• Team establishes the context for the visit, and orients team members to the purpose and goals.</li> <li>• Team reviews the Code of Conduct with school administrator.</li> <li>• The schedule for the day is reviewed and focus group assignments are finalized.</li> <li>• School leadership briefly orients the team to the building and establishes context for classroom visits.</li> </ul>
<b>B. Site visit team conducts focus group interviews, classroom visits, document review, and additional information gathering</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site-visit team members may participate in a combination of focus group interviews, classroom visits, document review, and additional information gathering depending on specifics of the school visit.</li> <li>• Conversations and observations will be guided by the site-visit protocol and guiding questions.</li> <li>• Classroom observations will be guided by the charter agreement, Joint Intervention Team (JIT) report, school improvement plans, and/or the School Improvement Grant (SIG) application, as applicable.</li> </ul>
<b>C. Focus group interviews</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All focus group interviews are facilitated by a member of the site-visit team.</li> <li>• Focus groups should be no larger than 8 persons.</li> <li>• The team member introduces him/herself, and establishes the context for the visit.</li> <li>• He/She sets the norms for the conversation, establishes the time frame, and lets the group know that questions asked are drawn from a set pool of focus group questions.</li> <li>• Introductions around the table.</li> <li>• The team member facilitates the conversation, opening with common questions asked of all groups at all schools. Questioning may then become more specific and tailored to the specific school context. Whenever possible the team member will guide the focus group members to ground their answers with specific evidence and data.</li> <li>• The team member takes notes and asks follow-up questions, as appropriate.</li> <li>• The team member thanks the focus group for their participation and ends the focus group on time.</li> </ul>
<b>D. Classroom observations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School leadership informs school staff that the site-visit team will be in classrooms during the day of the visit.</li> <li>• Collectively, the team visits as many classrooms as possible during the day of the visit.</li> <li>• Team members should see at least one opening of a lesson, one closing of a lesson, and a few transitions between lessons.</li> <li>• It is best if only one visitor at a time is in a classroom.</li> <li>• Classroom visitors will not be disruptive to classroom activities. Visitors will not interrupt the lesson, and will take cues from the teachers and students as to where to sit and, if it is appropriate, to talk with students.</li> <li>• Classroom visitors will take notes on the SED observation form.</li> </ul>

<p><b>E. Team organization and reflection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team members are reminded to refrain from judgment and ground comments in evidence, observations, and data.</li> <li>• The team conducts a debriefing of the day, structured by the charter agreement, performance plan, School Improvement Grant, classroom observations, focus group responses and/or document review, as applicable.</li> <li>• Site-visit team members gather additional evidence and data to fill in gaps through follow-up conversations with key school staff.</li> <li>• The team creates initial preliminary findings and outlines the next steps of reviewing the resulting site-visit report.</li> </ul>
<p><b>F. School community report out/debrief</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The team thanks school and district leadership for hosting the site-visit team and outlines the timeline for preparing and issuing the resulting site-visit report.</li> <li>• The team leader shares the team’s initial findings, structured by classroom observations, focus group responses and document review.</li> </ul>
<p><b>G. Site-visit report</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The team drafts the site-visit report.</li> <li>• Members review the report to ensure that it is factually accurate and reflects the collective findings of the team on the day of the visit. Corrections and suggestions for improvement are incorporated according to consensus.</li> <li>• The team reviews and issues the final report to the school and district leadership. Report is sent electronically and as a hard copy.</li> <li>• School leadership may prepare a response to the site-visit report that is submitted in writing to SED and becomes a permanent part of the school’s record.</li> </ul>

**Required Documentation**  
On-site School Visits

Due to the time constraints of a one-day site visit, it is impossible to thoroughly review large quantities of data and evidence. This said, if there are items not on the lists below that you would like to make available to the site-visit team, feel free to do so. There is no need to run more than one copy of any documentation other than the school map. While on-site, a member of SED may ask to borrow copies of documents to be used in writing the site-visit report.

<b>Checklist – <u>pre-visit</u> documentation – due to SED electronically three weeks prior to visit</b>	<b>Submitted?</b>
1. <b>Directions</b> to the school, including telephone number and any necessary parking instructions.	
2. A <b>master class schedule</b> for the day of the visit that clearly indicates the subjects taught and times, teachers, and room assignments for all classes.	
3. Summaries and analyses of <b>external assessments</b> . Please provide a copy of grade level summaries of student results on any standardized test from the most recent school year. In addition, if the school has done data analysis on scores from any of these tests, this should be provided as well. <b>Please <u>do not</u> send raw or student level data or data that is summarized in the annual report.</b>	
4. Summaries and analyses of <b>internal assessments</b> . Please provide any additional data the school has aggregated which gives a picture of student achievement. If internal assessments have been created on site, please provide samples. <b>Please <u>do not</u> send raw or student level data or data that is summarized in the annual report.</b>	

5. A <b>staff roster</b> that includes administrator and teacher names, number of years of teaching and/or administrative experience, number of years at the school, and subject and/or grade taught or administrative role.	
6. An <b>organizational chart</b> with titles and names that shows reporting structures.	
7. The school's Performance Plan (if applicable). ( Pending: OISM Working on a draft)	
8. A short (1-3 paragraphs, no more than one page) description of current instructional practices. This document should answer the question, " <i>What should site visitors expect to see in their classroom observations?</i> "	
9. <b>Any other documentation that helps to tell the story of your school</b> to an external team of visitors. Existing documents, including strategic plans and school improvement plans, are examples of documentation that should be provided.	

<b>Checklist - <u>on-site</u> documentation - available in the site visit team's meeting space or readily accessible.</b>	<b>Organized for the team?</b>
1. A school map, with corresponding teacher room assignments or marked with teacher names (one copy for each team member)	
2. Personnel policies/faculty handbook	
3. Student handbook	
4. Family, teacher and student survey information	
5. Samples of teacher and administrator evaluation tools	
6. Lists of staff, parents and students for the focus groups, and a brief explanation of how they were recruited. E.g., where and when it was publicized, how many volunteered, and how the final participants were chosen?	
7. Explanation of internal assessment program and any relevant samples	
8. Description/evidence of dissemination activities/plans	
9. Professional development calendar/agendas	
10. Curricular documents and/or explanation of academic program	
11. Teachers should have available copies of handouts and lesson plans to distribute to site visitors who observe their classroom	
12. Anything from the per-visit checklist that was not already provided	

## **Reporting**

At the end of the on-site visit, the team leader shares the team’s initial findings with the school in a brief report-out. The team leader’s statements do not make suggestions for improvement or direct the school to change operations or programs. Rather, the findings are statements of fact, grounded in evidence and data collected throughout the day.

After the visit, NYSED prepares a written report that includes the team’s findings and the evidence to support those findings. If the school chooses, a response to the site-visit report may be submitted in writing to NYSED. This response and the site-visit report become a part of the school’s permanent record, and become a part of the pool of evidence used to determine a school’s performance.

## **Focus Group Questions**

### On-site School Visits

The following are examples of questions that may be asked of particular focus groups. The team might also have specific questions based upon the review of documents before the visit and on evidence gathered during the day.

#### **A. School Leadership**

- How is the curriculum developed, how is its effectiveness evaluated, and how is it revised?
- Describe the school’s academic program in terms of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- What are the school’s academic priorities?
- What is the school’s strategy for improvement in these areas, and how does the school support teachers in their implementation of these strategies?
- Why do you think previous school improvement efforts have failed?
- Describe the process for supervision and evaluation of teachers. What are your expectations for what constitutes excellent instruction?
- What are the school’s greatest strengths?
- Describe your relationship with district leadership.
- Describe the roles of each member of the administrative team.

#### **B. Teachers**

- Describe the school’s curriculum. How was it developed? How is its effectiveness evaluated, and how is it revised?
- What assessments do you use to track student learning?
- What are the school’s academic priorities? How were these priorities determined?
- What are the school’s strategies for improvement in these areas, and what support do you receive in implementing these strategies?
- Why do you think previous school improvement efforts have failed?
- How does the school review your performance?
- How is it ensured that teachers stay on track regarding curriculum pacing?
- What are the expectations for what constitutes excellent instruction at this school?
- Are you required to follow any specific formats or procedures in your teaching and lesson planning?

- Do you submit lesson plans for review? If so, do you receive feedback on them?
- What professional development and other forms of support are made available to you?
- Describe the working relationships (collaborations) between teachers.
- What, if anything, is your role in the school beyond classroom instruction?
- Who is (are) the instructional leader(s) at this school?
- What kind of teacher is best suited to teach at this school?
- What information do you provide to parents?

### *Special Education*

- What kinds of instructional supports and services are made available to special education students at this school?
- What types of accommodations and modifications are being made in the regular education classroom for students with diverse learning needs?
- What ancillary academic supports and services are available to all students?
- What have been the outcomes for students with disabilities in terms of promotion, graduation, and NYS assessment program passing rates? What is their progress on internal assessments?

### *English Language Learners*

- What English language support services do ELL students receive and how are those services delivered?
- How does your school implement structured English immersion in the regular education classrooms?
- What have been the outcomes for ELL students in terms of promotion, graduation, and NYS assessment program passing rates? What is their progress on internal assessments?

## **C. Students**

- What is the mission of the school?
- How long have you attended school here?
- Tell us what it's like to be a student here.
- How does this school compare with others you've attended?
- What happens if someone misbehaves?
- How do you get help if you need it?
- How safe is your school?
- Do you find the work challenging?
- Describe your teachers.
- What would you like to change about this school?
- Tell us about a recent assignment or the one you brought with you today. What did you learn by doing this assignment? Was it challenging? Explain. Did a teacher assess or grade this piece of work? How?

## **D. Families**

- Did you choose to send your child(ren) to this school?
- What is the school's mission?
- What does the school expect of your children academically?
- Why do you think previous school improvement efforts have failed?
- Is the school a safe place?
- What does the school do to support your child(ren)?
- What is your role/involvement in the school?
- What information does the school provide to you about your child's learning?
- What are the school's biggest challenges?

### **E. School Governing Council**

- Describe the school’s mission and purposes, and how they are realized in the operation of the school.
- Describe the role and responsibilities of the board. What areas or decisions are outside the scope of this role?
- What are the criteria you use to determine whether the school is successful?
- How do you gather information to determine whether these criteria have been met?
- How does the board evaluate the performance of the school leader?
- What are the school’s greatest current challenges? What strategies are being employed to meet these challenges?
- Describe a recent policy decision made by the board—from initial proposal to enactment.
- For which students is this school most effective? Why?
- How are new board members identified, recruited, selected, and oriented?

## **Examples of Site-Visit Schedules**

### **On-site Visit Schedule – MORNING**

Time	Team Member A	Team Member B	Team Member C
7:30 to 7:45	Team Meeting: Orientation to the process (The school should provide a meeting room)		
7:45 to 8:15	Focus Group – Parents	Class Visits	Class Visits
8:15 to 8:45	Focus Group – School Leaders		Class Visits
8:45 to 9:15	Class Visits	Class Visits	Focus Group – Teachers
9:15 to 9:45	Class Visits	Class Visits	Class Visits
9:45 to 10:15	Class Visits	Focus Group – Ed. Partners/Focus Group - Students	
10:15 to 10:45	Team Discussion		
10:45 to 11:00	Presentation of general observations and preliminary findings to school leaders		

*On-site Visit Schedule – AFTERNOON*

<b>Time</b>	<b>Team Member A</b>	<b>Team Member B</b>	<b>Team Member C</b>
<b>12:00 to 12:15</b>	Team Meeting: Orientation to the process (The school should provide a meeting room)		
<b>12:15 to 12:45</b>	Focus Group – Parents	Class Visits	Class Visits
<b>12:45 to 1:15</b>	Focus Group – School Leaders		Class Visits
<b>1:15 to 1:45</b>	Class Visits	Class Visits	Focus Group – Teachers
<b>1:45 to 2:15</b>	Class Visits	Class Visits	Class Visits
<b>2:15 to 2:45</b>	Class Visits	Focus Group – Ed. Partners/Focus Group - Students	
<b>2:45 to 3:15</b>	Team Discussion		
<b>3:15 to 3:30</b>	Presentation of general observations and preliminary findings to school leaders		

*On-site Visit Schedule – Full-Day*

<b>Time</b>	<b>Team Member A</b>	<b>Team Member B</b>	<b>Team Member C</b>
<b>7:30 – 8:00</b>	Team Meeting: Orientation to the process		
<b>8:00 – 8:30</b>	Focus Group – School Leaders		
<b>8:30 to 9:00</b>	Class Visits	Class Visits	Class Visits
<b>9:00 to 9:30</b>	Focus Group - Parents	Class Visits	Class Visits
<b>9:30 to 10:00</b>	Class Visits	Focus Group - Students	Class Visits
<b>10:00 to 10:30</b>	Class Visits	Class Visits	Focus Group - Teachers
<b>10:30 to 11:00</b>	Class Visits	Class Visits	Class Visits
<b>11:00 to 12:00</b>	Document Review		
<b>12:00 to 1:00</b>	Initial Team Discussion/Team lunch (The school should provide lunch)		
<b>1:00 to 2:30</b>	Additional Fact Finding, Document Review, Class Visits, Focus Groups and Team Work Time		
<b>2:30 to 3:15</b>	Team Discussion		
<b>3:15 to 3:30</b>	Presentation of general observations and preliminary findings to school leaders		

## **Responsibilities of the School Leader**

### On-site school Visits

<b>Pre-visit</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. Review the Site-Visit Protocol and speak with school and district leadership to orient them to the purpose of the site-visit, what their respective roles will be during the day, and what to expect when the team is visiting the school. It is the expectation of the team that all classrooms in the school will be available for observation.</li><li>B. Work quickly after the scheduling letter from SED arrives to confirm the date of the site-visit.</li><li>C. Review the document preparation list and begin to gather the information the site-visit team needs before the visit and while on-site.</li><li>D. Identify a secure place that can serve as a meeting room for the team throughout the day.</li><li>E. Three weeks before the visit, send <b>pre-visit documents</b> from the checklist to SED electronically. These documents will be used to build the preparation binders for the site-visit team members and to help the facilitator organize for the visit.</li><li>F. The day will generally follow the default schedule, or can be modified to meet the particular needs of a school. The schedule needs to be finalized with SED at least one week prior to the visit.</li><li>G. Inform parent community of the opportunity to participate in a focus group on the day of the visit.</li><li>H. Assemble and organize <b>on-site documentation</b> as listed in “Required Documentation.”.</li></ul>
<b>During the On-site Visit</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. Meet with SED site-visit team for orientation.</li><li>B. Ensure coordination of focus group interview sessions.</li><li>C. Meet with SED site-visit team for debriefing session to go over initial findings. Ensure that appropriate school/staff personnel are available for this meeting.</li></ul>
<b>After the Visit</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. Review site-visit report. Disseminate and discuss finding with constituent groups.</li><li>B. School Leader may prepare a written response to be sent to SED.</li><li>C. School should continue to implement components of school improvement plans, as well as address issues or concerns from the site-visit report.</li></ul>

## *NYS Education Department (SED) & School Work Flow and Timelines*

### On-Site School Visits

<b>Pre-Visit</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
SED: sends out scheduling letter to schools electronically. Pre-visit document request is attached. Hard copy of letter will be sent to the district as well.	One month prior to visit
SCHOOL: confirms proposed date for site-visit.	As soon as possible upon receipt
SCHOOL: prepares pre-visit documents and sends electronically to SED.	Three weeks prior to the visit
SED: prepares the prep binders for the site-visit team.	One week prior to the visit
SCHOOL: makes arrangements for families, trustees, teachers, and students to participate in focus group interviews on the day of the visit; and arranges for a secure space for the site-visit team to meet.	Ongoing during the month before the visit
SCHOOL: finalizes, with SED, the schedule for the day of visit.	One week prior to visit
SCHOOL: gathers on-site documents for the site-visit team.	Ongoing
<b>Day of the Visit</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
SED site-visit team: conducts focus group interviews, classroom observations, document review, and team work time.	0.5 to 1.0 day, as determined by SED
SED site-visit team: presents the initial findings of the site-visit. This meeting is open to school and/or district leadership.	30 minutes, at the end of the visit.
<b>After the Visit</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
SED site-visit team: creates a draft site-visit report, with evidence-based findings.	One week after the visit
SED site-visit team: reviews the report to ensure that it is factually accurate and reflects the collective findings of the team on the day of the visit. The team incorporates corrections and suggestions for improvement.	Two weeks after the visit
SED: issues the final site-visit report for the school and sends electronic and hard copies to the school and district leadership.	Three to four weeks after the visit
School leadership may prepare a written response to the site-visit report that becomes a permanent part of the school's record.	As soon as possible after the final report is issued

## **Site Visit Code of Conduct for SED Site-Visit Team Members**

On-site School Visits

<b>A. Carry out work with integrity.</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School personnel may be apprehensive, so treat all those you meet with courtesy and sensitivity, and try to minimize stress.</li><li>• Try to allay anxiety by displaying respect, valuing opinions, and showing an interest in what every individual says.</li><li>• Focus your attention and questions on topics that will reveal how well students are learning.</li><li>• Assure confidentiality.</li><li>• Approach the review of a school with a clear understanding of that school’s particular mission and educational philosophy.</li></ul>
<b>B. Act with the best interests of students and staff in mind.</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do not put students or staff in a position where they may have conflicting loyalties.</li><li>• Emphasize that students come first and are at the center of the review.</li><li>• Wherever possible, work to others' convenience.</li><li>• Be supportive and enabling. Evidence given under undue stress is unreliable.</li><li>• Under no circumstances criticize the work of a teacher, or anyone else involved with the school during the course of an observation period or focus group.</li><li>• Observations are confidential to the teacher and team.</li><li>• Try to understand what teachers are doing and why.</li></ul>
<b>C. Be objective, base judgments on evidence not opinion.</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Judgments must be robust, fully supported by evidence, and defensible.</li><li>• Judgments must be reliable in that others would make the same judgment from the same evidence.</li><li>• Judgments must be based on evidence gathered in the context of the school, not in comparison to personal preference or opinion.</li><li>• An individual’s perception can be evidence, especially if supported by others’ observations.</li><li>• Be prepared to ask questions to establish whether a view is based on opinion or evidence. This applies to team members’ judgments as well.</li><li>• Discussion with staff and team members is part of the process to create a fair and secure evidence base from which judgments are made. Opinions may help inform discussion but are not part of the evidence.</li><li>• The bottom line is whether the evidence is affecting students’ learning. If there is no evidence to show that it is, then it isn’t an issue.</li></ul>

## ATTACHMENT A

### Charter School Renewal Site-Visit Information

#### **I. Overview of the Renewal Site Visit Protocol**

The New York State Education Department (“SED” or “the Department”) Charter School Renewal Protocol is designed to assess the extent to which a charter school (the “School”) has met the standards for renewal. This process involves having a team of two to four SED staff members visit a school for up to two days to collect and analyze data, make first-hand observations in classrooms and conduct interviews with various stakeholders. The renewal site visit team will provide verbal and written findings to the School following completion of the visit.

This Renewal Protocol is guided by four key documents: the School’s current charter, the School’s *Annual Report*, the School’s *Third-year Comprehensive Monitoring Report* and its *Renewal Application*. Consistent with the requirements of §2851(4) of the Education Law, three key questions are considered:

1. *Can the School demonstrate the ability to operate in an educationally sound manner?*
2. *Can the School demonstrate the ability to operate in a fiscally sound manner?*
3. *Can the school demonstrate adequate levels of parent and student satisfaction?*

The site visit is but one part of the overall evaluation of a school’s renewal application. It is meant to validate the information contained in the renewal application and to collect more in-depth information regarding the three key questions above. The Department uses multiple sources of evidence to understand a school’s performance and to make judgments about the renewal of the charter. Evidence collection begins with the receipt of the School’s renewal application and continues through the site review process. The site review team may also request additional information, including data to validate the progress being made by the School. It must be noted that the Department will consider the totality of the evidence provided. In developing its judgments concerning the three key questions, the Department will base its findings exclusively on the evidence collected throughout the renewal review period. No “scores” or other weighting is applied to any of the evidence. In addition it is up to each charter school, and the charter school alone, to make its best case for the renewal of its charter. While it may appear that two seemingly-similar charter schools will have different renewal recommendations, the Department will make its determinations based upon the unique history and circumstances of each school.

## **II. The Purpose of the Site Renewal Visit**

The renewal site visit is the final site visit to the charter school conducted during the charter term. This site visit supplements the earlier, briefer site visits conducted by SED and conducts a closer review of teaching and learning in the School as well as the systems and structures that support and promote teaching and learning. Guided by the provisions of the School's charter, the renewal site visit team reviews relevant documents and information prior to visiting the School, spends one to two days on site conducting observations and interviews and collecting further information, and prepares a renewal site visit report summarizing the team's findings with supporting evidence. The renewal site visit report thus provides a detailed and current portrait of a charter school during or near the final year of the School's charter term. The report becomes part of the evidence base for the Senior Deputy Commissioner's charter renewal recommendation and the Board of Regents' charter renewal decision.

## **III. Planning and Pre-visit Analysis**

The renewal site visit team and the School will work cooperatively to plan for and conduct the renewal site visit.

1. The SED Lead Reviewer and the School will determine the visit date(s).
2. The Lead Reviewer will provide school leadership with a description of the process and send a copy of the Renewal Protocol to the School
3. Among other preparations, the School will send all pre-visit documents requested for the desk audit to the Lead Reviewer. These documents include:
  - A school organizational chart
  - A school leadership team roster
  - Student waiting lists by grade
  - A School staff roster
  - Documentation of teacher certifications
  - Documentation of clearances for all staff
  - A map of the school, labeled with grades and teacher names
  - A master schedule/daily schedule
4. The Lead Reviewer will create a draft schedule of interviews and classroom visits and then finalize the schedule with input from the School's administration.
5. The team members will complete the desktop audit of all previously-requested documents.
6. The Lead Reviewer will send the daily schedule(s), interview questions, and charter school renewal site visit report tailored to each school to the other team member(s).

#### **IV. On-site Review and Feedback**

Teams will consist of two to four staff members from SED. The teams will review requested documents, visit classrooms and conduct interviews over a period of one to two days, depending on the size of the School. The team's primary objectives during the site visit are to validate/explicate the information provided in the School's renewal application, and to develop findings regarding the three key renewal questions listed above.

The team's work during the renewal site visit requires advance scheduling of interviews and classroom observations to enable the team to obtain the information required to prepare the renewal site visit report. However, the site visit schedule requires sufficient flexibility to enable the team to follow up on information reviewed or to pursue issues that warrant further inquiry. Since such issues cannot always be predicted in advance, the team must have the ability to move about the School, observe classrooms or other activities without advance notice, engage in further conversations with board members, administrators, staff members, teachers or parents, and review documents other than those requested in advance.

An entrance interview with the school leader serves to introduce the team to the school leader and the building. It also provides a brief overview of the School's program and a context for the team's subsequent observations, including a description of the pedagogical practices that the team should expect to see during the classroom observations. The site visit team reviews documents and conducts interviews and classroom visits in accordance with the visit schedule.

Separate interviews are conducted with the board of trustees, school leadership team, teachers, parents, and students (if appropriate). All board of trustees' members should be present for their interview, if possible. Teachers and parents should be allowed to self-select; if there is a large number interested in participating in the interview, these groups may be double-scheduled. The School may select students, but should assure that a group representative of the student body is included. All team members should attend all interviews, if the schedule permits.

Classroom/School observations will include, insofar as is possible, each grade level, each subject area, including special subject areas, hallways, restrooms, large group areas, and external areas. This is a priority for the site visit, and should be allotted as much time as possible within the schedule. Each classroom observation should span a minimum time period of twenty minutes, and transitions should be included, both within and between classes.

The Lead Reviewer will keep the School's leadership informed of the team's progress throughout the visit, providing updates on the team's judgments as they develop. This will ensure that the School has every opportunity to present evidence to address the team's questions.

The team will meet regularly during the visit to share information. The team will formulate a consensus judgment based on evidence provided from interviews, classroom observations and document reviews. At the end of the visit, the team’s preliminary findings will be presented verbally to the School’s leadership. It must be noted that this is a courtesy to the School, and in no way constitutes the team’s or the Department’s final findings and/or recommendations. No renewal recommendations or decisions will be made based solely upon any verbal report made to the School.

Below is a sample visit schedule, based on a typical two day visit. This is a sample schedule only. The actual schedule will vary from school to school, depending on the size and needs of the School. The daily schedule(s) for the visit will developed by the Lead Reviewer in conjunction with school leadership.

DAY ONE – (Sample Visit Schedule)

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Team Leader</b>	<b>Team Member A</b>	<b>Team Member B</b>
8:00 a.m.	Meet school leader and tour school			
9:00 a.m.	Meet with Administrative Team			
10:00 a.m.	Classroom Visits			
11:30 a.m.	Team Meeting/Lunch			
1:00 p.m.	Meet with Students			
2:00 p.m.	Meet with Teachers			
3:00 p.m.	After school Observations			
4:00 p.m.	Team Meeting			

DAY TWO – (Sample Visit Schedule)

8:00 a.m.	Classroom Visits			
12:00 p.m.	Meet with Board			
1:00 p.m.	Team Meeting/Lunch			
<b>3:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Meet with Parents</b>			
4:00 p.m.	Team meeting			
4:30 p.m.	Debriefing			

## **V. Analyzing Charter School Performance: Developing Findings Using High Quality Evidence**

The renewal site visit process is an evidence-based process that produces a series of findings about the school's performance relative to statutory and charter requirements. Findings are summary statements within each section of the renewal site visit report that describe conditions identified by the renewal team as relevant to the three areas of charter school accountability. Findings synthesize the renewal team's analyses of evidence collected from multiple sources prior to and during the renewal site visit. Each finding must be supported by sufficient evidence collected during the renewal process and, when appropriate, corroborated from multiple sources, including but not limited to observations, documents, data, and information derived from interviews.

In conducting the renewal site visit and writing the renewal report the renewal team must ensure that the evidence collected and analyzed by the team is of high quality. High quality evidence is both *sufficient in quantity* and *appropriate in nature*. The team must use its professional judgment to determine the sufficiency of the evidence collected. In assessing the appropriateness of the evidence, the team must ensure that the evidence is relevant, valid and reliable:

- Relevant evidence is logically related and important to the matter or issue under consideration.
- Valid evidence is based on accurate information and sound reasoning.
- Reliable evidence is verifiable and consistent.

Although information obtained from team interviews with school participants is an essential component of the evidence base used by the team, the team should keep in mind that interview information can in some cases be unreliable if not corroborated by other documentation. For instance, similar interview questions can be asked of each group and information can then be verified from documentation and/or additional interviews. Situations of alignment or misalignment may become findings if they are of sufficient depth or provide evidence that school operations are affected in any area of accountability.

Triangulation, which means corroboration of evidence from a variety of sources, is one method of testing the reliability of evidence. For example, if the administrator group tells the renewal team that a particular behavior management technique is in use at the school, the team should seek corroboration of this statement through documents, direct observations, and interviews with the school's teachers and students.

## ***VI. Written Report***

After the renewal site visit, the School will receive a written report on the findings within four to eight weeks of the site visit. The School will have one week to provide evidence of any factual errors in the report. It is not an opportunity for the School to debate the interpretations made by the team. The report will only be changed to correct factual errors and any interpretations made based upon such faulty data. However, the report will not be changed merely upon the assertion that facts are in error; the school must provide evidence of such. Absent any such evidence, the report will not be changed.