

Charter School

Site Visit Protocol

2023-24

**Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

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# Introduction

In conducting site visits, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) is carrying out the requirements of the charter school regulations ([603 CMR 1.00](https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr1.html)), which outline the ongoing review of charter schools. Site visit reports, generated by the Department, are important components of the body of evidence used by the commissioner and Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) in making a renewal determination for each school.

Site visits take place at least once during a charter term and may be conducted at additional times when deemed necessary by the Department. Site visits vary in length depending on the size, location, age, and/or specific conditions of a particular school. They are one of the means by which the Department documents each charter school’s performance and progress over time, corroborating and augmenting the information reported each year in the school’s annual report. The [Charter School Performance Criteria](https://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/acct.html?section=criteria) (Criteria) form the foundation of this process and are the basis on which this Site Visit Protocol (Protocol) was written. During the site visit, the school is assessed on all or a subset of the performance indicators contained in the Criteria (see [*Appendix B: Guiding Questions*](#_Appendix_B:_Guiding)). The Criteria expand upon and give definition to the three areas of charter school accountability defined in 603 CMR 1.00: faithfulness to the charter, academic program success, and organizational viability.

The purpose of a site visit is to gather and document evidence about a charter school’s performance in relation to the Criteria for accountability purposes. Evidence gathered during the site visit process is ultimately used to make a renewal determination or inform other authorizing actions pertaining to the school. Please see [Charter School Renewal Guidance and Materials](https://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/acct.html?section=renew) for more details. Accountability decisions may be required prior to renewal processes if evidence points to deficits in the school’s performance; this may include the imposition of conditions, probation, or revocation in the most serious circumstances (See [603 CMR 1.00](https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr1.html?section=12)). Site visits and subsequent site visit reports are not intended to provide specific technical assistance or other advice to the school. The site visit is also not intended to directly assist schools in making decisions about how to improve academic programs or operations.

This Protocol is designed to be a resource for charter school leaders, external site visitors, Department staff, and contracted vendors who may conduct site visits for the Department. It articulates the types of visits, site visit processes, roles and responsibilities of all parties, and expected outcomes. The Protocol is meant to provide useful information about site visits so stakeholders and visitors know what to expect and how to prepare. Familiarity with the Protocol helps site visits run smoothly. At the end of the document, in [*Appendix A: Site Visit Checklist for School Leaders/Designees*](#_Appendix_A:_Site), is a checklist to assist schools in preparing for the site visit.

# Types of Site Visits

The Department conducts site visits as frequently as necessary for accountability monitoring. Schools typically receive at least two visits during each charter term, including the renewal inspection. The length and scope of site visits may vary depending on the school’s age, size, location, and/or status (conditions or probation). Visits may also vary in length and scope if certain special considerations apply. Special considerations include, but are not limited to:

* Trending low academic achievement results for all students or subgroups of students, or a sudden drop in academic achievement
* Concerns about discipline rates or other student indicator data
* Concerns about a school’s financial health
* Significant leadership or board turnover
* Complaints, dependent on the volume and severity
* A pending or recently granted Board-approved amendment request

The table below outlines each type of typical site visit and under what circumstances each might occur. Please see [*Appendix C: Types of Visits*](#_Appendix_C:_Types) for more details.

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| Type of Visit | Approximate Length | Typically Eligible Schools | Criteria Typically Addressed |
| **Core Criteria Site Visit** | 1 day | * Schools in the spring of their first year of operation
* After renewal, schools in their second or third year of operation
 | 1, 2, 3 (if applicable), 5, 6.2, 8.3 (if applicable), 9, and 10 |
| **Full Criteria Site Visit** | 1 – 2 days  | * Schools in the spring of their second year of operation
 | 1, 2, 3 (if applicable),5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 |
| **Targeted Site Visit** | 1 – 2 days | * Schools on conditions or probation
* Schools where special considerations apply
 | Based on conditions, probation, or special considerations (see list above) |
| **Renewal Inspection**[[1]](#footnote-2) | 1 – 2 days | * Schools in their fifth year of each charter term
 | 1, 6.2, 8.3 (if applicable), and 9[[2]](#footnote-3) |

Please note that the length, type, and frequency of site visits and criteria addressed are ultimately determined by the Department. The Department provides adequate notice to all schools of any scheduled visits but reserves the right to visit schools unannounced at any time during the charter term.

# Planning the Site Visit

## Scheduling the Site Visit Date(s)

The Department typically conducts site visits between October and May. During the summer prior to the site visit, the Department notifies schools of planned site visit dates and the type of visit to be conducted. If the suggested date(s) are not feasible, the Department works with the school to find mutually convenient alternate date(s) for the visit. Once the date(s) have been confirmed by the school, they may not be changed, barring an emergency. If the school needs to change the date(s), the school must contact the Department as soon as possible. The Department has a limited number of available visit dates and may not be able to accommodate requests for changes. Once the school leader confirms the date(s) of the site visit, they should relay that information to all relevant stakeholders and ensure that the date(s) selected have regular programming. **No testing, field trips, or other events outside of the normal academic program should be conducted on the day(s) of the visit.**

## Pre-visit Planning and Preparation

The site visit team leader is typically the school’s liaison in the Department’s Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign. This person is generally responsible for all communication with the school, including requesting documents from the school, developing a schedule for the visit in consultation with the school leader or designee, assembling site visit materials for team members, orienting team members to the visit, leading the visit, and writing the resulting site visit report.

Site visit teams include a minimum of two Department staff and frequently include external volunteers. External volunteers who participate in site visits bring additional expertise to the team that may include fiscal management, governance, curriculum or instructional experience, or an area specific to a school’s mission. All team members are subject to a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check.

Planning for the site visit begins in earnest approximately seven weeks prior to the visit, when the site visit team leader sends the school an email that outlines:

* The scope of the visit (See [*Appendix C: Types of Visits*](#_Appendix_C:_Types) for more information.)
* The documents the school needs to provide to the Department and the timeline for submitting them ([*Appendix D: Site Visit Documents*](#_Appendix_D:_Site) lists all of the documents that schools *may* be asked to provide for the site visit.)
* The focus groups that need to be included in the visit (See [*Appendix F: Focus Groups*](#_Appendix_F:_Focus) for a complete list of the focus groups that *may* be conducted during a site visit.)

The letter also invites the school leader or designee to provide information that is used to create a draft of the schedule for the visit. (See [*Appendix C: Types of Visits*](#_Appendix_C:_Types) for more information)

The Department assumes that the school leader will act as the coordinator and liaison for site visits; however, the school has the option of designating another person to assume this role. Should a designee be assigned, the Department assumes that the designee will communicate all relevant information back to the school leader and school stakeholders. The school’s visit coordinator should be knowledgeable about the school’s schedule and programming, able to communicate quickly with various stakeholders, and must work with colleagues to resolve any scheduling issues. The site visit team leader works with the school leader or designee to ensure that key documents are provided electronically to the site visit team in a timely manner. Additional tasks include developing the site visit schedule, organizing the appropriate stakeholders for focus groups, and coordinating logistics. The Department may offer school leaders an introductory webinar that outlines the site visit process. For additional guidance on preparing for the site visit, please see [*Appendix A: Site Visit Checklist for School Leaders/Designees*](#_Appendix_A:_Site)*.*

# Site Visit Components

The table below summarizes each of the typical components of the site visit included in the site visit schedule. In addition, the schedule should enable the site visit team to observe all aspects of the school’s program, including, for example, the school’s extended day program and mission-related activities. Sample schedules for a one- or two-day site visit are contained in [*Appendix E: Sample Schedules*](#_Appendix_E:_Sample)*.*

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| Component | Description |
| **Team meeting** | The team leader welcomes the team, establishes the purpose and context of the visit, provides relevant materials, reviews the site visit schedule, reviews the classroom observation form, reviews the code of conduct, and answers questions from team members. |
| **Meeting(s) with school leader** | The team meets with the school leader to introduce themselves, to confirm logistical details of the visit, and to ask any remaining clarifying questions about the classroom observation form. The team may request additional meetings with the school leader during the visit as needed. |
| **Classroom observations** | The site visit schedule should include enough classroom observations to ensure coverage of a sampling of all grades and core subjects. The site visit team should observe all types of classrooms: general education, special education, English as a second language (ESL) instruction, and classrooms providing sheltered English immersion (SEI) instruction. While on site, the team should be free to visit all classrooms without advance notice to the school or the teachers. The length of classroom observations depends on the scope of the visit, with observations ranging from 10 to 20 minutes.The site visit team uses a [classroom observation form](https://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/acct.html?section=visit) developed by the Department. Prior to the visit, the site visit team leader works with the school leader to adapt the form with information specific to the school. |
| **Focus groups/interviews** | A few focus groups must be scheduled for the site visit. It is the school’s responsibility to gather a representative group from each relevant category through an open invitation, and to inform each participant of the time and place of the meeting. The Department expects that each participant is given complete freedom to speak regarding their knowledge of and experience at the school, with no limits or repercussions imposed. See [*Appendix F: Focus Groups*](#_Appendix_F:_Focus) for a complete list of the focus groups that may be conducted during the site visit. When the Department notifies the school of the scope of the site visit, the school is provided with a list of the specific focus groups that will be held. If necessary, the team leader may arrange additional interviews with other staff in consultation with the school administrator(s). For example, the team may want to meet with the school’s curriculum director to ask specific questions about curricular documents.Prior to the visit, the site visit team leader discusses the composition of focus groups with the school leader to ensure that focus group membership does not overlap and that the appropriate staff members will be present.Given time constraints, multiple focus groups within the same category of stakeholder group generally cannot be accommodated unless the school has multiple campuses. For a school with multiple campuses, the site visit team typically only conducts one focus group with administrators but may conduct a focus group with teachers at each campus and with students at each campus (if applicable). |
| **Team time/team moderation** | The site visit schedule should typically include a two-hour block of time near the end of the visit during which the team reviews documents, makes additional classroom and school observations, records and discusses observations, data and other evidence, identifies issues for further review, and develops preliminary findings for a subset of the Criteria. |
| **Exit meeting with school leader** | The site visit concludes with an exit meeting with the school leader. This meeting provides the team with an opportunity to obtain clarification about any outstanding questions or issues and to thank the school leader for the assistance provided during the site visit. The team typically reports preliminary findings in the areas of *Mission and Key Design Elements* (Criterion 1) and *Instruction* (Key Indicator 6.2). After the preliminary findings have been shared, the school leader may ask questions about the site visit process and next steps; however, the team will not answer questions about the preliminary findings or evidence gathered on the day of the site visit. Finally, the team leader describes next steps in the site visit process. |

# After The Site Visit

After the site visit, the site visit team leader prepares a written report that summarizes the evidence gathered for each of the criteria and key indicators included within the scope of the visit. The report also includes ratings for most criteria and key indicators to clearly communicate the school’s performance.[[3]](#footnote-4) The rating scale is summarized below:

**Exceeds:** The school fully and consistently meets the criterion and is a potential exemplar in this area.

**Meets:** The school generally meets the criterion and/or minor concern(s) are noted.

**Partially Meets:** The school meets some aspects of the criterion but not others and/or moderate concern(s) are noted.

**Falls Far Below:** The school falls far below the criterion and/or significant concerns are noted.

After the site visit team leader drafts the report, other site visit team members review the report to ensure that it is factually accurate and reflects the collective thoughts of the team. After incorporating the team’s corrections and after further consultation with the coordinator of accountability monitoring and the director of the Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign, the team leader issues a draft report to the school. Reports are typically issued approximately eight weeks following the site visit.

The school has one week to report factual inaccuracies to the Department or to request a conversation about the findings and/or ratings. The team leader makes factual corrections and a final report is issued to the school leader and chair of the school’s board of trustees. If the school chooses, a written response to the site visit report may be submitted to the Department. This response is appended to the final site visit report.

The site visit report becomes a permanent part of the school’s record. The site visit report and all related materials become a part of the body of evidence that the commissioner and Board consider when the school enters the renewal process.

# Appendix A: Site Visit Checklist for School Leaders/Designees

The school leader or designee should use the following checklist to prepare for accountability site visits.

**As soon as you receive the scheduling email**

* Check that the suggested site visit date(s) are on a regular school day without any schoolwide testing, field trips, or early release.
* Confirm the suggested date(s) as soon as possible. Please email your confirmation. If the date(s) create undue hardship for your school, contact the Department staff member who sent the email and work to find mutually agreeable alternate date(s).
* Once the date(s) are confirmed, share the site visit date(s) and the Site Visit Protocol with all relevant school stakeholders.
* Attend the site visit introductory webinar provided by the Department (if offered).

**Approximately seven weeks prior to the visit**

* Carefully review the email from the site visit team leader that outlines the scope of the visit, the documents the school needs to provide to the Department, and the focus groups that need to be included in the site visit. Reply to the site visit team leader to acknowledge receipt of the email.
* Review the Site Visit Protocol and share it with the school community.
* Talk with the school’s board of trustees, staff, and community to orient them to the purpose of the site visit, what their respective roles will be during the visit, and what to expect when the team visits. Inform teachers that classroom visits will be part of the visit; however, assure teachers that the purpose of classroom visits is to collect evidence and capture schoolwide trends, not to evaluate individual teachers. Ask teachers to avoid administering tests or quizzes on the day(s) of the site visit so that site visitors can observe instruction.
* Begin the process of identifying focus group participants. As noted in [*Appendix F: Focus Groups*](#_Appendix_F:_Focus), if a quorum of the board of trustees or a quorum of any subcommittee of the board is present at the interview, the interview falls within the scope of the Open Meeting Law, and the board should plan to conduct the meeting accordingly.
* Begin to gather the documents the school needs to provide to the Department. All the documents that schools ***may*** be asked to provide for the site visit are listed and described in [*Appendix D: Site Visit Documents*](#_Appendix_D:_Site). The email from the site visit team leader lists the ***specific*** documents that will be required and the timeline for submitting them. Most documents are due to the Department four weeks prior to the site visit.

**Four weeks prior to the site visit**

* Send documents for the visit (see above) to the site visit team leader. All documents submitted before the visit must be submitted electronically. It is important for schools to submit all the requested documents in a timely manner and for schools to use the file-naming conventions included in [*Appendix D: Site Visit Documents*](#_Appendix_D:_Site). This will facilitate the site visit team’s task of reviewing the documents.

**Approximately three weeks prior to the visit**

* Begin assembling a representative group for each focus group through an open invitation. See [*Appendix F: Focus Groups*](#_Appendix_F:_Focus) for further instructions.
* Identify private locations for conducting each focus group and, if feasible, a separate private location where the site visit team may work throughout the day.
* Work with the site visit team leader and the school community, including the board of trustees, to determine the schedule for the visit. This may take several iterations to complete. The schedule needs to be finalized with the team leader at least one week prior to the visit.

**Two weeks prior to the visit**

* Confirm participants for focus groups. If any participants need accommodations to fully participate in the focus group (e.g., translation, printed questions), work with the site visit team leader as needed to arrange for these accommodations.
* Arrange coverage (as needed) for school staff members who participate in focus groups.
* Complete the Focus Group Attendees template and send to the site visit team leader.

**Approximately one week prior to the visit**

* Speak with the site visit team leader by telephone to review and finalize logistics for the visit, the site visit schedule, the list of focus group attendees, and the classroom observation form.

**The day before the site visit**

* Distribute the site visit schedule to the school community.
* If teachers typically create lesson plans, ask them to make a copy of each lesson plan and other lesson materials to share with site visitors.
* Determine who will attend the site visit team’s exit meeting with the school leader. Invite those individuals to attend. (Please note: Only the school leader is required. If additional staff members attend, it is typically not more than one or two.)

**During the visit**

* Ensure that the team’s meeting room remains private and any additional requested documents are provided and clearly labeled.
* Ensure that rooms where focus groups are conducted remain private.
* Ensure that all focus group attendees (especially students and family members) are present for the start of each focus group.
* Be available to the site visit team for a morning orientation, a focus group, and any necessary follow-up. Assist the team in obtaining any additional information, documents, data, or interviews with school staff.
* Bring concerns and questions to the attention of the team leader as they arise.
* Attend an exit meeting with the site visit team to hear the team’s preliminary findings and next steps in the site visit process.

**After the visit**

* Work with the school’s leadership team to review and provide factual corrections, or other feedback, on the draft site visit report.
* If deemed necessary, prepare a response to the final report. This response will be appended to the report.
* Share the final, public site visit report with staff, families, board members, and other members of the school community.

# Appendix B: Guiding Questions

The site visit team gathers and analyzes evidence in alignment with the Charter School Performance Criteria. This appendix lists the questions that guide the team’s inquiry.

## Faithfulness to Charter

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| Criterion 1: Mission and Key Design Elements |
| The school is faithful to its mission, implements the key design elements outlined in its charter, and substantially meets its Accountability Plan goals.  |
| * Do all school stakeholders share a common understanding of the school’s mission as outlined in its charter?
* Is the school operating in a manner that is faithful to its mission? Is the school implementing the key design elements outlined in its charter?
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| Criterion 2: Access and Equity |
| The school ensures access and equity for all students eligible to attend the school. |
| * Does the school seek to ensure access to the program and equity for all students eligible to attend the school? Per Department guidelines, has the school annually updated and received approval for its student recruitment and retention plan, and has the school implemented the strategies described in the plan?
* Has the school been successful in recruiting and retaining a student population that is demographically comparable to the population that is enrolled in similar grades in schools from which the charter school enrolls students?
* Do school policies and practices allow all students to have equal rights of access to the opportunities provided by the educational program?
* How do discipline rates compare to the state? Are discipline and emergency removal rates for any student subgroups higher than the percentages for all students?
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## Academic Program Success

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| Criterion 6: Program Delivery |
| The school delivers a high quality academic program that meets the academic needs of all students. |

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| **Key Indicator 6.1: Curriculum** |
| The school’s documented curriculum is aligned to state curriculum frameworks and expectations; is aligned vertically between grades and horizontally across classrooms at the same grade level; provides lessons and materials that represent a variety of cultures and perspectives; and supports opportunities for all students to master these skills and concepts. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and revised. |
| * Is the school’s documented curriculum aligned to state curriculum frameworks and expectations?
* Is the curriculum aligned vertically between grades and horizontally across classrooms at the same grade level?
* Do lessons and curricular materials represent a variety of cultures and perspectives?
* Does the curriculum support opportunities for all students to master skills and concepts?
* Is the curriculum regularly reviewed and revised to ensure quality and effectiveness?
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| **Key Indicator 6.2: Instruction** |
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| The school staff has a common understanding of high-quality instruction. Instructional practices are aligned to this common understanding. Instructional practices are based on high expectations for all students and reflect cultural proficiency. Instruction fosters student engagement. Classroom environments are conducive to learning. |
| * Does the school staff share a common understanding of high quality instruction?
* Does classroom instruction mirror the school’s expected/common instructional practices?
* Does instruction reflect high expectations for all students?
* Does instruction reflect cultural proficiency?
* Does instruction foster student engagement?
* Are classroom environments conducive to learning?
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| **Key Indicator 6.3: Assessment and Program Evaluation** |
| Teachers and administrators use disaggregated qualitative and quantitative data to modify instruction to improve academic and non-academic outcomes for all students and subgroups. School staff and administrators use disaggregated data to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of its program to serve all students and modify the program in order to improve student outcomes.  |
| * Do teachers and administrators use disaggregated qualitative and quantitative data to modify instruction to improve academic and non-academic outcomes for all students and student groups?
* Do school staff and administrators use disaggregated data to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of its program to serve all students and modify the program in order to improve student outcomes?
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| **Key Indicator 6.4: Supports for All Learners** |
| The school has a proactive system to effectively identify and address all students’ strengths and needs for academic, behavioral, and social-emotional development through a tiered support model. Data and progress monitoring are used to ensure that all students across all subgroups have equal access and equitable support, interventions, and resources to achieve, grow, and advance. The school regularly uses data to evaluate and modify its support programming to ensure student success. |
| * Does the school have a proactive, data-based system to effectively identify all students’ strengths and needs for academic, behavioral, and social-emotional development?
* Does the school implement a [tiered support model](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfss/mtss/) that effectively addresses the strengths and needs of all students, across all groups? (Evidence must address the following questions.)
	+ What are some of the main Tier 1 academic and behavioral or social-emotional supports available to all students?
	+ What is the process used to identify and monitor students potentially in need of Tier 2 and Tier 3 academic and behavioral or social-emotional supports?
	+ What are some of the main Tier 2 (some students) and Tier 3 (few students) academic and behavioral or social emotional supports and interventions the school provides?
	+ Is the school’s tiered support model understood by school staff and consistently implemented with fidelity?
* Does the school use data to evaluate and modify its support programming to ensure student success? (Evidence must address the following question.)
	+ How does the school use data to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the school’s tiered support model and modify the system to better support all learners?
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| **Criterion 7: School Climate and Family Engagement** |
| The school creates safe, positive, healthy, culturally responsive, inclusive, and welcoming learning environments. These environments cultivate supportive, authentic relationships and a strong sense of belonging and connection, which value the diverse assets and voices of all students, staff, and families. |

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| **Key Indicator 7.1: Safe and Supportive Environment** |
| The school ensures that school and classroom environments are safe, supportive, culturally responsive, welcoming, respectful, inclusive, and reflective of the community and students’ cultures and identities. The school creates an environment that supports all students’ sense of belonging and helps students develop social and emotional knowledge, skills, and competencies for a multicultural world.  |
| * Does the school’s program include elements designed to foster a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment that supports all students’ sense of belonging? (Evidence must address the following questions.)
* How does the school ensure the physical and social-emotional safety of students?
* What programmatic elements are designed to foster students’ sense of belonging?
* Are students’ cultures and identities reflected in the learning environment?
* Is there evidence of strong relationships between students and staff?
* Is the school’s behavioral management system supportive and responsive for all students? (Evidence must address the following questions.)
* What is the school’s behavioral management system?
* Is the school’s behavioral management system implemented consistently across classrooms and grade levels?
* Do school staff review disaggregated discipline data? (If so, who is reviewing the data, in what context, and how is the data disaggregated?)
* Has the school made any recent changes to the behavioral management system to reduce rates of discipline?
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| **Key Indicator 7.2 Family Engagement** |
| The school develops effective relationships with all families/guardians and effectively communicates with them about the academic progress and social emotional well-being of students. The school partners with families in a way that is strengths-based, culturally responsive, and collaborative, and that demonstrates inclusion for all kinds of languages, norms, family structures, and values.  |
| * Does the school work to develop effective relationships with families/guardians?
* Does the school effectively communicate with families/guardians about the academic progress and social emotional well-being of students?
* Does the school partner with families in ways that are strengths-based, culturally responsive, and collaborative? Does the school demonstrate inclusion for all kinds of language, norms, family structures, and values?
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## Organizational Viability

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| **Criterion 8: Capacity** |
| The school sustains a well-functioning organizational structure and creates a professional, inclusive, respectful, and welcoming working climate for all staff. |

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| **Key Indicator 8.1: School Systems and Leadership** |
| 1. The school’s leadership team implements school academic programming and operations in a manner to meet a clearly defined mission and set of goals. The school defines and delineates clear roles and responsibilities among leaders, staff, management, and board of trustee members. The school has clear and well-understood systems for decision-making and communication processes among all members of the school community.
2. School leadership fosters a culture of accountability, trust, and collaboration with school stakeholders to promote joint responsibility for student learning. Based on data, school leadership takes concrete and ambitious steps to close identified achievement, access, and opportunity gaps. School leadership sets goals and establishes systems and structures for the recruitment, development, and retention of educators reflective of the racial and ethnic composition of the students and families it serves. School leadership ensures an inclusive, respectful environment for all staff.
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| * Does the school clearly define and delineate roles and responsibilities among leaders, staff, management, and board of trustees members?
* Does the school have clear and well-understood systems for decision-making? Is there an effective system for communication between all members of the school community?
* Has school leadership taken concrete and ambitious steps to close identified achievement, access, and opportunity gaps?
* Has school leadership set goals and established systems and structures for the recruitment, development, and retention of educators reflective of the racial and ethnic composition of students and families the school serves?
* Does school leadership ensure an inclusive, respectful environment for all staff?
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| **Key Indicator 8.2: Professional Climate and Standards for Performance** |
| 1. The school staff frequently collaborate and engage in professional development to improve implementation of the curriculum and instructional practice. The school implements a comprehensive professional learning culture that supports the development of effective educators. The school develops staff capacity to examine and dismantle implicit biases and systemic inequalities in order to create environments in which all students can deeply learn, grow, and thrive.
2. All school staff are provided the tools and resources to perform their responsibilities and meet expectations for performance. An objective and transparent system is in place for monitoring individual staff performance against established expectations, which includes a formal process of evaluation for all employees, including teachers.
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| * Do school staff frequently collaborate and engage in professional development to improve implementation of the curriculum and instructional practice?
* Does the school develop staff capacity to examine and dismantle implicit biases and systemic inequalities in order to create environments in which all students can learn, grow, and thrive?
* Is an objective and transparent system in place for monitoring individual staff performance against established expectations? Does the system include a formal process of evaluation for all employees, including teachers?
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| **Key Indicator 8.3: Contractual Relationships (if applicable)** |
| 1. (If applicable) The board of trustees and school leadership establish effective working relationships with their management company while maintaining appropriate separation between the entities. Changes in the school’s relationship with its management company comply with required charter amendment procedures.
2. (If applicable) An effective working relationship exists between the board of trustees and school leadership of a Horace Mann charter school and the host district, which operates under one or more memoranda of understanding (MOU) that clearly articulate the relationship with the host district regarding services, including but not limited to, facilities, funding, and waivers of collective bargaining agreement provisions.[[4]](#footnote-5) The board of trustees works to ensure that the memorandum or memoranda, as applicable, are implemented appropriately.
 |
| Education Management Organization (EMO)* Do stakeholders clearly understand the roles and responsibilities among the board, school leaders, and the EMO?
* Have the board of trustees and school leadership established effective working relationships with their management company while maintaining appropriate separation between the entities?
* Has the school or board of the school ensured that the contract with the EMO is appropriately executed? (Evidence must address the following questions.)
	+ Does the board of trustees use a documented process to evaluate the performance of the EMO on an annual basis?
	+ Have changes in the school’s relationship with its management company been made in compliance with charter amendment requirements? (if applicable)

Horace Mann* Do stakeholders clearly understand the roles and responsibilities among the board, school leaders, and the district?
* Have the board of trustees and school leadership of the Horace Mann charter school established an effective working relationship with the host district?
* Does the board of trustees of the school ensure that the MOU between the school and the district is implemented appropriately?
* Does the board of trustees of the school ensure that the MOU between the school and the collective bargaining unit is implemented appropriately? (if applicable)
 |

|  |
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| **Criterion 9: Governance** |
| Members of the board of trustees uphold their responsibilities under Massachusetts law and regulations to act as public agents authorized by the state and provide competent and appropriate governance to ensure the success and sustainability of the school. |
| * Does the board of trustees fulfill their legal and fiduciary responsibilities? (Evidence must address the following questions.)
* Does the board act in compliance with the board’s bylaws?
* Does the board act in compliance with Open Meeting Law?
* Does the board approve appropriate school policies?
* Does the board demonstrate appropriate oversight of the school’s efforts to be faithful to the mission?
* Does the board demonstrate appropriate oversight of the school’s academic performance?
* Does the board regularly review disaggregated student data to ensure that the school’s academic program is a success for all students?
* Does the board demonstrate appropriate oversight of the school leader?
* Does the board engage in governance tasks rather than management of day-to-day operations at the school?
* Does the board demonstrate appropriate oversight of the school’s finances?
* Does the board of trustees foster a culture of collaboration? (Evidence must address the following questions.)
* Does the board communicate regularly with other members of the school community?
* Does the board have clear and well-understood systems for decision-making?
* Do board of trustees meetings foster open, deliberate, and thorough discussions to facilitate and ensure public accountability?
* Does the board of trustees engage in strategic and continuous improvement planning? (Evidence must address the following questions.)
* Does the board have a strategic plan?
* Does the board ensure sustainability of the school by establishing clear plans for board and school leadership succession?
* Does the board recruit and select new members who have expertise and skills that support effective governance and who have connections to the community?
* Does the board train members to provide competent governance?
 |

# Appendix C: Types of Visits

This appendix includes further details specific to Core Criteria Site Visits, Full Criteria Site Visits, and Targeted Site Visits. Approximately eight weeks prior to each previously scheduled site visit, the site visit team leader will send an email to the school leader with detailed instructions on how to prepare. That email will specify:

* The scope of the visit; that is, the specific criteria to be addressed
* Documents to be submitted by the school
* Focus groups to be conducted

## Core Criteria Site Visit

|  |
| --- |
| Core Criteria Site Visit |
| **Purpose** | This visit is designed to gather evidence regarding the school’s implementation of its program and how it is performing in terms of a subset of the Criteria. |
| **Typically eligible schools** | * Schools in the spring of their first year of operation[[5]](#footnote-6)
* After renewal, schools in their second or third year of each charter term
 |
| **Length** | One day |
| **Site visit team composition** | Department staff and external reviewers (as needed) |
| **Criteria typically addressed** | 1, 2, 3 (if applicable), 5, 6.2, 8.3 (if applicable), 9, and 10. The site visit team leader will indicate whether any additional criteria will be included in the scope of the visit. |
| **Documents to be submitted to the school** | See [*Appendix D: Site Visit Documents*](#_Appendix_D:_Site) for a list of the documents to be submitted to the Department prior to the visit. The site visit team leader may request additional documents depending on the scope of the visit. |
| **Required focus groups** | * Board of Trustees
* Network Administrators (if applicable)
* District Administrators or EMO Representatives (if applicable)
* School Leaders/Administrators
* Teachers
* Others, as determined by the site visit team leader
 |
| **Product** | Core Criteria Site Visit Report that includes:* Ratings, findings, and evidence related to:
	+ Criterion 1: Mission and Key Design Elements
	+ Criterion 2: Access and Equity
	+ Criterion 3: Compliance (if applicable)
	+ Key Indicator 8.3: Contractual Relationships (if applicable)
	+ Criterion 9: Governance
* Findings and evidence related to:
	+ Criterion 5: Student Performance
	+ Key Indicator 6.2: Instruction
* Evidence related to:
	+ Criterion 10: Finance
* Ratings, findings, and evidence related to any other criteria or key indicators included in the scope of the visit.
 |

When the site visit team leader sends the school leader an email with instructions on how to prepare for the site visit, the email will include the table below, with guidelines to establish preferred times for Core Criteria Site Visit elements.

|  |
| --- |
| Core Criteria Site Visit Scheduling Guidelines |
| Please enter into the table below the times for which you would like to schedule the components of the site visit. **All of these events should occur before 1:00 PM.** Please do not schedule the board of trustees, school leaders/administrators, and teachers focus groups at the same times.  |
| Group | Time Needed | Time Scheduled | Location |
| Orientation by School Leader | 15 minutes | Just before beginning of school day |  |
| Board of Trustees | 75 minutes |  |  |
| Network Administrators (if applicable) | 60 minutes |  |  |
| District Administrators or EMO Representatives (if applicable) | 60 minutes |  |  |
| School Leaders/Administrators | 60 minutes |  |  |
| Teachers | 60 minutes |  |  |
| Students (if needed)  | 45 minutes |  |  |
| Home base location for team | All day | All day |  |

## Full Criteria Site Visit

|  |
| --- |
| Full Criteria Site Visit |
| **Purpose** | This visit is designed to gather evidence regarding the school’s implementation of its program and how it is performing in terms of the Criteria. |
| **Typically eligible schools** | Schools in the spring of their second year of operation |
| **Length** | One to two days |
| **Site visit team composition** | Department staff and external reviewers |
| **Criteria typically addressed** | 1, 2, 3 (if applicable), 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 |
| **Documents to be submitted to the school** | See [*Appendix D: Site Visit Documents*](#_Appendix_D:_Site) for a list of the documents to be submitted to the Department prior to the visit. The site visit team leader may request additional documents as needed. |
| **Required focus groups** | * Board of Trustees
* Network Administrators (if applicable)
* District Administrators or EMO Representatives (if applicable)
* School Leaders/Administrators
* Teachers
* Students
* Families
* Student and Family Support Services Staff
 |
| **Product** | Full Criteria Site Visit Report that includes:* Ratings, findings, and evidence related to:
	+ Criterion 1: Mission and Key Design Elements
	+ Criterion 2: Access and Equity
	+ Criterion 3: Compliance (if applicable)
	+ Key Indicator 6.1 Curriculum
	+ Key Indicator 6.2 Instruction
	+ Key Indicator 6.3 Assessment and Program Evaluation
	+ Key Indicator 6.4: Supports for All Learners
	+ Key Indicator 7.1 Safe and Supportive Environment
	+ Key Indicator 7.2 Family Engagement
	+ Key Indicator 8.1 School Systems and Leadership
	+ Key Indicator 8.2 Professional Climate and Standards for Performance
	+ Key Indicator 8.3: Contractual Relationships (if applicable)
	+ Criterion 9: Governance
* Findings and evidence related to:
	+ Criterion 5: Student Performance
* Evidence related to:
	+ Criterion 10: Finance
 |

When the site visit team leader sends the school leader an email with instructions on how to prepare for the site visit, the email will include the table below, with guidelines to establish preferred times for Full Criteria Site Visit elements.

|  |
| --- |
| Full Criteria Site Visit Scheduling Guidelines |
| Please enter into the table below the times for which you would like to schedule the components of the site visit. **All of these events should occur before 1:00 PM on the final day of the visit**. Please do not schedule the board of trustees, school leaders/administrators, and teachers focus groups at the same times.  |
| Group | Time Needed | Time Scheduled | Location | Date |
| Orientation by School Leader | 15 minutes | Just before beginning of school day |  |  |
| Board of Trustees | 90 minutes |  |  |  |
| Network Administrators (if applicable) | 60 minutes |  |  |  |
| District Administrators or EMO Representatives (if applicable) | 60 minutes |  |  |  |
| School Leaders/Administrators | 90 minutes |  |  |  |
| Teachers | 60 minutes |  |  |  |
| Students | 60 minutes |  |  |  |
| Families  | 45 minutes |  |  |  |
| Student and Family Support Services Staff  | 60 minutes |  |  |  |
| Home base location for team | All day | All day |  |  |

Please Note: If a Full Criteria Site Visit is scheduled for multiple days, you may schedule focus groups on either day of the visit. See [*Appendix G: Site Visits at Schools with Multiple Campuses and Schools That Are Part of a Network*](#_Appendix_G:_Site)for more information about planning and executing multi-campus site visits.

## Targeted Site Visit

|  |
| --- |
| Targeted Site Visit |
| **Purpose** | This visit is designed to monitor a school’s progress in addressing concerns previously identified by the Department. |
| **Typically eligible schools** | * Schools on conditions or probation
* Schools where special considerations apply. As indicated on page 4, special considerations include, but are not limited to:
	+ Trending low academic achievement results for all students or subgroups of students, or a sudden drop in academic achievement
	+ Concerns about discipline rates or other student indicator data
	+ Concerns about a school’s financial health
	+ Significant leadership or board turnover
	+ Complaints, dependent on the volume and severity
	+ A pending or recently granted Board-approved amendment request
 |
| **Length** | One to two days |
| **Site visit team composition** | Department staff and external reviewers (as needed) |
| **Criteria typically addressed** | Criteria related to conditions, probation, or special considerations. The site visit team leader will indicate criteria to be included in the scope of the visit. |
| **Documents to be submitted to the school** | See [*Appendix D: Site Visit Documents*](#_Appendix_D:_Site) for a list of documents submitted for Core Criteria and Full Criteria Site Visits. For Targeted Site Visits, the site visit team leader will specify which documents need to be submitted, depending on the scope of the visit. |
| **Required focus groups** | Required focus groups will be determined based on the scope of the visit, but are likely to include:* Board of Trustees
* Network Administrators (if applicable)
* District Administrators or EMO Representatives (if applicable)
* School Leaders/Administrators
* Teachers
* Others, as indicated by site visit team leader
 |
| **Product** | Targeted Site Visit Report that includes ratings, findings, and evidence related to criteria included in the scope of the visit. If the school is on conditions, the site visit report will also include a report on the school’s progress towards meeting those conditions. |

When the site visit team leader sends the school leader an email with instructions on how to prepare for the site visit, the email will include an adapted version of the table on the following page, with guidelines to establish preferred times for elements to be included in the visit schedule.

|  |
| --- |
| Targeted Site Visit Scheduling Guidelines |
| Please enter into the table below the times for which you would like to schedule the components of the site visit. **All of these events should occur before 1:00 PM on the final day of the visit**. Please do not schedule the board of trustees, school leaders/administrators, and teachers focus groups at the same times.  |
| Group | Time Needed | Time Scheduled | Location | Date |
| Orientation by School Leader | Varies dependent on purpose of visit |  |  |  |
| Board of Trustees |  TBD |  |  |  |
| Network Administrators (if applicable) | TBD |  |  |  |
| District Administrators or EMO Representatives (if applicable) | TBD |  |  |  |
| School Leaders/Administrators | TBD  |  |  |  |
| Teachers | TBD  |  |  |  |
| Students | TBD  |  |  |  |
| Families  | TBD  |  |  |  |
| Student and Family Support Services Staff  | TBD  |  |  |  |
| Home base location for team | All day | All day |  |  |

# Appendix D: Site Visit Documents

All the documents that schools ***may*** be asked to provide for the site visit are listed and described in this appendix. When the Department notifies each school of the scope of the site visit, the school is provided with a list of the ***specific*** documents that will be required and the timeline for submitting them. All documents submitted before the visit must be submitted electronically. It is important for schools to submit all the requested documents in a timely manner and for schools to use the file-naming conventions provided for each document. This will facilitate the site visit team’s task of reviewing the documents.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Required Document Naming Convention[SI] = School Initials*Examples:*ABCS DirectionsABCS School MapABCS Master Class Schedule | Description |
| [SI] Directions  | Please provide the **address** team members should use to find the school, **instructions for parking**, and **instructions for entering the building**.Whenever possible, parking must be made available to the visiting team. If the school has multiple campuses, please provide this information for each campus.  |
| [SI] School Map | A **school map**, with corresponding teacher room assignments or marked with teacher names and showing the location of special education and ESL instructional spaces. |
| [SI] Class Schedule | An easily readable *and* easily printable **class schedule** for the day of the visit that clearly indicates the following for all classes: * Teacher
* Subject
* Time
* Location (room assignments).
* Please identify on the schedule which classes are SEI, ESL and special education pullout or substantially separate placements and where they will be located.
 |
| [SI] Preferred Schedule | The school’s preferred times for site visit components. See [*Appendix C: Types of Visits*.](#_Appendix_C:_Types) |
| [SI] List of Focus Group Attendees | Using a template provided by the Department, please submit a **list of focus group attendees**. Focus groups (including student and family focus groups) should be assembled using a process that begins with an open invitation. Focus groups should not include more than 10 participants, should include a range of participants, and, except for the school leaders/administrators focus group, supervisors should not be in the same groups as supervisees.  |
| [SI] Recruitment Materials | Current **recruitment materials**, including the school’s application for admission and any school brochures/flyers used to recruit applicants. Please also provide samples of recruitment materials translated in other languages.  |
| [SI] Translated Documents | List of school **documents and/or forms available in languages other than English**. Please specify the languages in which the school makes documents available. The site visit team may also ask to see copies of the translated documents. |
| [SI] Staff Roster | A copy of the school’s **staff roster** that includes each staff member’s name and job title or role. In addition, please clearly indicate on the roster: * Staff members who have been at the school one year or less.
* Staff members who provide English as a Second Language services.
* Staff members who provide special education services.

Department staff will follow up with the school as needed either before or after the site visit to gather further information about [staff qualifications](http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/guidance/2020-1.html). |
| [SI] Curriculum | The Department will identify whether a **curriculum** review is necessary prior to the visit based on the age of the school, the school’s status, and a review of the school’s student achievement data. If a curriculum review is required, the school will need to make curriculum documents available to the Department through an online platform or via hard copy onsite. |
| [SI] Classroom Observation Form | A version of the Department’s [**classroom observation form**](https://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/acct.html?section=visit) that includes information specific to the school. Instructions for including this information will be sent to the school as part of the pre-visit document request.*Note: To facilitate the editing process, this form must be submitted in Word format.* |
| Classroom schedules (no naming convention required) | On the day(s) of the site visit, a copy of the **schedule for each classroom** (and any other instructional spaces) should be posted on the door. For each class, the schedule should indicate the time and the instructor. |
| Lesson Plans (no naming convention required) | If teachers at the school are typically expected to prepare **lesson plans**, one copy of the lesson plan for each class occurring on the day of the visit should be printed and made available to members of the site visit team to reference when they conduct classroom observations.  |
| [SI] Supports for All Learners | Using a template provided by the Department, please provide a **description of the school’s system of supports for all learners**, including: * a list of all assessments used to identify students’ strengths and needs for academic, behavioral, and social emotional development
* a list of supports provided to all students
* a list of interventions administered to students based on the outcome of an assessment
* a list of resources used to support all learners (staff, curricula, technology)
* a description of how the school uses data to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the [tiered support model](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfss/mtss/) and modify the system to better support all learners.

*Note: This template is revised annually. Please use the current version of the template, which is attached to the email requesting documents for the site visit.*  |
| [SI] DCAP | A copy of the school’s **District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP)**. This plan is developed by the charter school to ensure that the needs of all learners in the general education program are met. *Note: Please review the DCAP prior to submitting it to the Department and provide updated information as applicable regarding the school’s practices for ensuring that the needs of all learners are met. Updated information should be submitted in a clearly identified addendum to the DCAP.* |
| [SI] Tiered System of Supports Process (if applicable) | If the DCAP does not include a description of the school’s tiered system of supports process, please provide a copy of the document that describes the school’s tiered system of supports. |
| [SI] Aggregated Survey Results | Aggregated **family, teacher, and student survey results**. For each survey, please indicate: * when the survey was conducted
* the number of surveys administered
* the number of responses received
 |
| [SI] School Climate | Using a template provided by the Department, please provide a **brief** **description of programming designed to foster a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment for students**. The description should include evidence that addresses the guiding questions for *Key Indicator 7.1: Safe and Supportive Environment (p. 13):** Does the school’s program include elements designed to foster a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment that supports all students’ sense of belonging?
* Is the school’s behavioral management system supportive and responsive for all students?
 |
| [SI] Student/Family Handbook | The **student/family handbook**. |
| [SI] Org Chart | An **organizational chart for the 2023-24 school year** that shows reporting relationships among the board of trustees, the school’s administrators (including network administrators, if applicable), and staff.  |
| [SI] School Leadership | Selected documents highlighting **recent/current leadership initiatives**. |
| [SI] Staff Handbook | The **staff handbook**. |
| [SI] Evaluation Tools | **Tool(s) used to evaluate the performance of the school leader, other administrators, teachers, and staff**.  |
| [SI] Professional Development Plan Calendar | **Professional development calendar** for the current school year. |
| [SI] Board Minutes [Date] | **Minutes for each board of trustees (board) meeting** that has occurred in the past 12 months. Minutes may be provided for each meeting or combined into one document. *Note: Any documents referenced in the minutes should be available upon request from the site visit team.* |
| [SI] [Committee Name] Minutes [Date] | **Minutes for each board committee meeting** that has occurred in the past 12 months.*Note: Any documents referenced in the minutes should be available upon request from the site visit team.* |
| [SI] Bylaws | The board’s current, approved **bylaws**. |
| [SI] Board Self-Evaluation | The **board’s most recent self-evaluation**. |
| [SI] School Leader Evaluation | The **board’s most recent evaluation of the school leader**. If the school contracts with an education management organization (EMO) and the EMO provides support with evaluating the school leader, please provide a copy of the most recent evaluation of the school leader approved by the board. |
| [SI] Student Data | Examples of **displays of student data** presented to and reviewed by the board of trustees (if available).(If different) Examples of key displays of student data used by administrators and teachers to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the program.*Note: Each document submitted should be labeled so that it is clear when the document was shared with the board of trustees or reviewed by administrators and teachers.* *Note: Do not send individual student data.* *Please do not send raw or student level data or data that is summarized in the annual report. Please see* [*603 CMR 23.00*](http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr23.html) *for more information regarding student testing privacy.*  |
| [SI] Strategic plan (if available) | The board’s current **strategic plan** (if available). |
| [SI] Board Leadership Succession Plan (if available) | The board’s **plan for succession of board leadership** (if available). |
| [SI] School Leader Succession Plan (if available) | The board’s **plan for succession of school leadership** (if available).  |
| [SI] EMO Contract | If the school contracts with an EMO for substantially all educational services, please provide the most recent **contract between the school and the EMO**.  |
| [SI] EMO Evaluation | If the school contracts with an EMO, please provide a copy of the **board’s most recent evaluation of the EMO**. |
| [SI] [District Name] Memorandum of Understanding/[SI] [Union Name] Memorandum of Understanding | If a Horace Mann charter school, please provide a copy of the current, approved **Memorandum of Understanding with the district**. If a Horace Mann I charter school, please also provide a copy of the current, approved **Memorandum of Understanding with the teachers union**. |
| [SI] Safety Documents | A copy of the **fire inspection certificate** and **building safety inspection**. |
| [SI] Other | **Any other materials** that the school believes will assist the team in efficiently reviewing the school’s performance under its charter, including, but not limited to materials documenting the school’s efforts to address concerns resulting in conditions on the school’s charter (if applicable) and materials documenting the school’s efforts to work toward the elimination of persistent achievement, access, and opportunity gaps experienced by historically underserved students.Alternative charter schools are required to provide the following: Evidence related to Criterion 1, Criterion 2, and Criterion 5 that the school uses to assess the overall health and viability of the school, including progress in student achievement. |

# Appendix E: Sample Schedules

This appendix includes sample schedules for the site visit team’s work at the school. The schedules illustrate the types of activities that occur during a typical site visit. The actual schedule will be developed by the team leader in consultation with the school. Each team may include fewer or more members than what is represented on the sample schedules. As indicated in [*Appendix F: Focus Groups*](#_Appendix_F:_Focus), focus groups are typically an hour in length, but the site visit team leader may schedule longer or shorter meetings depending on several factors. For example, focus groups with school leaders/administrators may be extended to 90 minutes, while 30 minutes or 45 minutes may be enough for some focus groups. The site visit team leader should review the list of questions for each focus group and determine an appropriate amount of time.

## Site Visit Conducted at a School with a Single Campus

| Time | [Team Member 1] | [Team Member 2] | [Team Member 3] |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 7:00-7:30 | Team Meeting |
| 7:30-8:00 | Meeting with School Leader |
| 8:00-9:00 | Board of Trustees Focus Group | Classroom Observations |
| 9:00-10:00 | Classroom Observations |
| 10:00-11:00 | Classroom Observations |
| 11:00-12:00 | Classroom Observations | Teachers Focus Group |
| 12:00-1:00 | Lunch/Document Review |
| 1:00-2:00 | Students Focus Group | Classroom Observations | Students Focus Group |
| 2:00-3:00 | School Leaders/Administrators Focus Group  | Classroom Observations |
| 3:00-4:30 | Team Moderation |
| 4:30-4:45 | Exit Discussion with School LeaderTeam Departs |

## Site Visit Conducted at a School with Multiple Campuses

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Time | [Team Member 1] | [Team Member 2] |
| 7:00-7:10 | *Arrive at [Campus 1]* |
| 7:10-7:30 | Team Meeting |
| 7:30-8:00 | Meeting with School Leader |
| 8:00-9:00 | Board of Trustees Focus Group |
| 9:00-10:00 | Teachers Focus Group |
| 10:00-10:30 | Students Focus Group |
| 10:30-11:30 | Classroom Observations | Classroom Observations |
| 11:30-12:30 | Network Administrators Focus Group |
| 12:30-1:00 | Classroom Observations | Classroom Observations |
| 1:00-1:30 | Lunch/team arrival |
| 1:30-3:45 | Team Moderation |
| 3:45-4:00 | Exit Meeting with School Leader |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Time | [Team Member 3] | [Team Member 4] |
| 7:00-7:10 | *Arrive at [Campus 1]* |
| 7:10-7:30 | Team Meeting |
| 7:30-7:45 | Meeting with School Leader |
| 7:45-9:00 | Classroom Observations | Classroom Observations |
| 9:00-9:15 | *Travel to [Campus 2]* |
| 9:15-9:30 | Meeting with School Leader |
| 9:30-11:00 | Classroom Observations | Classroom Observations |
| 11:00-12:00 | Teachers Focus Group |
| 12:00-12:30 | Students Focus Group |
| 12:30-12:45 | Break |
| 12:45-1:00 | *Travel to [Campus 1]* |
| 1:00-1:30 | Lunch |
| 1:30-3:45 | Team Moderation |
| 3:45-4:00 | Exit Meeting with School Leader |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Time | [Team Member 5] | [Team Member 6] |
| 7:00-7:10 | *Arrive at [Campus 3]* |
| 7:10-7:30 | Team Meeting |
| 7:30-7:45 | Meetings with School Leader |
| 7:45-8:00 | Morning Motivation Observations | Morning Motivation Observations |
| 8:00-9:00 | Teachers Focus Group |
| 9:00-9:30 | Students Focus Group |
| 9:30-10:30 | Classroom Observations | Classroom Observations |
| 10:30-11:00 | Student and Family Support Staff Focus Group |
| 11:00-12:00 | School Administrators Focus Group |
| 12:00-12:50 | Classroom Observations | Classroom Observations |
| 12:50-1:00 | *Travel to [Campus 1]* |
| 1:00-1:30 | Lunch |
| 1:30-3:45 | Team Moderation |
| 3:45-4:00 | Exit Meeting with School Leader |

# Appendix F: Focus Groups

A few focus groups must be scheduled for the site visit. Following is a complete list of the focus groups that *may* be conducted during the site visit. When the Department notifies each school of the scope of the site visit, the school is provided with a list of the *specific* focus groups that will be held.

It is the school’s responsibility to gather a representative group from each category through an open invitation, and to inform each participant of the time and place of the meeting. Focus group composition **should not include more than 10 individuals**. Additionally, it is not necessary for individuals to attend multiple focus groups. For instance, it is not necessary for the special education administrator to attend the focus group for school leaders/administrators if that person is already attending the focus group for special education/ESL administrators. *Please note: Stakeholders other than those identified in these focus groups, such as external stakeholders or school partners, should* ***not*** *be interviewed.*

Focus groups are typically an hour in length but may be longer or shorter depending on several factors. If the scope of the site visit is expanded, if the school has a larger number of key design elements, and/or if the school is operated by an education management organization, it may take up to 90 minutes to gather all the evidence needed, particularly from school leaders/administrators. The list of questions for some focus groups is more targeted, however, and so only 30 minutes or 45 minutes may be needed. The site visit team leader should review the list of questions for each focus group and determine an appropriate amount of time.

The Department expects that each participant is present for the entirety of the meeting and is given complete freedom to speak regarding their knowledge of and experience at the school, with no limits or repercussions imposed.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Focus Groups  | Description |
| **Board of Trustees** | This meeting is typically scheduled in the morning in order to work around the schedules of the school’s trustees. The school leader, even if they serve on the board, may **not** attend this meeting. Please note that if a quorum of the board of trustees or a quorum of any subcommittee of the board is present, the meeting falls within the scope of the [Open Meeting Law](http://www.mass.gov/ago/government-resources/open-meeting-law/attorney-generals-open-meeting-law-guide.html), and the board should conduct the meeting accordingly.  |
| **Network Administrators** **(if applicable)** | If the school is part of a network or if the school has multiple campuses, the site visit schedule will include an interview with administrators whose responsibilities span the network/multiple campuses. Administrators responsible for the academic program and operation of the network/multiple campuses should attend this meeting.  |
| **District Administrator(s)** **(if applicable)** | If the school is a Horace Mann charter school, the site visit will include an interview with at least one representative of the district.  |
| **EMO Representative(s)****(if applicable)** | If the school is operated by an education management organization (EMO), the site visit will include an interview with at least one representative of the organization. |
| **School Leaders/ Administrators** | The school leader and other administrators who are directly and primarily responsible for the academic program and the operation of the school should attend this meeting. If *Key Indicator 6.4: Supports for All Learners* is included in the scope of the visit, administrators of the school’s special education and English language education programs should participate. During the visit, the team may request additional meeting times with one or more administrators for additional inquiry or clarification.  |
| **Teachers** | All teachers should be offered the opportunity to participate. If *Key Indicator 6.4: Supports for All Learners* is included in the scope of the site visit, the focus group should include special education teachers and ESL teachers. The focus group should also include teachers of courses specifically associated with the school’s mission and/or key design elements and contain a representative sample of teachers in terms of their experience, years at the school, subject, and grade level. This focus group should also reflect the demographic composition of teachers employed by the school. Administrators and/or teachers who are directly responsible for supervising/evaluating other teachers in the focus group may not be present at this meeting.  |
| **Students** | Student focus groups should include only students in Grade 4 and above. All students should be offered the opportunity to participate. The focus group should represent a variety of ages, grade levels, abilities, and time spent at the school. This focus group should also reflect the demographic composition of the student body.  |
| **Families** | All families should be offered the opportunity to participate. This focus group should include parents or guardians whose children represent a variety of ages, grade levels, abilities, and time spent at the school, and, if possible, parents/guardians of students with disabilities and students who are English learners. This focus group should also reflect the demographic composition of the student body.  |
| **Student and Family Support Services Staff** | This focus group should include student support services staff including but not limited to: family support and outreach staff, guidance and counseling staff, dean(s) of students, social worker(s), school psychologist, nurse, a crisis management team member, discipline coordinator, and/or community services liaison, if applicable. Administrators and/or staff members who are directly responsible for supervising/evaluating other staff members in the focus group may not be present at this meeting. |

# Appendix G: Site Visits at Schools with Multiple Campuses and Schools That Are Part of a Network

Several Massachusetts charter schools operate multiple campuses with separate administrative leadership teams and programs in different locations. In some cases, the campuses serve overlapping grade levels, and in other instances, campuses serve an elementary, middle, and/or high school with distinct separations of program and leadership. In addition, there are several charter school boards of trustees who hold charters for more than one school (a “network”), but utilize a centralized administrative leadership structure to oversee each school. The legal structure for these various configurations differs depending on the particular circumstances.

To the extent possible, the Department will endeavor to schedule and coordinate site visits in the most efficient manner possible—including conducting visits to multiple charter schools within a network during the same day or week. In addition, the Department may also issue a single site visit report in these cases. To ensure that the necessary evidence is gathered to make the appropriate accountability determinations, it is important that the site visit team gather evidence of the Criteria at each individual campus. This will allow the team to paint a clear and accurate picture of the performance of each campus/school. Prior to any site visit, the Department will confirm with the school whether or not it is considered a network or a school with multiple campuses.

## Responsibilities of the Site Visit Team

* During the planning process, the site visit team leader should seek confirmation from the school leader (or designee) that information about the site visit process is being communicated to school community members at all campuses/schools.
* The site visit team is responsible for gathering evidence from all campuses/schools. At least two team members should visit each campus/school for the purposes of conducting focus groups and classroom observations.
* Planning the number of focus groups for a site visit at a school with multiple campuses needs to take into account the number of campuses, the distance between campuses, and the number of site visit team members. The site visit team should only need to conduct one focus group with board members and one focus group with administrators whose responsibilities span multiple campuses. Other focus groups, including campus administrators, teachers, and/or students, should include a representative group of participants from multiple campuses if the school is able to assemble participants from those campuses. If not, the site visit team will need to hold a focus group with each of these groups at each campus.
* Conduct enough classroom observations at each campus/school to ensure coverage of a sampling of all grades and core subjects. The site visit team should observe all types of classrooms: general education, special education, English as a second language (ESL) instruction, and classrooms providing sheltered English immersion (SEI) instruction.
* In the site visit report (SVR), provide specific evidence from each campus/school.

# Appendix H: Site Visit Team Code of Conduct

The site visit team’s conduct throughout the site visit process can significantly affect the team’s ability to obtain and report information regarding the school’s performance; it can also influence perceptions of the school community about the objectivity of the site visit process and report. This Code of Conduct provides guidance for team members (including team members from the Department as well as external team members) in fulfilling their assigned responsibilities.

* Ensure that you review all necessary materials, including this *Protocol* and the documents and information provided in advance of the site visit by the Department and the school.
* Approach the review of a school with a clear understanding of the school’s particular mission and educational philosophy.
* Understand your obligation to conduct the site visit without personal or professional bias and act accordingly, including disclosing any possible conflicts of interest, e.g., prior relationships with school staff, students, or families.
* Ensure that all of your communications with the school are professional and courteous in tone.
* Expected site visit apparel is business casual.
* Arrive at the school on time and closely follow the schedule for the day. Inform the school contact immediately of any changes to the agreed-upon schedule.
* Refrain from using your cell phone during classroom observations, focus groups, and team meetings. Site visitors may use the lunch break to use cell phones and check email.
* Avoid unnecessary disruptions to school and classroom routines while performing your assigned tasks such as classroom observations.
* Under no circumstances criticize the work of a teacher or anyone else involved with the school during an observation or focus group.
* Where appropriate, ensure the confidentiality of school information such as student names and personnel information.
* Do not offer personal or professional opinions or recommendations, even if solicited by interviewees.
* Reject requests from those interviewed to speak “off the record”; all conversations and other evidence gathered during the site visit are considered “on the record.”
* Bring lunch and/or snacks. Based on Department guidelines, the site visit team is not permitted to partake of snacks or lunch provided by the school without compensation. Please contact the school prior to the visit to determine if any accommodations need to be made because of food allergies at the school.
* When speaking with other members of the team about the school and about the evidence gathered during the site visit, speak as though a member of the school staff were present.
* Do not evaluate the performance of individuals, either orally or in written descriptions of the evidence.
* Findings must be aligned with the Criteria and supported by evidence. Findings should also clearly identify any areas of moderate or significant concern.
* Treat the draft site visit report, notes, and related evidence as confidential.
* Refrain from communications with outside groups or individuals. Do not discuss the site visit or your opinions regarding individuals working at the school with outside groups or individuals, including the media.
1. Renewal inspections are conducted in accordance with a separate [Renewal Inspection Protocol](https://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/acct.html?section=renew). Department staff may conduct the renewal inspection, or the Department may contract with an independent organization to conduct the renewal inspection. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Based on evidence and data compiled during the charter term, the Department may expand the scope of a renewal inspection to include additional criteria or key indicators. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Site visit reports do not include ratings for Criterion 3: Compliance, Criterion 5: Student Performance, or Criterion 10: Finance. See *Appendix C: Types of Visits* for more details about which criteria and key indicators are rated. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. There are three types of Horace Mann charter schools with a set of requirements that vary by type, including the requirements for the involvement of the collective bargaining unit. To the extent provided by their charters and as agreed to in one or more memoranda of understanding, Horace Mann charter schools may be exempt from certain provisions in local collective bargaining agreements. Horace Mann charter schools enter into a memorandum of understanding with the school committee, and depending upon the type of Horace Mann, may also enter into a memorandum of understanding with the faculty or relevant collective bargaining units. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Please note: It is typical for schools in their initial years of operation to receive ratings of “Partially Meets” in a number of areas due to the developmental trajectory of schools. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)