

GUIDELINES FOR CHECK-IN SITE VISITS

BEFORE THE VISIT

- Review the letter sent to the school to schedule the visit, verify visit date, and enter date into GroupWise calendar.
- Request that the school leader send the following documents, in electronic format (Microsoft Word or pdf format) if possible:
 - Organizational chart with staff names and titles
 - Roster of current Board of Trustees members
 - Recent board minutes not on file at the CSO
 - Classroom schedule for the date of the visit
 - School map
- Review relevant documents on file at the CSO pertaining to the school's charter, operations, and performance, including but not necessarily limited to the following:
 - Approved charter and revisions (if any)
 - Prior site visit reports from the current term (if any)
 - Board meeting minutes
 - Most recent Annual Report
 - Most recent annual fiscal dashboard
 - Student performance data
- In consultation with the school liaison, determine which of the Charter School Performance Framework benchmarks on the following page will be the focus of the check-in site visit.
- Prepare interview questions based on the benchmarks selected and the documents reviewed.
- Create a schedule for the one-day visit that is consistent with the benchmarks selected. Send the schedule to the school leader, the Board chair, and any other team members. Confirm that the school leader has received the schedule and has sent the requested documents.
 - The schedule must include a meeting with school leaders upon arrival at the school and a team tour of the school building(s).
 - The schedule must include at least three classroom observations, each representing a different grade and core academic subject.
 - The schedule may include focus group interviews with Board members, teachers, students, or other school stakeholders.

DURING THE VISIT

- At the initial meeting with school leaders, ask the school leader to describe the instructional and classroom management practices that the team can expect to see during the classroom observations and to explain any changes since the CSO's last visit.
- When conducting classroom observations, document evidence of academic rigor and student engagement. If possible, document evidence of the school's mission and key design elements and of the instructional and classroom management practices described by the school leader.
- When conducting focus group interviews, ask targeted questions based on the Performance Framework benchmarks selected for the visit and on the documents reviewed prior to the visit.

AFTER THE VISIT

- Within two weeks of the check-in site visit, draft a check-in site visit report that does not exceed three pages. The report will include a methodology section identifying the team member(s), visit date, and visit schedule, and a section for each benchmark selected as the focus of the visit. Each benchmark section will consist of a series of bulleted statements or paragraphs briefly summarizing the pertinent evidence collected with respect to the benchmark.
- After the draft report has been edited within the CSO, send the draft to the school leader for factual corrections, requesting that any factual corrections be provided within one week.
- Send the final report in pdf format to the school leader and the Board chair, and file the final report in the school's folder in the CSO's z-drive.

The Charter School Performance Framework benchmarks are listed in the table below. Before the check-in visit, the team lead, in consultation with the school liaison, decides which of the following benchmarks will be the focus of the visit. The indicators associated with each benchmark are provided at the following link: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/documents/CSPerformanceFramework022113.pdf>.

Performance Benchmark	
Educational Success	Benchmark 1: Student Performance: The school has met or come close to meeting student achievement goals for academic growth, proficiency, and college and career readiness on state standards and achievement goals outlined in the school’s charter.
	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 has rigorous and coherent curriculum and assessments that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) 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.
	Benchmark 3: Culture, Climate, and Family Engagement: The school has systems in place to support students’ social and emotional health and to provide for a safe and respectful learning environment. 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.
Organizational Soundness	Benchmark 4: Financial Condition: The school is in sound and stable financial condition as evidenced by performance on key financial indicators.
	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.
	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.
	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.
Faithfulness to Charter & Law	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.
	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.
	Benchmark 10: Legal Compliance: The school complies with applicable laws, regulations, and the provisions of its charter.