



New York State Education Department Charter School Check-In Visit Overview

The New York State Education Department (SED) carries out its charter school monitoring responsibilities through document review, periodic reports from the charter schools and site visits. A full-day site visit is usually conducted the third year of a school's charter term. This is a thorough process, involving an extensive review of documentation of various aspects of the charter school's program and operations, as well as an on-site visit by two or more site visit team members.

An interim, less formal, check-in visit is scheduled at other times during the term of the school's charter. These check-in visits are designed to gather and document evidence about the school's performance, implementation of the educational and organizational program outlined in its charter, and compliance with laws and regulations.

The guiding questions that frame this process are:

- Is the school faithful to the terms of its charter?
- Is the school educationally sound?
- Is the school fiscally sound and organizationally viable?

The check-in visit will usually include classroom observations, interviews with the school's administration and teachers, and a review of selected documents. At least one SED staff member will visit the school for approximately one-half day. This SED facilitator will work with the charter school leader to develop a schedule for the half-day.

The site visit begins with a brief meeting between the site visit team and the school leadership to establish the purpose of the meeting for the school leaders and to orient the visitors to the school. While at the school, the site visit team members participate in a combination of the focus group interviews, classroom visits, and possible document review.

Usually, two focus group interviews are conducted; one with the school leadership team, and one with teachers. The SED facilitator leads a discussion centering on the school's progress toward meeting its goals and any issues or concerns that have arisen along the way. Classroom observations provide insight into many aspects of the educational program. The check-in visit will end with a short debriefing with the school leader.

Following the visit, the SED facilitator will send a memo documenting general observations from the visit to the school. The information provided in the memo may be used by the school to inform and improve its instructional and operational practice.