



New York State Education Department

***Monitoring Plan for New York State Charter Schools
Authorized by the Board of Regents***

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Overview

The purpose of the Monitoring Plan is to provide internal and external stakeholders with a snapshot of monitoring activities performed by the Charter School Office (CSO) over the course of a school's charter term. Such activities will support comprehensive oversight of charter schools authorized by the Board of Regents. In accordance with the Board of Regents' Oversight Plan¹, CSO is authorized to oversee all school operations, including (but not limited to) inspecting school functions via site visits, records review and evaluation.

On behalf of the Board of Regents, CSO will evaluate schools against performance benchmarks presented in the [Charter School Performance Framework](#). The priorities that will be considered by the CSO and the Board of Regents during the renewal process are set forth in the Renewal Policy² authorized by the Board of Regents and Section 119.7 of the Regulations of the Commissioner. Evidence collected throughout the charter term—such as annual reports, independent financial audits, state testing data, and all site visit reports—will be used by the CSO to make decisions about the frequency and type of site visits to each school and will be also used to directly inform renewal decisions.

The events outlined in this Monitoring Plan allow the CSO to collect evidence on the school's performance 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 CSO documents all evaluative findings related to school performance. All documentation contributes to the school's record of performance, which will, in turn, be used to support renewal decision-making.

Site Visits

The timing and scope of site visits conducted by the CSO and others will depend on a school's track record in meeting Performance Framework benchmarks, and other academic, operational, and compliance-related objectives outlined in the charter agreement. In a typical five year charter term, the CSO will conduct a combination of check-in visits and full site visits. While the CSO will typically visit each school at least once per year, schools may receive fewer site visits, or site visits of shorter duration. Additional site visits may be scheduled at CSO discretion and may be unannounced if deemed appropriate.

Full site visits are conducted as a mid-term visit (generally year 3) and a renewal site visit in year 5. These visits are one to two days in length, and are performed by a team of three or more evaluators, who may be internal CSO staff or external expert school evaluators. All visits will result in a comprehensive report that summarizes the site visit team's observations and analyses of evidence gathered prior and on site. The site visit report will outline the school's academic and organizational performance relative to Performance Framework benchmarks and indicators.

Check-in visits will provide a means for CSO staff to check in with schools and ensure the school is progressing toward meeting Performance Framework Benchmarks. Check-in site visits may occur in years 1, 2, and 4 of a school's charter term, and will result in a letter or summary memo to the school.

All information gathered through site visits, whether full site or check-in, will be compiled into a school's record of performance and used to inform renewal decisions at the end of a school's charter term.

¹ The Board of Regents Oversight Plan is described at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/OversightPlan.html>

² The Board of Regents Renewal Policy may be viewed at <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/documents/meetings/2012Meetings/November2012/1112p12a1.pdf>

Desk Audits

In addition to site visits, the Monitoring Plan includes desk auditing of documentation and data collected by schools, including records pertaining to students, staff, financials and general operations. The Board of Regents requires that schools engage in transparent record-keeping practices and the CSO and other SED staff will monitor and review such documentation throughout the life of a school's charter term.³ Similar to the site visit protocols referenced above, the timing and scope of desk audits will depend on federal and state statute, as well as a school's track record and ability to meet goals and objectives outlined in its charter contract.

A Note about Charter Term Lengths

For charter schools with terms that are not a full five years, the CSO will work with each school to modify the typical Monitoring Plan outlined below. Generally, schools should expect a full program evaluation sometime during the middle of the charter term, a renewal site visit prior to the end of the charter term, and check-in visits as appropriate.

³ See Appendix A for a list of records that must be maintained by schools for inspection by the Regents and/or their agents.

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Year of Charter Term	Charter Term⁴	Site Visit Type	Purpose	Approximate Site Visit Length⁵	Site Visit Deliverable
Pre-Opening	First	Visit will occur prior to school opening	Ensure completion of all SED-required Prior Actions	Half day prior to school opening	Consent to Open letter to school board outlining key findings and school's status regarding final authorization to open
1	First and subsequent	Check-in ⁶	Assess progress toward meeting criteria outlined in Performance Framework	Half day	Check-in report to school board outlining key observations
2	First and subsequent	Check-in	Assess progress toward meeting criteria outlined in Performance Framework	Half day	Check-in report to school board outlining key observations
3	First and subsequent	Mid-term site visit	Assess progress toward criteria outlined in Performance Framework	One to two full days	Full site visit report to school board, including all key findings and analysis
4	First and subsequent	Check-in	Assess progress toward criteria outlined in Performance Framework	Half day	Check-in report to school board outlining key observations
5	First and Subsequent	Renewal	Assess attainment of criteria outlined in Performance Framework	One to two full days	Full site visit report to school board, including all key findings and analysis

Additionally, a site visit is conducted when a school moves to a new facility, to verify compliance with all applicable facility-related requirements.

⁴ For charter school on a shorter term, CSO will typically conduct a full site visit mid-term.

⁵ Check-in visits are conducted at the discretion of CSO staff.

⁶ Site visit lengths are approximate and will depend on school performance and CSO resources.

Evidence Gathered through Monitoring Process

Area of Performance Framework	Sources of Evidence
Educational Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSO analysis of state assessment results⁷ • Site visit materials⁸ and reports • Renewal application (during final year of charter) • Surveys • Focus Groups • Public comments
Organizational Soundness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-opening requirements (during pre-opening year) • Board-approved budget • Quarterly reports and quarterly cash flow statements (pre-opening year) • Annual Reports (year 2 and subsequent years) • Annual audits (year 2 and subsequent years) • Renewal application (during final year of charter) • Board meeting minutes • Public comments
Faithfulness to Charter and Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site visit materials and reports • Annual Reports (year 2 and subsequent years) • Renewal application (during final year of charter) • Public comments

⁷ Analysis is performed according to Benchmark 1 of the Performance Framework.

⁸ CSO will request desk audit materials prior to each site visit. Further requests may be made while on site or throughout the year based on CSO discretion.

Appendix A
Additional Monitoring and Reporting Requirements

Board of Regents-authorized charter schools must ensure a timely response to all SED and CSO requests. The charter school's failure to do so will be grounds for action under §2855 of the Education Law.

Further, all Regents-authorized charter schools are required to maintain the following records for inspection by the Regents and/or their agents, including but not limited to CSO staff, throughout a school's charter term.

1. Records concerning the enrollment and admissions process including recruitment and outreach activities, all applications received and documents concerning the lottery process, if conducted
2. Student academic and health records
3. Attendance records for students including withdrawals of students from the school
4. Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students with disabilities enrolled in the school
5. Staff rosters, including records of hiring and termination of employees of the school
6. Evidence of credentials for all teachers including certifications
7. Fingerprint clearances for all relevant personnel
8. Certificates of occupancy
9. Other facility-related certifications, reports or permits
10. Lease agreements
11. Deeds
12. Loan documents
13. Records pertaining to the receipt and expenditure of all grants
14. Contracts in excess of \$1,000
15. School policies in areas such as financial management, personnel, student discipline (including suspension and expulsion), health and safety, student records access, enrollment, and transportation
16. Complaints and/or grievances received by the school, including but not limited to, complaints received by the board of trustees pursuant to §2855(4) of Education Law, together with all documentation of all actions taken in response

17. Inventory of all assets of the school
18. Minutes of each meeting of the board of trustees and documentation of public notifications of such meetings
19. All records regarding the following events and occurrences:
 - The charter school shall provide a written request to the State Education Department by December 15 of the year prior to the anticipated implementation of any change to the approved charter, including but not limited to:
 - a change in the school's mission or key design elements
 - significant changes to the governance or leadership structure
 - hiring or termination of the management company
 - a change to school name
 - a change in district of location
 - a change in maximum enrollment or grades served
 - The charter school shall provide written notice to the State Education Department within five (5) business days of the occurrence of any of the following:
 - any change of the director/principal of the school
 - a change in the school's by-laws or code of ethics
 - execution of contracts or incurring of debt in excess of \$25,000
 - receipt of a summons and/or complaint in which either the school or any member of the board of trustees (acting in his or her capacity as a member of the board of trustees) is named a party to the action
 - termination, resignation, or removal of a member of the board of trustees⁹

⁹ Schools must follow the required procedure to add a new member to the board of trustees. The requirements are located on the following website: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/OversightPlan.html>