



# New York State Education Department Charter School Office

## Renewal Site Visit Protocol



Charter School Office  
89 Washington Avenue Albany, New York 12234  
[charterschools@nysed.gov](mailto:charterschools@nysed.gov)  
518-474-1762

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## Purpose and Overview of the Renewal Site Visit

The Charter School Office (CSO) site visit team will work with your charter school leader and Board of Trustees chair to plan for a site visit that is best suited for your situation. We intend to conduct all visits fully on-site. All site visits will be conducted in accordance with the New York State Education Department (NYSED) [CSO Monitoring Plan](#). NYSED will continue to use the Performance Framework and Board of Regents renewal policies to evaluate, in a summative manner, applicable charter schools for renewal recommendation determinations. NYSED supports charter schools submitting supplemental data in the charter school's renewal application to demonstrate the work they have been doing in support of all 10 Performance Framework Benchmarks. This supplemental data may include, but is not limited to, school-administered interim assessment data, protocols to support continued high-quality teaching and learning, student, staff, and family engagement efforts and measures, and differentiated efforts to ensure the continuity of board and organizational capacity – including the continued differentiation between governance and management.

The primary purpose of the renewal site visit to Board of Regents-authorized charter schools is to supplement and validate the information collected over the charter term by the CSO. This information is used to inform the action taken by the Board of Regents to approve, modify, or disapprove the charter school's request for renewal. In advance of action by the Board of Regents, the CSO prepares a renewal recommendation.

The priorities that are considered by the CSO and the Board of Regents in the renewal process are set forth in the [Charter School Renewal Policy](#) and [8 NYCRR 119.1](#). The [Charter School Performance Framework](#)<sup>1</sup> was originally adopted by the Board of Regents in 2012 and updated in 2015. It was later updated in 2019. Both the 2015 and the 2019 Performance Frameworks will be used during the renewal site visit process, depending on the status of the charter school. The CSO's renewal recommendation to the Board of Regents is based on the charter school's performance across all benchmarks in the applicable Performance Framework over the entire charter term, and occasionally, in cases of short-term renewals, the previous charter term. This evidence includes, but is not limited to, information provided in annual reports, independent financial audits, state testing data, site visit reports, and other communications. Additional information is collected throughout the charter renewal process.

Although all charter schools should be working toward the standards for renewal throughout the charter term, the formal charter renewal process begins with the charter school's submission of the [Application for Charter Renewal](#). After the CSO has reviewed the Application for Charter Renewal and determined that it is complete, the CSO will arrange for a team of two or more evaluators to conduct a charter renewal site visit. Charter renewal site visits are differentiated in length and scope based on adherence to the benchmarks set forth in the Performance Framework over the charter term. Visits may range from one and a half to two days in length. During the site visit, the CSO site visit team will interview charter school stakeholders and observe instruction. In addition, the CSO site visit team may evaluate other aspects of the charter school's operation. Ultimately, the renewal process offers an opportunity for the charter school community to reflect on its experiences during the charter term as it comes to an end and to make a compelling, evidence-based case that it has met the rigorous academic, organizational, and legal standards for the granting of an additional charter term.

The [Performance Framework](#) is part of the [Board of Regents' Oversight Plan](#) that is described in the charter

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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 10 [Performance Framework](#) benchmarks should be used by charter schools for self-assessment and planning purposes and are used by the CSO to frame the renewal site visit.

### Charter Renewal Site Visit Benchmarks

To evaluate the charter school's performance and inform the NYSED renewal recommendation provided to the Board of Regents, the CSO will summarize key findings and include an assessment of the charter school's benchmark ratings using the scale below.

Level	Description
<b>Meets</b>	The school generally meets the performance benchmark; few concerns are noted.
<b>Approaches</b>	The school does not meet the performance benchmark; a number of concerns are noted.
<b>Fall Far Below</b>	The school falls far below the performance benchmark; significant concerns are noted.

## 2015 Charter School Performance Framework Benchmarks

Educational Success	<p><b>Benchmark 1: Student Performance:</b> 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).</p>
	<p><b>Benchmark 2: Teaching and Learning:</b> 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.</p>
	<p><b>Benchmark 3: Culture, Climate, and Family Engagement:</b> 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.</p>
Organizational Soundness	<p><b>Benchmark 4: Financial Condition:</b> The school is in sound and stable financial condition as evidenced by performance on key financial indicators.</p>
	<p><b>Benchmark 5: Financial Management:</b> 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.</p>
	<p><b>Benchmark 6: Board Oversight and Governance:</b> 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.</p>
	<p><b>Benchmark 7: Organizational Capacity:</b> 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.</p>
Faithfulness to Charter & Law	<p><b>Benchmark 8: Mission and Key Design Elements:</b> The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.</p>
	<p><b>Benchmark 9: Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention:</b> 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.</p>
	<p><b>Benchmark 10: Legal Compliance:</b> The school complies with applicable laws, regulations, and the provisions of its charter.</p>



## 2019 Charter School Performance Framework Benchmarks

Educational Success	<b>Benchmark 1: Student Performance:</b> The school has met or exceeded achievement indicators for academic proficiency, trends toward proficiency, similar schools, college and career readiness, and high school graduation, if applicable. Proficiency at the elementary/middle school level shall be defined as achieving a performance level of 3 or higher on Grades 3-8 state assessments in ELA, math, and science. At the high school level, passing shall be defined as obtaining a Regents exam score of 65 or higher.
	<b>Benchmark 2: Teaching and Learning:</b> 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 implements research-based practices and has rigorous and coherent curriculum and assessments that are aligned to New York State Learning Standards 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.
	<b>Benchmark 3: Culture, Climate, and Student and Family Engagement:</b> The school has systems in place to support students' social and emotional health and to provide for a positive, safe, and respectful learning environment that prepares all students for college and career. 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	<b>Benchmark 4: Financial Condition:</b> The school is in sound and stable financial condition as evidenced by performance on key financial indicators.
	<b>Benchmark 5: Financial Management:</b> 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.
	<b>Benchmark 6: Board Oversight and Governance:</b> 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.
	<b>Benchmark 7: Organizational Capacity:</b> The school has established a well-functioning organizational structure and has 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	<b>Benchmark 8: Mission and Key Design Elements:</b> The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.
	<b>Benchmark 9: Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention:</b> 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. High schools are meeting persistence rates commensurate with the NYSED target.
	<b>Benchmark 10: Legal Compliance:</b> The school complies with applicable laws, regulations, and the provisions of its charter.

## Planning and Scheduling the Renewal Site Visit

The CSO site visit team lead will contact the charter school leader and board chair to discuss a site visit date and next steps.

### Charter School Leader Responsibilities:

- Finalize a site visit date with the CSO site visit team lead.
- Review this document in its entirety. Share with all stakeholders.
- Review the [Performance Framework](#) (2015 PF or 2019 PF, whichever is applicable to [your charter school's designation](#) for renewal purposes). Share with all stakeholders.
- Speak with charter school staff about the purpose of the renewal site visit, what to expect during the site visit, and their potential involvement in focus groups and/or classroom observations. Work with the CSO site visit team lead on developing the site visit schedule and the classroom observation schedule. See the samples below.
- Upload required documents to the NYSED Business Portal, as indicated below.
- If you have any questions, contact your CSO site visit team lead.

### Charter Schools Uploading Documents to the NYSED Business Portal:

As necessary, the CSO site visit team may request and will review documents prior to, during, and after the visit. Some site visit teams may request materials by email. Document reviews include those relevant to the charter school's performance and operations during the charter term, such as charter information, the Annual Report, and site visit reports from previous years.

Please upload these documents to the NYSED Business Portal:

1. Optional: Upload the most recent charter school-administered teacher, parent, and/or student survey results; and
2. Other documents as requested by the CSO site visit team lead.

## Preparing the Renewal Site Visit Schedule:

The CSO site visit team lead, with input from the charter school leader, will create the renewal site visit schedule. The site visit schedule is intended to be a flexible guide for the day and may be adjusted to enable the CSO site visit team to gather all pertinent information and documentation.

### Sample Day 1 Renewal Site Visit

Time	Activity	Room Number
8:15 AM – 8:30 AM	CSO site visit team meets with school leader for orientation to the school	xxxxx
8:30 AM – 9:30 AM	Leadership Focus Group	xxxxx
9:30 AM – 11:00 AM	Classroom Observations	xxxxx
11:00 AM – 11:45 AM	Board Focus Group	xxxxx



11:45 AM – 12:45 PM	Classroom Observations	xxxxx
12:45 PM – 1:45 PM	Lunch and Team Time	xxxxx
1:45 PM – 2:45 PM	Special Populations Focus Group	xxxxx
2:45 PM – 3:30 PM	Team Time	xxxxx
3:30 PM – 3:45 PM	Closing Meeting (Optional)	xxxxx

**Notes:**

1. Leave time in between observations in order to discuss them and access the next one.
2. You can schedule time for pre-observation and post-observation discussion before and after each observation or group them if more efficient.
3. Schedule a lunch break for the site visit team.

**Introductory meeting with charter school leader**

- The CSO site visit team lead introduces the team members to the charter school leader and reviews the purpose of the renewal site visit.
- The charter school leader briefly orients the CSO site visit team to the charter school including a general overview of what the CSO site visit team should see during its site visit.
- The CSO site visit team lead answers any questions the charter school leader has and ensures that s/he has a copy of the applicable 2015 or 2019 [Performance Framework](#).

**Focus group interviews**

- The CSO site visit team will decide on the number and types of focus group interviews to be conducted. Along with the charter school leader, the CSO site visit team lead will determine interview times that work best for all stakeholders. Examples of focus groups are charter school leadership, special population staff, parents, board of trustees, and/or teachers.

**Classroom observations**

**Note: The CSO site visit team selects a representative sample of classrooms to observe.**

- The CSO site visit team will not conduct observations of short-term substitute teachers but may observe classes taught by long-term substitute teachers.
- CSO site visit team members will observe classroom instruction together with the instructional leader for that subject area or grade level, whenever possible. Ideally, the instructional leader provides regular feedback to the teacher being observed. Generally, CSO site visit team members separate to observe different classrooms simultaneously.
- As per the Classroom Observation Worksheet (Appendix A), prior to each classroom observation, the instructional leader will frame the observation by responding to the pre-visit prompt. Each classroom observation lasts approximately 15-20 minutes. After each classroom observation, the instructional leader responds to the post-observation prompt.

### Surveys

- The CSO site visit team will reference the CSO Annual Survey of Charter School Parents/Guardians, Teachers, and Students.
- The charter school has the option of uploading its most recently administered parent, student, and/or teacher survey results.
- The CSO site visit team has access to the charter school's NYCDOE School Quality Report that provides parent and teacher survey results for NYC-based charter schools.

### **Closing Meeting and Site Visit Reports**

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

1. Identify any additional information or documents needed to complete the assessment of performance;
2. If possible, share any preliminary **high-level information** based on the observations made during the site visit;
3. If possible, provide the charter school leadership with a list of NYSED resources;
4. Address remaining questions from charter school leadership; and
5. Review the process for finalizing the renewal site visit report.

Following the site visit, the CSO site visit team lead will send the charter school leader and the BOT chair a draft renewal site visit report. The report is a summary of findings on each of the 10 Performance Framework benchmarks regarding the charter school's performance at the time of the site visit. The findings are based on cumulative evidence from relevant documentation as well as observations and information collected on site. The draft renewal site visit report will be sent to the charter school leader and BOT chair to review and provide factual corrections, returning comments to the CSO within a reasonable timeframe (typically one week). Once the factual corrections, if any, are reviewed, the CSO will finalize the report and send it to the charter school. At this time, the charter school may, if desired, submit a written response to the findings, which will be attached to the final report.

Along with the final report, the CSO will send the charter school leader and the BOT chair an Action Plan template to complete. This action plan will serve as a tool to communicate the actions that the charter school intends to take toward improving or maintaining its Performance Framework Benchmark ratings and assist the CSO liaison in better understanding these actions. The final renewal report, along with the charter school's evaluative comments, if any, will be posted on the CSO website and used in discussions regarding the charter school's renewal recommendation.

NYSED Charter School Office

**Appendix A: CSO Learning Classroom Observation Evidence Worksheet**

School name:	Date:	CSO team observer name:		
Class title/subject area:	Grade:	Was a school rep observing with you? Y N	School rep name:	School rep title:
Type of class: <input type="checkbox"/> Gen ED <input type="checkbox"/> ICT <input type="checkbox"/> SETTS/Resource Room <input type="checkbox"/> Stand-alone ENL <input type="checkbox"/> Pull-out/break-out room <input type="checkbox"/> Dual language <input type="checkbox"/> Other				
# of adults in the classroom:	Role(s): <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Lead teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Co-teacher(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching Asst. <input type="checkbox"/> SPED teacher <input type="checkbox"/> ENL Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Social Emotional Staff):			
Total number of students:	Duration of observation (minutes):			

**PRE-OBSERVATION (with school administrator):**

**Ensure that lesson plans are available prior to observations.**

Question to school staff member viewing with observer: **What should we expect to see in this classroom in terms of staffing, instruction, content, key design elements, differentiation, student engagement, and other norms for students and teachers while they are in this class?**

**DURING OBSERVATION:****LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

<b>Metric</b>	<b>Extent to which Metric is Observed</b>	<b>Additional Notes</b>
A. Lesson organization and preparation evident (i.e. lesson plans available, posted agenda or objectives, prepared materials, effective use of resources).	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Observed	
B. Students demonstrate awareness of class rules, procedures, and expectations, which are clear. Students exhibit self-monitoring behavior.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Observed	
C. Students are learning ready (e.g. available for check-in; dressed as expected by the school; on time; and have the tools necessary to engage in classwork) the learning environment is safe and respectful; there are positive relationships between teacher and students, and among students.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Observed	

**INSTRUCTION**

<b>Metric</b>	<b>Extent to which Metric is Observed</b>	<b>Additional Notes</b>
E. Effectively communicates objective(s) to students. Teacher has command of content and appropriate pedagogy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Observed	
F. Assessment tools used to check for student understanding, Teacher responses are immediate and targeted.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Observed	
G. Differentiates lesson to meet needs of all students, follows lesson plan. Teacher uses a variety of learning modes. Teacher makes knowledge and	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Observed	

to lives of students. Questioning and discussion lead to critical thinking. connections to prior		
H. Provides feedback to students based on learning assessments.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Observed	
I. Students are engaged rather than merely compliant, and are actively participating in learning activities. Students are aware of their own learning goals and progress; they are accountable for and monitor their own learning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Observed	
J. Class time is maximized for learning. Pacing is age- and content-appropriate. There is a balance between teacher talk and student talk.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Observed	

**POST OBSERVATION (with school administrator):**

Question to school staff member viewing with observer **Was the observed instruction aligned with the school's instructional model and key design elements? (What feedback would you give the teacher based on what was just observed?) Can this question be reworded so that it doesn't get too close to teacher evaluation?**

**NOTES:** List school's approved key design elements