

Commonwealth of massachusetts virtual school accountability review protocol

October 2023

**Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

75 Pleasant Street

Malden, MA 02148

Phone: (781) 338-3227



This document was prepared by the   
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Jeffrey C. Riley

Commissioner

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, an affirmative action employer, is committed to ensuring that all of its programs and facilities are accessible to all members of the public.

We do not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

Inquiries regarding the Department’s compliance with Title IX and other civil rights laws may be directed to the

Human Resources Director, 75 Pleasant St., Malden, MA 02148-4906. Phone: 781-338-6105.

© 2023 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Permission is hereby granted to copy any or all parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes. Please credit the “Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.”

This document printed on recycled paper

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906

Phone 781-338-3000 TTY: N.E.T. Relay 800-439-2370

[www.doe.mass.edu](http://www.doe.mass.edu)



Table of Contents

[Introduction 1](#_Toc147929064)

[Types of Accountability Reviews 2](#_Toc147929065)

[Planning the Accountability Review 4](#_Toc147929066)

[Scheduling the Accountability Review Date(s) 4](#_Toc147929067)

[Pre-Review Planning and Preparation 4](#_Toc147929068)

[Accountability Review Elements 6](#_Toc147929069)

[After The Accountability review 8](#_Toc147929070)

[Appendix A: Accountability Review Checklist for School Leaders/Designees 9](#_Toc147929071)

[Appendix B: Sample Timeline 12](#_Toc147929072)

[Appendix C: Guiding Questions 13](#_Toc147929073)

[Faithfulness to Certificate 13](#_Toc147929074)

[Academic Program Success 13](#_Toc147929075)

[Organizational Viability 16](#_Toc147929076)

[Appendix D: Types of Reviews 19](#_Toc147929077)

[Core Criteria Accountability review 19](#_Toc147929078)

[Full Criteria Accountability Review 21](#_Toc147929079)

[Targeted Accountability Review 23](#_Toc147929080)

[Appendix E: Accountability Review Documents 25](#_Toc147929081)

[Appendix F: Focus Groups 30](#_Toc147929082)

[Appendix G: Sample Focus Group Schedules 32](#_Toc147929083)

[Focus groups day 1 schedule 32](#_Toc147929084)

[Focus group day 2 schedule 33](#_Toc147929085)

[Appendix H: Accountability Review Team Code of Conduct 34](#_Toc147929086)

# Introduction

In conducting accountability reviews, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) is carrying out the requirements of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual Schools (CMVS) regulations ([603 CMR 52.00](http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr52.html?section=all)), which outline the ongoing review of CMVS. Accountability review reports, generated by the Department, are important components of the body of evidence used by the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education (Commissioner) and Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) in making a renewal determination for each school.

Accountability reviews take place at least once during a certificate term and may be conducted at additional times when deemed necessary by the Department. Accountability reviews vary in length depending on the size, age, and/or specific conditions of a particular school. They are one of the means by which the Department documents each CMVS’s performance and progress over time, corroborating and augmenting the information reported each year in the school’s annual report. The [Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual School Performance Criteria](https://www.doe.mass.edu/cmvs/cmvs/performance-criteria.docx) (Criteria) form the foundation of the accountability review process and are the basis on which this Accountability Review Protocol (Protocol) was written. During the accountability review, the school is assessed on all, or a subset of the performance indicators contained in the Criteria (see [*Appendix C: Guiding Questions*](#_Appendix_C:_Guiding)). The Criteria expand upon and give definition to the three areas of CMVS accountability defined in 603 CMR 52.00: faithfulness to the certificate, academic program success, and organizational viability.

The purpose of an accountability review is to gather and document evidence about a CMVS’s performance in relation to the Criteria for accountability purposes. Evidence gathered during the accountability review process is ultimately used to make a renewal determination or inform other authorizing actions pertaining to the school. 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 52.12). Accountability reviews and subsequent accountability review reports are not intended to provide specific technical assistance or other advice to the school. The accountability review is also not intended to directly assist schools in making decisions about how to improve academic programs or operations.

This Protocol is designed to serve as a resource for virtual school leaders, external accountability reviewers, Department staff, and contracted vendors who may undertake accountability reviews on behalf of the Department. It articulates the types of accountability reviews, roles and responsibilities of all parties, and expected outcomes. The Protocol is meant to provide useful information about accountability reviews so that stakeholders and visitors know what to expect and how to prepare. Familiarity with the Protocol helps accountability reviews run smoothly. At the end of the document, in [*Appendix A: Accountability Review Checklist for School Leaders/Designees*](#_Appendix_A:_Site), is a checklist to assist schools in preparing for the accountability review.

# Types of Accountability Reviews

The Department conducts accountability reviews as frequently as necessary for accountability monitoring. Schools typically receive at least two hybrid reviews during each certificate term, including the renewal inspection. The length and scope of accountability reviews may vary depending on the school’s age, size, and/or status (conditions or probation). Reviews 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 accountability review and under what circumstances each might occur. Each review has two components. The first component (component one) occurs during the first one to two weeks of the accountability review and includes virtual instruction observations and a curriculum review, depending on the scope of the visit. The second component (component two) occurs during the last week of the accountability review and includes focus groups that can be conducted virtually or onsite. A full week is allotted for conducting focus groups, but most focus groups are often conducted within one to two days. For planning purposes, the accountability review begins with the start of component one.

Please see [*Appendix D: Types of Reviews*](#_Appendix_C:_Types) for more details.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Visit | Approximate Length | Typically Eligible Schools | Criteria Typically Addressed |
| **Core Criteria** | 2-3 weeks | * 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), 4, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 7.3 (if applicable) 8, 9 |
| **Full Criteria** | 2-3 weeks | * Schools in the spring of their second year of operation (during first certificate); as needed if concerns arise | 1, 2, 3 (if applicable), 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 |
| **Targeted** | 1-2 weeks | * 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) | 2-3 weeks | * Schools in their final year of each certificate term | 1, 2, 5.1, 5.2 5.4, 9 , 8[[2]](#footnote-3) |

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

# Planning the Accountability review

## Scheduling the Accountablity Review Date(s)

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

## Pre-Review Planning and Preparation

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

Accountability review teams include a minimum of two Department staff and frequently include external volunteers. External volunteers who participate in accountability reviews 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. The team may also include relevant community members from Digital Learning Advisory Council (DLAC) and/or other organizations.

All team members are responsible for reviewing the preparation materials that are sent to them by the Department. Team members participate in a webinar training led by the Department, read over the provided materials, participate in the review with an understanding of the background of the school and are prepared to share initial impressions or questions with the team. The Department’s team leader will specify the exact pre-review work team members should complete. Team members are required to review and follow the Code of Conduct (see [Appendix H](#_Appendix_H:_Accountability)) during the review. All accountability review team members must have a documented background in virtual learning and participate in training related to online learning and virtual schools prior to participating in the accountability review. All team members are subject to a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check.

Planning for the review begins in earnest approximately seven weeks prior to component one of the review, when the accountability review team leader sends the school an email that outlines:

* The scope of the review (See [*Appendix D: Types of Reviews*](#_Appendix_C:_Types) for more information.)
* The documents the school needs to provide to the Department and the timeline for submitting them ([*Appendix E: Accountability Review Documents*](#_Appendix_D:_Site) lists all of the documents that schools *may* be asked to provide for the accountability review.)
* The focus groups that need to be included in the review (See [*Appendix F: Focus Groups*](#_Appendix_F:_Focus_1) for a complete list of the focus groups that *may* be conducted during an accountability review.)

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

The Department assumes that the school leader will act as the coordinator and liaison for accountability reviews; 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 accountability review designee 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 Department’s accountability review team leader works closely with the school leader or designee to ensure that key documents are provided electronically to the review team in a timely manner. Additional tasks include developing the review schedule, organizing the appropriate stakeholders for focus groups, and coordinating logistics. The Department may offer school leaders an introductory webinar that outlines the accountability review process. For additional guidance on preparing for the accountability review, please see [*Appendix A: Accountability Review Checklist for School Leaders/Designees*](#_Appendix_A:_Site)*.*

# Accountability Review Elements

The table below summarizes each of the typical elements of the accountability review included in the pre-planning period and the review schedule. Sample schedules are contained in [*Appendix G: Sample Schedules*](#_Appendix_G:_Sample)*.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Pre-Planning Elements | |
| Accountability Review Elements | Description |
| **Pre-review Team Meeting** | The accountability review team leader meets with the team a week before the pre-review meeting with the school. During this meeting, the team leader welcomes the team, establishes the purpose and context of the review, provides relevant materials, reviews the accountability schedule, reviews the code of conduct, and answers questions from team members. During this time, the accountability review team leader will conduct a training for the team on how to conduct virtual instruction observations and a virtual curriculum review. |
| **Pre-review Meeting with School Leader** | A week before component one of the accountability review, the school leader meets the team, confirms with the team leader the final logistics of the review, and provides an orientation to the school’s LMS. The team may request additional meetings with the school leader during the review as needed. |
| **Component One of the Accountability Review** | |
| **Virtual Instruction** **Observations** | The accountability review schedule should include enough virtual instruction observations to ensure coverage of a sampling of all grades and core subjects. Virtual instruction observations take place during the first one to two weeks of the review. The review team should observe all types of instruction: general education, special education, English as a second language (ESL) instruction, and instruction providing sheltered English immersion (SEI) instruction. The team should be free to observe all instruction without advance notice to the school or the teachers. The length of virtual instruction observations depends on the scope of the review, with observations ranging from 10 to 20 minutes.  The accountability review team uses a virtual instruction observation form developed by the Department. Prior to the review, the team leader works with the school leader to adapt the form with information specific to the school. |
| **Virtual Curriculum Review** | The virtual curriculum review takes place simultaneously with the virtual instruction observations during the first one to two weeks of the review. Prior to the start of component one, the school leader will be asked to submit curriculum documents, which include but are not limited to curriculum maps, pacing charts, lesson plans, etc. During the virtual curriculum review, the review team should have access to curriculum materials in the LMS and asynchronous courses and coursework. |
| **Component Two of the Accountability Review** | |
| **Focus Groups/ Interviews** | Focus groups take place during the third and final week of the review. Depending on the scope of the visit and/or the type of focus groups to be held, the focus groups may be scheduled virtually or onsite. 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_1) for a complete list of the focus groups that may be conducted during the review. When the Department notifies the school of the scope of the review, 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.  During the pre-review meeting with the school, the review 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. |
| **Team Time/ Team Moderation** | The accountability review schedule should include blocks of time during which the team reviews documents, makes additional instruction 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. The team time/team moderation occurs during the final day of the review. |
| **Exit Meeting with School Leader** | The accountability review concludes with an exit meeting with the school leader on the final day of the review. This meeting provides the team with an opportunity to obtain clarification about any outstanding questions or issues, provide preliminary findings, and to thank the school leader for the assistance provided during the review. After the preliminary findings have been shared, the school leader may ask questions about the accountability review process and next steps; however, the team will not answer questions about the preliminary findings or evidence gathered on the day of the review. Finally, the team leader describes next steps in the accountability review process. |

# After The Accountability review

After the accountability review, the 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 review. 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 team leader drafts the report, other accountability review 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 issued approximately eight weeks following the accountability review.

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 accountability review report may be submitted to the Department. This response is appended to the final accountability review report.

The accountability review report becomes a permanent part of the school’s record. The accountability review 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: Accountability Review Checklist for School Leaders/Designees

The school leader or designee should use the following checklist to prepare for accountability reviews. Each review has two components. The first component (component one) occurs during the first one to two weeks of the accountability review and includes virtual instruction observations and/or a curriculum review, depending on the scope of the visit. The second component (component two) occurs during the last week of the accountability review and includes focus groups that can be conducted virtually or onsite. A full week is allotted for conducting focus groups, but most focus groups are often conducted within one to two days. For planning purposes, the accountability review begins during component one.

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

* Confirm the review dates as soon as possible. Please email your confirmation. If the dates create undue hardship for your school, contact the Department staff member who sent the email and work to find mutually agreeable alternate dates. Check that the suggested accountability review dates are on a regular school day without any schoolwide testing, field trips, early release, or events outside of the normal academic program.
* Once the dates are confirmed, share the accountability review dates and the Accountability Review Protocol with all relevant school stakeholders.
* Attend the accountability review introductory webinar provided by the Department (if offered).

**Approximately seven weeks prior to Component one of the Review**

* Carefully review the email from the accountability review team leader that outlines the scope of the review, the documents the school needs to provide to the Department, and the focus groups that need to be included in the accountability review. Reply to the Department staff member who sent the email to acknowledge receipt of the email.
* Review the Accountability Review Protocol and share it with the school community if not already shared.
* Talk with the school’s board of trustees, staff, and community to orient them to the purpose of the review, what their respective roles will be during the review, and what to expect when the team visits. Inform teachers that virtual instruction observations will be part of the review; however, assure teachers that the purpose of virtual instruction observations is to collect evidence and capture schoolwide trends, not to evaluate individual teachers.
* Begin the process of identifying focus group participants. As noted in [*Appendix F: Focus Groups*](#_Appendix_F:_Focus_1), 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 accountability review are listed and described in [*Appendix E: Accountability Review Documents*](#_Appendix_D:_Site). The email from the Department staff member 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 start of component one of the accountability review.

**Four weeks prior to Component one of the Accountablity review**

* Send documents for the review (see above) to the Department staff member who sent the document request email. All documents submitted before the review 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 E: Accountability Review Documents*](#_Appendix_D:_Site). This will facilitate the review team’s task of reviewing the documents.

**one week prior to component one of the Review**

* Begin assembling a representative group for each focus group through an open invitation. See [*Appendix F: Focus Groups*](#_Appendix_F:_Focus_1) for further instructions.
* (If applicable) Identify private locations for conducting each focus group and, if feasible, a separate private location where the accountability review team may work throughout the day.
* Work with the accountability review team leader and the school community, including the board of trustees, to determine the schedule for the review. This may take several iterations to complete. The schedule needs to be finalized with the team leader at least one week prior to the start of the review.
* Meet with the accountability review team to confirm the final logistics of the review, conduct an orientation of the school’s LMS, and provide the team teacher-level and student-level access to the LMS, which includes curricular and courses.

**Two weeks prior to component TWo of the review**

* 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 accountability review 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 accountability review team leader.

**The day before the start of component one of the review**

* Distribute the schedule for component two to the school community.
* If teachers typically create lesson plans, ask them to prepare to share a copy of each lesson plan and other lesson materials with the review team.

**The day before the Start of component TWo of the Review**

* Determine who will attend the accountability review 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.)

**General Guidance During the review**

* If in-person, ensure that the team’s meeting room remains private and any additional requested documents are provided and clearly labeled.
* If in-person, 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 review team for 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 review team to hear the team’s preliminary findings and next steps in the accountability review process.
* Ensure the accountability review team has access to the LMS. Please ensure someone from your school is able to provide technical assistance if any team members have any issues accessing the LMS materials or courses.

**After the Accountability Review**

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

# Appendix B: Sample timeline

PREP FOR REVIEW

ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW

**Six months prior to review**, CMVS is notified of the review dates and type of review

**Seven weeks prior to component one**, CMVS is notified of the review’s scope, the documents to submit, and the focus groups that will be needed

**Four weeks prior to component one,** requested documents are due

**Three weeks prior to component one**, begin assembling representative focus groups through an open invitation

**One week prior to component one**, meet with accountability review team to confirm final logistics, conduct an LMS orientation, and provide the review team access to the LMS

**Component one begins.** The accountability review beings with the first one to two weeks dedicated to virtual instruction observations and a virtual curriculum review (depending on scope)

**Component two begins.** After virtual instruction observations and/or a virtual curriculum review, the accountability review enters its final week with focus groups

**Exit Meeting:** On the last day of focus groups, an exit meeting takes place between the school leader and review team to discuss next steps

**Eight weeks after the accountability review is complete:** The Department will issue a draft accountability review report for the school’s review

**One week after the school reviews the accountability review report:** The Department incorporates any factual corrections submitted by the school to the report. The report is finalized and becomes part of the school’s body of evidence that will be reviewed when the school is up for renewal.

POST REVIEW

# Appendix C: Guiding Questions

The review team gathers and analyzes evidence in alignment with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual School Performance Criteria. This appendix lists the questions that guide the team’s inquiry.

## Faithfulness to Certificate

|  |
| --- |
| Criterion 1: Mission and Terms of the Certificate |
| The school is faithful to its mission, implements the terms outlined in its certificate, and substantially meets its Accountability Plan goals. |
| * Do all school stakeholders share a common understanding of the school’s mission as outlined in its certificate? * Is the school operating in a manner that is faithful to its mission? Is the school fully implementing the terms in the approved certificate? * What is the school’s progress in meeting the goals articulated in its Accountability Plan? |

|  |
| --- |
| Criterion 2: Access and Equity |
| The school ensures access and equity for all students who attend and who are eligible to attend the school. |
| * Does the school ensure that information is readily available to (and translated for) families, students, and the general public regarding: the school and its online learning program; non-discriminatory statements and enrollment practices; and the availability of specialized programs and services at the school to meet the needs of all students? * Do all students have access to necessary technology and materials? Do school policies and practices ensure all students have equal rights of access to the opportunities provided by the educational program? * Does the school define and monitor student attendance? * Does the school provide supports/orientation for students and families to enhance their success in online learning before students begin significant coursework? * Does the school use active strategies from its Recruitment and Retention Plan to enroll and retain any target populations specified in the certificate? |

## Academic Program Success

|  |
| --- |
| Criterion 5: Program Delivery |
| The school delivers a high-quality academic program that meets the academic needs of all students. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Key Indicator 5.1: Curriculum and Course Design** |
| 1. The school’s documented curriculum is aligned to [Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks](https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html) and expectations; is fully implemented in all courses; is aligned vertically between grades and horizontally across 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 to ensure quality. 2. Courses offered through the academic program: integrate materials and technology that appropriately support learning goals and enhance the learning experience; support active and authentic learning through research-based design principles; and provide appropriate opportunities for both asynchronous and synchronous learning. Courses are organized in a way that stakeholders can easily navigate. |
| * 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? * Do courses integrate materials and technology to appropriately support learning goals and enhance the learning experience? * Do courses support active and authentic learning through research-based design principles? * Do courses provide appropriate opportunities for both asynchronous and synchronous learning? * Are courses organized in a way that stakeholders can easily navigate? |

| **Key Indicator 5.2: Instruction** |
| --- |
| The school adopts clear expectations for high-quality virtual teaching practices that align with its stated mission, certificate terms, learning goals, evidence-based practices, and define the frequency and quality of teacher and student interaction.Instructional practices are aligned to a common understanding, based on high expectations for all students, inclusion of all learners, and cultural responsiveness. Instruction fosters student engagement and allows for interaction between students and teachers. |
| * Does the school adopt clear expectations for high-quality virtual teaching practices? Does the school define the frequency and quality of teacher and student interaction? * Does virtual instruction mirror the school’s expectation for high-quality virtual teaching? * Does instruction reflect high expectations for all students? * Does instruction reflect inclusion of all learners as well as cultural responsiveness? * Does instruction foster student engagement and allow for interaction between students and between students and teachers? |

|  |
| --- |
| **Key Indicator 5.3: Assessment and Program Evaluation** |
| 1. The school uses a system of assessments to monitor and report on student progress. The assessment system is aligned to and appropriate for learning objectives; it allows teachers, administrators, students, and families with information to monitor student learning. Teachers and administrators use data from multiple assessment sources to assess student learning and modify instruction or supports to improve academic and non-academic outcomes for each student. The school ensures there is maximum participation in school assessment administrations. 2. The school uses disaggregated qualitative and quantitative data from a variety of assessments to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the program. Based on program evaluation results, modifications are made to the academic program to improve academic and non-academic outcomes for all students. Program evaluation results are communicated to the school community. 3. The school ensures the academic integrity of course assignments and assessments. The school ensures statewide assessments are proctored in accordance with statewide testing protocols. |
| * Does the school use a system of assessments to monitor and report on student progress? * Does the school use disaggregated qualitative and quantitative data from a variety of assessments to evaluate quality and effectiveness of the program? * How does the school implement strategies to ensure the academic integrity of course assignments and assessments? |

|  |
| --- |
| **Key Indicator 5.4: 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.The school provides supports, interventions, and acceleration opportunities in an equitable manner to enable all students, including, but not limited to students with disabilities and English learners, to complete their courses and meet their goals |
| * Does the school have a proactive, data-based system to effectively identify all students’ strengths and needs for academic, behavioral, and social-emotional development? (Evidence must address the following questions.) * Does the school implement a [tiered support](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfss/mtss/) model 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, behavioral, and 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 SEL 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 system of supports understood by school staff and consistently implemented with fidelity? * Does the school conduct formal evaluations of the special education and English learner education programs? Have recent evaluations of the special education and English learner education programs resulted in specific changes to improve those programs? |

|  |
| --- |
| **Criterion 6: School Climate and Family Engagement** |
| The school fosters safe, respectful, inclusive, engaging, culturally responsive, and welcoming learning environment that cultivates supportive, authentic relationships and a strong sense of belonging and connection, and that values the diverse assets and voices of all students, staff, families, and community members. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Key Indicator 6.1: School Climate** |
| School environments are safe, supportive, culturally responsive, welcoming, respectful, trauma-sensitive, gender- and sexuality-inclusive, and reflective of the community and students’ cultures and identities. The school creates a community for students and an environment that supports all students’ sense of belonging. The school establishes effective connection and communication between students and the broader community and helps students develop social and emotional knowledge, skills, and competencies. The school implements policies and procedures for cyber safety as well as for age-appropriate supervision for students under the age of 14, if applicable. |
| * Does the school’s program include elements designed to foster a safe and supportive environment? (Evidence must address the following questions.) * How does the school ensure the safety of students? Does the school implement policies and procedures for cyber safety for all students and age-appropriate supervision for students under the age of 14? * Does the school’s program include elements designed to foster students’ sense of belonging? * Are students’ cultures and identities reflected in the learning environment? * How does the school establish effective connection and communication between students and the broader community? Is there evidence of strong relationships between students and staff and between students and students? |

|  |
| --- |
| **Key Indicator 6.2 Family Engagement** |
| The school develops strong collaborative 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 ways that are culturally responsive, collaborative, and that demonstrates inclusion for all kinds of languages, norms, family structures, and values. |
| * Does the school work to develop strong collaborative relationships with all 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 culturally responsive and collaborative? Does the school demonstrate inclusion for all kinds of language, norms, family structures, and values? |

## Organizational Viability

|  |
| --- |
| **Criterion 7: Capacity** |
| The school sustains a well-functioning organizational structure and creates a professional and inclusive, working climate for all staff. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Key Indicator 7.1: School 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 that are updated regularly. The school has an organizational structure with enough qualified professional, administrative and support staff and appropriate student to teacher ratios. 2. School leadership promotes and sustains a culture of accountability and collaborates with school stakeholders to promote shared responsibility for all students. Based on data, school leadership takes concrete and ambitious steps to close identified student 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. |
| * 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? * Does school leadership ensure that the school has enough qualified professional, administrative, and support staff and appropriate student to teacher ratios? * 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? |

|  |
| --- |
| **Key Indicator 7.2: Professional Climate** |
| 1. The school has structures for regular, frequent collaboration and professional development aligned with research about high quality online teaching for faculty and staff to improve implementation of the curriculum and instructional practice. The school creates a professional development plan to ensure teacher and administrator participation in a variety of training opportunities, including, but not limited to, effective online learning, teaching, pedagogy, and use of technology. 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. 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. All staff are provided regular feedback and timely and effective technical support to perform their responsibilities and meet expectations for performance. The feedback and evaluation systems and structures are aligned with research about high quality online teaching |
| * Do school staff frequently collaborate and engage in professional development aligned with research about high quality online teaching for faculty and staff to improve implementation of the curriculum and instructional practice? * Does the school create a professional development plan to ensure teacher and administrator participation in a variety of training opportunities? * 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? Are feedback and evaluation systems and structures aligned with research about high quality online teaching? |

|  |
| --- |
| **Key Indicator 7.3: Contractual Relationships (if applicable)** |
| The board of trustees and school leadership establish and execute a Department approved contract with an organization that provides substantially all educational services. The board of trustees and school leadership establish effective working relationships with the contracted organization and operate according to the contract. The board of trustees formally evaluates the performance of the contracted organization annually and holds the organization accountable for meeting specified goals. Changes in the school’s relationship with its contracted organization comply with required certificate amendment procedures. |
| * Do stakeholders clearly understand the roles and responsibilities among the board, school leaders, and the contracted organization? * Have the board of trustees and school leadership established effective working relationships with their contracted organization while maintaining appropriate separation between the entities? * Has the school or board of the school ensured that the contract with the contracted organization is appropriately executed? (Evidence must address the following questions.)   + Does the board of trustees use a documented process to evaluate the performance of the contracted organization on an annual basis?   + Have changes in the school’s relationship with its contracted organization been made in compliance with certificate amendment requirements? (If applicable) |

|  |
| --- |
| **Criterion 8: Governance** |
| Members of the board of trustees uphold their responsibilities under Massachusetts law and regulations to act as public agents authorized by the state, providing 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 enable them to sustain an excellent virtual school and encourage diversity in membership? * Does the board train members to provide competent governance? |

# Appendix D: Types of Reviews

This appendix includes further details specific to Core Criteria Accountability Reviews, Full Criteria Accountability Reviews, and Targeted Accountability Reviews. Approximately eight weeks prior to each previously scheduled accountability review, the review 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 review; that is, the specific criteria to be addressed
* Documents to be submitted by the school
* Focus groups to be conducted

## Core Criteria Accountability review

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Core Criteria Accountability Review | |
| **Purpose** | This review 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[[4]](#footnote-5) * After renewal, schools in their second or third year of each certificate term |
| **Length** | Component One: Two weeks of virtual instruction observations and a virtual curriculum review (if applicable)  Component Two: One to two days of focus groups |
| **Review team composition** | Department staff, external reviewers, contracted vendors (as applicable) |
| **Criteria typically addressed** | 1, 2, 3 (if applicable), 4, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 7.3 (if applicable), 8, 9. The review team leader will indicate whether any additional criteria will be included in the scope of the review. |
| **Documents to be submitted to the school** | See [*Appendix E: Accountability Review Documents*](#_Appendix_D:_Site) for a list of the documents to be submitted to the Department prior to the review. The review team leader may request additional documents depending on the scope of the review. |
| **Required focus groups** | * Board of Trustees * Contracted Organization Representatives (if applicable) * School Leaders/Administrators (including Special Education/ESL Administrators) * Teachers (including General Education Teachers and Special Education/ESL Staff)Others, as determined by the review team leader |
| **Product** | Core Criteria Accountability Review Report that includes:   * Ratings, findings, and evidence related to:   + Criterion 1: Mission and Terms of the Certificate   + Criterion 2: Access and Equity   + Key Indicator 5.1: Curriculum and Course Design   + Key Indicator 5.4: Supports for All Learners   + Key Indicator 7.3: Contractual Relationships (If applicable)   + Criterion 8: Governance * Findings and evidence related to:   + Criterion 3: Compliance (if applicable)   + Criterion 4: Student Performance   + Key Indicator 5.2: Instruction * Evidence related to:   + Criterion 9: Finance * Ratings, findings, and evidence related to any other criteria or key indicators included in the scope of the review. |

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

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Core Criteria Accountability Review Scheduling Guidelines | | | |
| Please enter into the table below the times for which you would like to schedule the components of the accountability review. 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 | On the first day of the review. |  |
| Board of Trustees | 75 minutes |  |  |
| School Leaders/Administrators (including Special Education and ESL Administrators) | 60 minutes |  |  |
| Teachers (including Special Education and ESL Staff) | 60 minutes |  |  |
| Home base location for team (if review includes in-person components) | All day | All day |  |

## Full Criteria Accountability Review

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Full Criteria Accountability Review | |
| **Purpose** | This review 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** | Component One: Two weeks of virtual instruction observations and a virtual curriculum review (if applicable)  Component Two: One to two days of focus groups |
| **Review team composition** | Department staff and external reviewers |
| **Criteria typically addressed** | 1, 2, 3 (if applicable), 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 |
| **Documents to be submitted to the school** | See [*Appendix E: Accountability Review Documents*](#_Appendix_D:_Site) for a list of the documents to be submitted to the Department prior to the review. The review team leader may request additional documents depending on the scope of the review. |
| **Required focus groups** | * Board of Trustees * Contracted Organizational Representatives (if applicable) * School Leaders/Administrators (including special education/ESL administrators) * Teachers (including general education teachers and special education/ESL staff) * Students * Families * Student and Family Support Services Staff |
| **Product** | Full Criteria Accountability Review Report that includes:   * Ratings, findings, and evidence related to:   + Criterion 1: Mission and Terms of the Certificate   + Criterion 2: Access and Equity   + Key Indicator 5.1: Curriculum and Course Design   + Key Indicator 5.2: Instruction   + Key Indicator 5.3: Assessment and Program Evaluation   + Key Indicator 5.4: Supports for All Learners   + Key Indicator 6.1: School Climate   + Key Indicator 6.2: Family Engagement   + Key Indicator 7.1: School Leadership   + Key Indicator 7.2: Professional Climate   + Key Indicator 7.3: Contractual Relationships (if applicable)   + Criterion 8: Governance * Findings and evidence related to:   + Criterion 3: Compliance (if applicable)   + Criterion 4: Student Performance * Evidence related to:   + Criterion 9: Finance |

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

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Full Criteria Accountability Review Scheduling Guidelines | | | | |
| Please enter into the table below the times for which you would like to schedule the components of the accountability review. 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 |  |  |  |
| Board of Trustees | 90 minutes |  |  |  |
| Contractual Partner Representatives (if applicable) | 60 minutes |  |  |  |
| School Leaders/Administrators (including special education/ESL administrators) | 90 minutes |  |  |  |
| Teachers (including general education teachers and special education/ESL staff) | 60 minutes |  |  |  |
| Students | 60 minutes |  |  |  |
| Families | 60 minutes |  |  |  |
| Student and Family Support Services Staff | 60 minutes |  |  |  |
| Home base location for team (if review includes in-person components) | All day | All day |  |  |

## Targeted Accountability Review

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Targeted Accountability Review | |
| **Purpose** | This review 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 2, 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** | Component One: Two weeks of virtual instruction observations and a virtual curriculum review (if applicable)  Component Two: One to two days of focus groups |
| **Review team composition** | Department staff and external reviewers (as needed) |
| **Criteria typically addressed** | Criteria related to conditions, probation, or special considerations. The review team leader will indicate criteria to be included in the scope of the review. |
| **Documents to be submitted to the school** | For Targeted Accountability Reviews, the review team leader will specify which documents need to be submitted, depending on the scope of the review. |
| **Required focus groups** | Required focus groups will be determined based on the scope of the review, but are likely to include:   * Board of Trustees * Contractual Partner Representatives (if applicable) * School Leaders/Administrators (including Special Education and ESL Administrators) * Teachers (including General Education and Special Education/ESL Staff) * Students * Families * Student and Family Support Services Staff * Others, as indicated by review team leader |
| **Product** | Targeted Accountability Review Report that includes ratings, findings, and evidence related to criteria included in the scope of the review. If the school is on conditions, the accountability review report will also include a report on the school’s progress towards meeting those conditions. |

When the review team leader sends the school leader an email with instructions on how to prepare for the accountability review, 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 review schedule.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Targeted Accountability Review Scheduling Guidelines | | | | |
| Please enter into the table below the times for which you would like to schedule the components of the accountability review. 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 |  |  |  |
| Board of Trustees | TBD |  |  |  |
| Contractual Partner Representatives | 60 minutes |  |  |  |
| School Leaders/Administrators (including special education/ESL administrators) | 60 minutes |  |  |  |
| Teachers (including general education teachers and special education/ESL staff) | 60 minutes |  |  |  |
| Students | 60 minutes |  |  |  |
| Families | 60 minutes |  |  |  |
| Student and Family Support Services Staff | 60 minutes |  |  |  |
| Home base location for team (if review includes in-person components) | All day | All day |  |  |

# Appendix E: Accountability Review Documents

All the documents that schools ***may*** be asked to provide for the accountability review are listed and described in this appendix. When the Department notifies each school of the scope of the accountability review, 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 review 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 review team’s task of reviewing the documents.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Required Document Naming Convention  [SI] = School Initials  *Example:*  ABCS Master Class Schedule | Description |
| [SI] Class Schedule | An **easily readable** *and* easily printable full **class schedule** for each grade level that clearly indicates the following for all classes:   * Teacher * Subject * Time * Link to virtual classroom * Please clearly identify on the schedule which classes are SEI, ESL and special education pullout or substantially separate placements. |
| [SI] Preferred Schedule | The school’s preferred times for Component Two: Focus Groups. See [Appendix F: Focus Groups.](#_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] Evidence of Student and Family Orientation | Current **student and/or family orientation materials**, including materials provided to students and families during onboarding and staff presentation materials used during orientations or initial meetings with students and/or families. |
| [SI] Translated Documents | List of school **documents and/or forms available in languages other than English**. The review 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 accountability review to gather further information about [staff qualifications](https://www.doe.mass.edu/licensure/). |
| [SI] Curricular Materials | As applicable, curricular documents may include but is not limited to course catalogs, curriculum maps, pacing charts, priority standards (if available) for each subject, scope and sequence for asynchronous courses, and syllabi for asynchronous courses. Curriculum documents must include:   * Evidence of alignment of the school’s curriculum with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks; * Examples of teacher-created supplements to curriculum, if applicable; * Examples of teacher feedback and communication with students (with identifying information removed); * Sample student work and projects (grade level identified, but all student identifying information removed); and * Explanation of requirements for teacher/student communication * A list of asynchronous courses the school offers for each standard, concept, and/or skill |
| [SI] LMS Access Information | Login information for each member of the review team and instructions for how to access online courses and course materials. Student and teacher level access test accounts. Access to the LMS from the start of the Accountability Review until the Accountability Review Report is finalized |
| [SI] Assessment Materials | Please provide:   * A list of administered assessments * A copy of test proctoring protocols |
| [SI] Virtual Instruction Observation Form | A version of the Department’s virtual instruction observation form that includes information specific to the school. Instructions for including this information will be sent to the school as part of the pre-review document request. |
| Lesson Plans (no naming convention required) | If teachers at the school are typically expected to prepare **lesson plans**, then lesson plans should be available to members of the accountability review team when they conduct virtual instruction 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. |
| [SI] DCAP | A copy of the school’s **District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP)**. This plan is developed by the CMVS to ensure that the needs of all learners in the general education program are met.  *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] Special Education Policies and Procedures Manual | A copy of the **special education policies and procedures manual**. |
| [SI] Special Education Program Self-Evaluation | A copy of the school’s most recent [special education program self-evaluation.](https://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/sped/default.html?section=sped) |
| [SI] English Learners Program Self-Evaluation | A copy of the school’s most recent [English learner program self-evaluation](https://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/sped/default.html?section=el). |
| [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 | A brief **description of programming designed to foster a safe and supportive environment for students**. The description should include evidence that addresses the guiding questions for *Key Indicator 6.1: School Climate (p. 14):*   * Does the school’s program include elements designed to foster a safe and supportive environment and help students develop social and emotional skills? (Evidence must address the following questions.) * How does the school ensure the safety of students? * Does the school’s program include elements designed to foster students’ sense of belonging? * Are students’ cultures and identities reflected in curriculum documents and the learning environment? * Is there evidence of strong relationships between students and staff? |
| [SI] Family Engagement | Documentation of family and/or community engagement activities sponsored by school, including a calendar of student activities/events organized by school indicating student and family participation for past events. |
| [SI] Student/Family Handbook | The **student/family handbook**. |
| [SI] Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures (if applicable) | If the student/family handbook does not include a description of the school’s academic integrity policies and procedures, provide a summary of the strategies and tools the school uses to ensure the academic integrity of course assignments and assessments. |
| [SI] Cyber Safety Policies and Procedures (if applicable) | If the student/family handbook does not include a description of the school’s cyber safety policies and procedures, please provide a copy of the document that describes the school’s cyber safety policies and procedures and the school’s policy for age-appropriate supervision for students under the age of 14. |
| [SI] Org Chart | **Current organizational chart** showing all administrative and instructional positions and reporting relationships (if not already provided in the most recent annual report). |
| [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 accountability review 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 accountability review 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 has a contractual relationship with an organization and the contractual organization 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: 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] Contract for Contractual Organization (if applicable) | If the school contracts with a contractual organization for substantially all educational services, please provide the most recent **contract between the school and the organization**. |
| [SI] Evaluation of Contractual Organization | If the school contracts with a contractual organization, please provide a copy of the **board’s most recent evaluation of the organization**. |
| [SI] Safety Documents | A copy of the **fire inspection certificate** and **building safety inspection** **for the CMVS administrative offices.** |
| [SI] Documents related to conditions (if appliable) | The Department will identify what documents and materials are needed as they relate to the school’s progress regarding conditions on the school’s certificate. |
| [SI] Waitlist Number | Provide the updated number of students on the school’s waitlist. Ensure the data of the waitlist is included in the document. |
| [SI] Other | **Any other materials** that the school believes will assist the team in efficiently reviewing the school’s performance under its certificate, including, but not limited to materials documenting the school’s efforts to work toward the elimination of persistent achievement, access, and opportunity gaps experienced by historically underserved students. |

# Appendix F: Focus Groups

A few focus groups must be scheduled for the accountability review. Following is a complete list of the focus groups that *may* be conducted during the accountability review. When the Department notifies each school of the scope of the accountability review, 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 accountability review 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 accountability review 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** | 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. |
| **Contractual Organization Representative(s)**  **(if applicable)** | If the school is operated by a contractual organization, the accountability review will include an interview with at least one representative of the organization. |
| **School Leaders/ Administrators** | Administrators who are directly and primarily responsible for the academic program and the operation of the school should attend this meeting, which includes administrators of the school’s special education and English language education programs. During the review, the team may request additional meeting times with one or more administrators for additional inquiry or clarification. |
| **Teachers** | All teachers (including general education teachers and special education/ESL staff) should be offered the opportunity to participate. The focus group must include teachers of English language arts and mathematics, special education teachers, and ESL teachers. The focus group should also include teachers of courses specifically associated with the school’s mission and/or terms of the certificate 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. |
| **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: Sample Focus Group Schedules

This appendix includes a sample schedule for component two of the accountability review. The schedule illustrates the types of focus groups and meetings that occur during component two of the review. 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 review 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 review team leader should review the list of questions for each focus group and determine an appropriate amount of time.

As previously indicated, virtual instruction observations and/or a virtual curriculum review will take place one to two weeks prior to the focus groups.

## focus groups day 1 schedule

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Time** | **Team Member 1** | | **Team Member 2** | | **Team Member 3** | **Team Member 4** | | | **Team Member 5** |
| 8:15-8:30 | Department Team Meeting | | | | | | | | |
| 8:30-8:45 | Meeting with Head(s) of School | | | | | | | | |
| 8:45-9:00 | Break | | | | | | | | |
| 9:00-10:00 | Break | | | School Leaders/Administration Focus Group | | | School Leaders/Administration Focus Group | Break | |
| 10:00-10:15 | Break | | | | | | | | |
| 10:15-11:15 | Break | Contractual Partner Representatives Focus Group | | Break | | | | Contractual Partner Representatives Focus Group (*notetaker)* | |
| 12:00-1:00 | Break | | | | | | | | |
| 1:00-2:00 | Break | | | Teachers Focus Group | | | Teachers Focus Group (*notetaker)* | Break` | |
| 2:15-2:45 | Break | Student and Family Support Staff Focus Group | | Break | | | | Student and Family Support Staff Focus Group (*notetaker)* | |

## focus group day 2 schedule

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Time** | **Team Member 1** | **Team Member 2** | | **Team Member 3** | | **Team Member 4** | | **Team Member 5** | |
| 8:15-8:30 | Department Team Meeting | | | | | | | | |
| 8:30-8:45 | Meeting with Head(s) of School | | | | | | Break | | |
| 8:45-9:00 | Break | | | | | | | | |
| 9:00-10:00 | Board of Trustees Focus Group (*notetaker)* | | Board of Trustees Focus Group | | Break | | | | |
| 10:00-10:15 | Break | | | | | | | | |
| 10:15-11:15 | Break | | | | Student Focus Group | | Student Focus Group (*notetaker)* | | Break |
| 11:15-1:00 | Break | | | | | | | | |
| 1:00-2:00 | Family Focus Group | | Break | | | | | | Student Focus Group (*notetaker)* |
| 2:00-2:15 | Break | | | | | | | | |
| 2:15-4:15 | Department Team Time Moderation | | | | | | | | |
| 4:15-4:30 | Exit Discussion with Head(s) of School | | | | | | Break | | |

# Appendix H: Accountability REview Team Code of Conduct

The review team’s conduct throughout the accountability review 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 accountability review 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 accountability review 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 accountability review 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 accountability review apparel is business casual.
* Expected to be prompt to all scheduled meetings and conduct meetings in a quiet environment with limited to no distractions.
* Refrain from using your cell phone during virtual instruction observations, focus groups, and team meetings. Review team members 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 virtual instruction 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 accountability reviews are considered “on the record.”
* Bring lunch and/or snacks. Based on Department guidelines, the review team is not permitted to partake of snacks or lunch provided by the school without compensation. Please contact the school prior to the review 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 review, 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 accountability review report, notes, and related evidence as confidential.
* Refrain from communications with outside groups or individuals. Do not discuss the accountability review 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. Department staff may conduct the renewal inspection, or the Department may contract with an independent organization to conduct the renewal inspection. For more information visit the [Department’s website](https://www.doe.mass.edu/cmvs/). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Based on evidence and data compiled during the certificate term, the Department may expand the scope of a renewal inspection to include additional criteria or key indicators. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Accountability review reports do not include ratings for Criterion 3: Compliance, Criterion 4: Student Performance, or Criterion 9: Finance. See *Appendix D: Types of Reviews* for more details about which criteria and key indicators are rated. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. 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-5)