



New York State Education Department
Charter School Office

Mid-Term Site Visit Protocol

2019-2020

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Table of Contents

Purpose and Overview of the Mid-Term Site Visit.....	1
Planning and Scheduling the Mid-Term Site Visit.....	3
Providing Documents for the Mid-Term Site Visit.....	3
Preparing the Mid-Term Site Visit Schedule.....	4
School Leader Responsibilities.....	6
Closing Meeting and Site Visit Reports.....	6
APPENDIX A: Classroom Observation Worksheet.....	7
APPENDIX B: BoT Observation Template.....	9

Purpose and Overview of the Mid-Term Site Visit

The Charter School [Performance Framework](#)¹ 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 ten Performance Framework benchmarks, listed on the next page, should be used by schools for self-assessment and planning purposes, and are used by the NYSED Charter School (CSO) to frame the mid-term site visit. In evaluating a school's performance, the CSO site visit team will summarize key findings, and include an assessment of whether the charter school meets, approaches, or falls far below the performance benchmarks² listed on the next page.

The purpose of a mid-term site visit is to provide the school with an informative and comprehensive report and formative feedback detailing how the school is progressing toward meeting the standards set forth in the Performance Framework. The mid-term 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 report, will help to continue the conversation between the CSO and the charter school around the Performance Framework and how we can both support high quality educational options for all students.

The mid-term site visit is also 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.

To provide this report and feedback, the CSO 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 answer any questions 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.

Mid-term 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 mid-term site visit may occur in years 1, 2, or 3 of that term. They are usually completed in one or one-and-one-half days depending upon the size, location, or other characteristics of the school. The CSO team conducting the site visit is usually 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. Prior to the site visit, the school will be required to administer the NYSED CSO Parent Survey and NYSED CSO Teacher Survey. The CSO encourages charter schools to use their mid-term site visit reports, and the Performance Framework, to ensure that they are on track for a full-term renewal.

¹ Charter schools authorized or renewed beginning in the 2019-2020 school year and thereafter use the [2019 Charter School Performance Framework](#), and all other charter schools use the [2015 Charter School Performance Framework](#) until renewal. Refer to the appropriate framework for the applicable benchmark standards.

² All ten Performance Benchmarks might not be addressed in the Mid-Term Site Visit Report.

2015 Charter School Performance Framework Benchmarks³	
Educational Success	Benchmark 1: Student Performance: The school has met or exceeded achievement indicators for academic trends toward proficiency, proficiency, and high school graduation. At all grade levels and all assessments, scoring proficiently means achieving a performance level of 3 or higher (high school Regents and Common Core Regents exam score of 65 or higher).
	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 New York State Learning Standards (NYSLS) 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.

³ Charter schools authorized or renewed beginning in the 2019-2020 school year and thereafter use the [2019 Charter School Performance Framework](#), and all other charter schools use the [2015 Charter School Performance Framework](#) until renewal. Refer to the appropriate framework for the applicable benchmark standards.

Planning and Scheduling the Mid-Term Site Visit

The CSO team lead will contact the school leader and board chair/president, providing information about the site visit and required documentation.

Providing Documents for the Mid-Term Site Visit

In order to get the best overview of the school, the CSO team 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 Annual Report, and site visit reports from previous years.

The school will upload the following documents to the CSO online portal:

- a. **Current 2019-2020 organizational chart** showing all key staff positions, names of staff in those positions, and the school's reporting structure;
- b. **Current 2019-2020 master school schedule** showing each class, grade or course, and teacher(s). Note what days are A, B, C days and which classrooms include ELLs/MLLs and SWDs;
- c. **A map of the school** showing a basic floor plan, including classroom numbers, teacher names, and offices;
- d. **Board materials**, strategic plan (if applicable), and a narrative describing the board's self-evaluation process;
- e. **Narrative describing the process used to evaluate school leadership;**
- f. **Narrative describing the process school leadership uses to evaluate teachers;**
- g. **Optional: School administered teacher, parent/student survey results;**
- h. **Optional: NYCDOE School Quality Reports showing survey results;**
- i. **Required: NYSED CSO Parent Survey and NYSED CSO Teacher Survey results (CSO retrieves from Survey Monkey, the school does not need to upload anything);**
- j. **Narrative describing the school's progress and efforts made toward reaching its enrollment and retention targets (including ELLs/MLLs, SWDs, EDs; if the school is not meeting its targets, describe the efforts made to do so, the evaluation of those efforts, and the results of the evaluation.);**
- k. **Admissions and Waitlist:** Provide the (1) number of new students who submitted an application for enrollment for the 2019-2020 SY, (2) number of new students admitted for the 2019-2020 SY, (3) number of students currently on the wait list for the 2019-2020 SY, (4) backfill policy if the school has one, and (5) enrollment preference, weighted lottery, and/or set aside if the school has one;
- l. **Faculty/Staff Roster;** and
- m. **Other documents requested by the CSO liaison.**

Note: The CSO team lead may request additional documents before, during, or after the site visit.

Preparing the Mid-Term Site Visit Schedule

The CSO team lead, with input from the school leader, will create the site visit schedule. The schedule will include focus groups and classroom observations, allowing the team, accompanied by academic leaders, to observe various aspects of the school's program. If possible, focus groups and meetings will be scheduled at times convenient for all stakeholders. The site visit schedule is intended to be a flexible guide for the day and may be adjusted to enable the CSO team to gather all pertinent information and documentation. A **sample** mid-term site visit schedule is shown below.

Sample Mid-Term Site Visit Schedule

Time	Activity	Location
8:00 – 8:30 a.m.	CSO Team Arrival and Orientation to Building	Conference room
8:30 – 9:30 a.m.	Leadership Focus Group	Conference room
9:30 – 11:00 a.m.	Classroom Observations	School-wide
11:00 – 11:45 a.m.	Board Focus Group	Conference room
11:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.	CSO Team Time (including lunch)	Conference room
12:45 – 1:45 p.m.	Classroom Observations	School-wide
1:45 – 2:45 p.m.	Special Populations Focus Group	Conference room
2:45 – 4:00 p.m.	CSO Team Time/Follow-Up Meetings (TBD)	Conference room
4:00 – 4:30 p.m.	Closing Meeting with School Leadership	Conference room

The major activities to be incorporated into the mid-term site visit schedule are summarized below, along with the mid-term site visit report preparation process.

A. Introductory meeting with school leader
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The CSO team lead introduces the team members to the school leader and reviews the purpose of the mid-term site visit.• The school leader briefly orients the team to the school including a general overview of what the school leader hopes the team will see in the school.• The CSO team lead answers any questions the school leadership team may have and ensures the school has a copy of the Performance Framework.
B. Focus group interviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus group interview participants may vary by visit. Examples of focus group participants include school leadership staff, special population staff, parents, the board of trustees, and/or another group specified by the CSO team lead. All focus groups will be determined ahead of time and the school will be notified of them prior to the visit.

C. Use of Surveys

- The CSO requires that schools administer the NYSED CSO Parent Survey and the NYSED CSO Teacher Survey in advance of mid-term site visits. Details are sent to the school leader and BoT chair in the winter prior to the mid-term site visit. The CSO has access to the survey results in late February. As communicated to the school leader and BoT chair, the greater the return rate, the more comprehensive the CSO findings placed in the mid-term site visit report will be in Benchmark 2 (Teaching and Learning) and Benchmark 3 (Culture, Climate and Family Engagement). Low return rates will negatively affect the findings in those benchmarks. The CSO minimum return rate for teachers is 80%. There is no minimum return rate for parents; however, the school's outreach efforts and the return rate will both be taken into consideration when making a Benchmark 3 finding. Upon review of all surveys, the NYSED liaison for your charter school may include a parent and/or teacher focus group on the site visit agenda.
- In addition, the school has the option of providing the CSO team lead its most recently administered internal parent, student, and teacher survey results.
- Mid-term schools located in NYC have the option of providing the CSO team lead the NYCDOE School Quality Report which contains its parent and teacher survey results.

D. Classroom observations

- The CSO team selects a representative sample of classrooms to observe.
- On the day of the site visit, the school leader will inform the CSO team lead of any teacher absences and classes taught by short-term substitute teachers. The team will not conduct observations of short-term substitute teachers but may observe classes taught by long-term substitute teachers.
- CSO team members will observe classroom instruction together with the instructional leader for that subject area or grade level, whenever possible. Ideally, the person accompanying the CSO team on classroom observations provides regular feedback to the teacher being observed. CSO team members will generally separate and observe different classrooms simultaneously.
- Prior to the observation, the instructional leader will describe the content being taught in the classroom being observed and the instructional strategies the CSO team should expect to see being utilized in the classroom. The CSO team member and instructional leader will observe the classroom together for approximately 15-20 minutes. After the observation, the CSO team member and the instructional leader will discuss the instruction that was observed, whether that instruction meets the expectations of the school, and what feedback the instructional leader would provide to the teacher(s) being observed.
- The CSO classroom observation worksheet can be found in Appendix A of this document.

School Leader Responsibilities

- Review this document and the [Performance Framework](#). Share the document with all stakeholders.
- Speak with school staff to orient them to the purpose of the site visit, to explain what to expect during the site visit and to coordinate their involvement, if applicable.
- Inform the board of trustees, teachers (if applicable), and parents (if applicable) of the opportunity to participate in a focus group during the site visit.
- Identify a secure place (e.g., a small conference room, vacant classroom, or lounge) that can serve as a CSO team meeting room for the duration of the site visit. The space will be used for CSO team discussions, document review, and focus groups, if necessary. The CSO team meeting room should be private and have adequate power outlets and/or power cords for team member laptops. If the school has a wireless network, it would be helpful to provide network access information to the CSO team upon arrival.
- Via the NYSED online portal, upload the documents requested under “Providing Documents for the Mid-Term Site Visit” which is on page 3 of this document. Details about uploading the documents will be emailed to the school leader and BoT chair.
- Prepare for the focus group interviews and, should a parent or teacher focus group be requested, copy the CSO team lead on any invitation sent to those groups showing that all teachers and/or parents were invited.
- Contact your CSO team lead regarding any questions you may have.

Closing Meeting and Site Visit Reports

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

1. Identify any additional information or documents needed to complete the assessment of performance;
2. Share any preliminary information that the team feels would benefit the school based on the observations made during the site visit;
3. Address remaining questions from school leadership; and
4. Review the process for finalizing the mid-term site visit report.

Following the site visit, the CSO team lead will email the school leader and the BoT chair the draft mid-term site visit report. This report is a summary of findings on the Performance Framework benchmarks that were evaluated. Although this is usually not the case, not all benchmarks may be evaluated during the mid-term process. The findings are based on cumulative evidence from relevant documents as well as observations and information collected on site. The school leader and BoT chair will then have an opportunity to review the draft report for factual accuracy and return factual corrections to the CSO within a reasonable timeframe (typically one week). The CSO team lead will review the factual corrections and incorporate those deemed applicable into the draft report. The CSO team lead will then email the school leader and the BoT chair the final mid-term report. The school leader and BoT chair will then have an opportunity to submit written evaluative comments which are filed with the report.

Appendix A: Classroom Observation Worksheet

NYSED Charter School Office Site Visit Classroom Observation Evidence Worksheet

School Name:		Date:
Observer's Name:		Accompanying School Representative:
Subject/Grade:	# of Students Observed:	Time in Class:
Type of Classroom (Gen. Ed., ICT, SPED, Dual Language, etc.):	# of Adults in Classroom and Their Roles:	

Pre-Observation Question to School Staff Member Accompanying Observer: What should we expect to see in this classroom in terms of staffing, instruction, content, and differentiation?

During Observation

Classroom Environment

Metric	Observation 2 = observed, 1 = partially observed, 0 = not observed	Notes (If Needed)
A. Classroom organization and preparation evident (i.e. lesson plans available, posted agenda or objectives, prepared materials, or other)	2 1 0	
B. Students demonstrate awareness of classroom rules, procedures, and expectations	2 1 0	
C. Classroom appears safe and well-managed	2 1 0	

Classroom environment score: ___ out of 6

Instruction

Metric	Observation 2 = observed, 1 = partially observed, 0 = not observed	Notes (If Needed)
D. Groupings used	(Circle All that Apply) independent work / pairs / groups / whole class	
E. Effectively communicates objective(s) to students	2 1 0	
F. Assessment tools used to check for student understanding	(Circle All that Apply) questions / observations / classwork / rubrics / homework / exit tickets / polls/ peer review / individual conferences/ quizzes or tests / other	
G. Differentiates lesson to meet needs of student population	2 1 0	
H. Provides feedback to students	2 1 0	
I. Students are engaged and are participating in learning activities	2 1 0	
J. Maximizes class time for learning	2 1 0	

Instruction score: ___ out of 10

Post Observation De-Brief: Was the instruction observed aligned with the school’s instructional model and key design elements? What feedback would you give the teacher based on what was just observed?

Commentary:

Appendix B: NYSED Charter School Office - Charter School Board Meeting Checklist (DRAFT)

School Name:	Scheduled Start Time:
Date of Board Meeting:	Actual Start Time:
Location of Meeting:	End Time:
Observation by:	
Board member attendance: ____ of ____ = ____%	Is quorum met? (Y/N)? If not, is meeting still held?
Names of Board Members Present:	
Names of board members absent:	
Others in attendance: (Indicate staff, parents, community members, counsel, etc.)	

A "YES" or "NO" below indicates whether or not the following were evident at the board meeting. Performance framework indicators are identified in the left column if applicable.

Compliance Elements - Evident at Each Meeting		Notes
NYS Open Meeting Law/BM 10:		
BM 10	Meeting time and place is posted properly on school website and/or onsite at school. If meeting includes board member participation via videoconference (e.g. Skype), the notice includes the locations of all members who will be participating via videoconference, and states that these sites are available to the public for attendance.	
BM 10	All board members can see and hear one another during the meeting, including those board members participating via videoconference.	
BM 10	A quorum (majority of the total board, including counting vacant seats not yet eliminated) is present when the board meeting is convened and/or any item on the agenda is being considered.	
BM 10	Only board members who have been approved by the NYSED CSO vote.	
BM 6.3	Actions taken by board, including description of any amendments, are clearly articulated. (Board members are clear what they are voting on).	
O.2.2	Meeting *generally* follows approved agenda (<i>If no, provide detail</i>).	
O.2.2	The board meeting is accessible pursuant to ADA at all sites.	
BM 10	One set of board materials is available for public inspection on the school's website.	

BM 10	<p>If the board goes into Executive Session, the board votes to do so: agenda and minutes show a valid reason to go into Executive Session which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. matters which will imperil the public safety if disclosed; b. any matter which may disclose the identity of a law enforcement agent or informer; c. information relating to current or future investigation or prosecution of a criminal offense which would imperil effective law enforcement if disclosed; d. discussions regarding proposed, pending or current litigation; e. collective negotiations pursuant to article fourteen of the civil service law; f. the medical, financial, credit or employment history of a particular person or corporation, or matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal or removal of a particular person or corporation; g. the preparation, grading or administration of examinations; and h. the proposed acquisition, sale or lease of real property or the proposed acquisition of securities, or sale or exchange of securities held by such public body, but only when publicity would substantially affect the value thereof. 		
Key Contractual Performance Areas		YES/NO	Notes
BM 6.3	Academic Performance related to BM 1 of the Performance Framework is reviewed and discussed.		
BM 6.3	The School's Financial Performance, including the school's budget, for the current school year is reviewed and discussed.		Budgeted/Actual Enrollment: ___/___
BM 6.3	The school's enrollment, including current enrollment in relation to the school's maximum approved enrollment, is reviewed and discussed.		
BM 9	The school's enrollment of SWDs, ELL/MLL, and ED students, including this enrollment in relation to the school's district of location, is reviewed and discussed.		

BM 9	If applicable, strategies toward achieving equitable enrollment of SWDs, ELL/MLL, and/or ED students compared to the school's district of location, are reviewed and discussed.		
BM 6.2	Plans for board training and development are discussed at the meeting or meaningful discussion/reflection occurs related to recent training attended by one or more board members.		
BM 6.2	The board discusses, references, or utilizes the board's/the school's strategic plan.		
BM 1	If the school has a Corrective Action Plan, the status of the plan and progress toward plan goals is reviewed and discussed.		
Best Practices for Strong Boards		YES/NO	Notes
	The board has community representation or ensures that community voice has a presence at the board meeting.		
	All board members present participate in the meeting.		
	The meeting starts on time.		
	There is a participant sign-in sheet.		
	Meeting materials, if any, are distributed to all present.		
	There is a portion of the board meeting as indicated in the meeting agenda for public comment.		
	Members of the community attend the meeting such as parents, school staff, CBOs/partners, and students.		

The board makes use of its committees. For example, if the board has a finance committee, did that committee meet and make a recommendation to the board about the financial matters discussed at the meeting?		
The board's legal counsel is present or referred to regarding any needed follow-up.		
<p>School management presents information on the following:</p> <p>___ Attendance</p> <p>___ Suspensions/Expulsions</p> <p>___ School safety and climate (DASA related incidents)</p> <p>___ Parent engagement</p> <p>___ Data in a dashboard or in another format</p> <p>___ Special populations (such as SWDs, ELLs/MLLs, and EDs)</p>		

Following the meeting:

Were there any observed areas of concern that might affect the board's capacity to govern a Board of Regents-authorized charter school?

General Comments/Observations/Compliance Elements or Effective Practices Observed (e.g. Director Evaluation, Strategic Planning, Bylaw Changes, Policy Actions, etc.)

Liaison Follow-Up: Review the minutes generated after the meeting to determine whether or not they accurately reflect the meeting. If the board meeting minutes do differ from the events at the meeting, how do they differ?

Required Follow-Up:

Other General Notes: