

Charter School

Renewal Inspection Protocol

2023

**Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

75 Pleasant Street

Malden, MA 02138

Phone: (781) 338-3227

Fax: (781) 338-3220



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

Jeffrey C. Riley

Commissioner

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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

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# Introduction

The Education Reform Act of 1993 authorized the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to establish independent public schools that operate under five-year charters granted by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) and are governed by public boards of trustees. The charter school law, Massachusetts state law, [G.L. c. 71, §89](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section89), and regulations, [603 CMR 1.00](https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr1.html?section=all), permit the Board to grant charters to two types of charter schools: Commonwealth charter schools, which operate independently of any school committee; and Horace Mann charter schools, which must obtain the approval of the local school committee and, in some cases, the local collective bargaining agent upon applying to the Board for charter status (603 CMR 1.02).

Any group or entity may apply for a public school charter, with the exception of for-profit companies and private/parochial schools, by initiating the charter application process established by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) (G.L. c. 71, §89). Charter schools are free to organize around a core mission, curriculum, theme, and/or teaching method, to control their own budgets, and to hire and fire teachers and staff. In return for this freedom, charter schools are held accountable for producing positive results over the five-year charter term. At the end of the first year of the school’s charter, each charter school must develop an Accountability Plan establishing specific five-year performance objectives for the purpose of measuring the school’s progress and success in fulfilling the terms of its charter (603 CMR 1.04(3)(l)).

The Board is obligated by law to conduct ongoing performance reviews of each charter school and, by the fifth year of the school's charter term, decide whether or not to renew the school’s charter. The charter renewal decision is based upon the school’s performance over the term of the charter in three areas (603 CMR 1.11(2)): faithfulness to the charter, academic program success, and organizational viability.

The renewal process includes the submission of a renewal application, a renewal inspection visit, and an analysis of all evidence related to the charter school’s performance, including quantitative and qualitative evidence collected through the Department’s charter school accountability process.

The Charter School Renewal Inspection Protocol (Protocol) explains the process by which information is gathered, analyzed, and reported regarding the performance and progress of Massachusetts charter schools applying for charter renewal. In determining whether or not to recommend charter renewal, the Department considers the information provided by the renewal inspection prepared in accordance with this Protocol, along with other sources of evidence. This version of the Protocol replaces the 2021 version.

In January 2010, Chapter 12 of the Acts of 2010, An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap, was signed into law and took effect immediately. Among other things, the new law amended the charter school statute, Massachusetts state law, G.L. c. 71, §89, and amended the charter school regulations, 603 CMR 1.00. In 2011, the Protocol was revised to comply with the revised statute and regulations.

In June 2013, the Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign released the Charter School Performance Criteria v. 3.0 (Criteria). The Criteria were revised after multiple forums, meetings, and consultations with stakeholder groups. The Criteria define charter school success and provide the standards by which schools are evaluated for all aspects of charter school accountability, from the application process to renewal. The Criteria outline expectations for charter school performance in the three areas of accountability: faithfulness to charter, academic program success, and organizational viability. The Criteria provide the performance benchmarks and lens of inquiry for the renewal inspection visit and for subsequent Department analysis, which leads to a recommendation regarding charter renewal.

In March 2014, the charter school regulations were amended. Since 2014, the Criteria and the Protocol have both been revised annually to reflect the best practices learned through implementation and the revised regulations. The current version of the [Criteria (v. 4.3)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/acct.html?section=criteria) includes clear expectations for charter schools to work toward the elimination of persistent achievement, access, and opportunity gaps experienced by historically underserved students.

# Overview of the Charter Renewal Process

## Major Components and Sequencing of the Charter Renewal Process

| Component | Description |
| --- | --- |
| **Submission of Application for Renewal** | The school submits the completed Application for Renewal to the Department no earlier than March 1 of the school’s third year and no later than 5 p.m. on August 1 after the end of the fourth year of the school’s charter. The completed Application must follow specific content and format guidelines and must be complete upon submission. |
| **Application for Renewal review** | The Department reviews the completed Application for Renewal. The Application for Renewal is accepted or returned to the school for revision or the inclusion of additional information. |
| **Renewal Inspection Evidence template preparation** | The Department develops a Renewal Inspection Evidence (RIE) template that includes the criteria to be addressed during the renewal inspection. |
| **Renewal inspection** | The renewal inspection provides the Department with current information about the school’s performance relative to the Criteria. The length and scope of the renewal inspection varies depending on the school’s age, size, location, status (conditions or probation), and/or past performance. All renewal inspections collect evidence that is required for a renewal determination as outlined by G.L. c. 71, § 89(dd). Department staff may conduct the renewal inspection, or the Department may contract with an independent organization to conduct the renewal inspection. Following the renewal inspection, the renewal inspection team completes the RIE and submits it to the Department for review, along with copies of notes and other materials gathered during the renewal inspection. Department staff work with the renewal inspection team to ensure that the evidence included in the RIE is clearly aligned with the Criteria, that it is of sufficient quality, and that it is clearly presented. |
| **Summary of Review – drafting process** | Department staff prepare a Summary of Review (SOR), which summarizes for the commissioner and the Board the school’s performance over the five-year charter term. The SOR incorporates the contents of the RIE as well as evidence compiled throughout the charter term from sources such as annual reports, site visit reports, demographic data, state assessment results, board of trustees documents, and financial audits. The SOR highlights evidence for six Criteria that are directed related to the statutory[[1]](#footnote-2) and regulatory[[2]](#footnote-3) requirements for charter renewal: Criterion 1: Mission and Key Design Elements; Criterion 2: Access and Equity; Criterion 3: Compliance; Criterion 4: Dissemination; Criterion 5: Student Performance; and Criterion 9: Governance. The SOR also contains relevant background information and evidence from the school’s history. |
| **Summary of Review – factual correction process, opportunity for response, and finalization process** | The Department sends a draft of the SOR to the school for review. The school is given approximately one week in which to make factual corrections to the report. The renewal inspection team assists Department staff as needed with corrections to evidence gathered during the renewal inspection. The school may provide the Department with a formal response to the SOR; this response is appended to the final draft of the SOR. Other interested parties, including the superintendent in the district in which a charter school is located or the region from which the school draws students, also have the opportunity to submit written comments to the Department regarding the renewal of a school’s charter. |
| **Renewal decision** | The SOR is presented to the commissioner, who makes a renewal recommendation or determination based on the evidence.Please see the commissioner’s 2013 [Considerations for Charter School Renewal memo](http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=7802) for a description of renewal outcomes and the rationale for making such decisions. In brief, based on Board votes in 2009 and 2013, and further codified in the [charter school regulations](http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr1.html?section=all), the commissioner has been delegated the authority to grant charter renewals that do not involve probation or non-renewal. In these cases, the commissioner notifies the Board ahead of any intended actions, and the Board may ask to bring the renewal to the full board for a vote. If the Board does not ask to bring the renewal to the full board, the commissioner's decision stands and the charter will be renewed, with or without conditions. For renewals involving probation or non-renewal, or for any item requested by the Board to be discussed at a meeting, the Board then votes either to renew, to renew with conditions, to renew with probation, or not to renew the school’s charter. |

## Sources of Evidence for a Renewal Determination

The primary purpose of this Protocol is to describe the process used to conduct a renewal inspection and to prepare the document reporting the evidence gathered: the Renewal Inspection Evidence (RIE). However, the evidence gathered during the renewal inspection constitutes only one source of evidence among the many reports, data, and other evidence informing the charter renewal process. The table below lists and describes many of key sources of evidence that are referenced in the Summary of Review (SOR) and that are considered by the commissioner and by the Board when making a renewal determination. The Charter School Performance Criteria (v. 4.3) also includes a list of sources of evidence used to assess the performance of charter schools.

| Evidence | Description |
| --- | --- |
| **Charter and charter amendments** | The charter is a license granted by the Board allowing the grantee to operate a charter school for a period of five years (G.L. c. 71, §89(dd); 603 CMR 1.02). Charter schools are required by law to operate in accordance with their charters (G.L. c. 71, §89(dd); 603 CMR 1.06(1)). If a charter school plans to change the material terms of its charter, the school must request approval of a charter amendment through the process required by the charter school regulations (603 CMR 1.10). |
| **Accountability Plan** | Every charter school is required to develop an Accountability Plan that establishes specific five-year performance objectives to help measure the school’s success in fulfilling the terms of its charter (603 CMR 1.04(3)(l)). |
| **Annual reports** | Every charter school is required to submit an annual report, no later than August 1 of each year, to the Department and the local school committee of each district from which the school draws its students. The annual report must also be made available to the parents and guardians of enrolled students and of prospective students (G.L. c. 89(jj)). The annual report contains information about the school’s preceding school year and requires specific information as outlined in (603 CMR 1.08(1)). |
| **Annual independent audit reports** | Every charter school is required to have an independent audit of its accounts conducted and to file the audit annually, on or before November 1, with the Department and the State Auditor (603 CMR 1.08(3)). The independent audit reports provide evidence to the Department with respect to each school’s financial condition and internal controls. |
| **Site visit reports** | Depending on the age and/or status of the school, the Department usually conducts charter school site visits in the second or third year of the charter term and may conduct site visits at other times when deemed necessary. Each site visit team prepares a site visit report, which is provided to the school and becomes part of the school’s permanent record. Site visits enable the Department to gather qualitative data about the school’s performance in relation to the Criteria.  |
| **State assessment results** | The Department considers the extent to which the school has made progress in student academic achievement for all students as defined by the statewide accountability system. In the event that a school believes that the statewide accountability indicators are not fully representative of student performance at the school, the Department may consider additional valid and reliable data demonstrating the progress the school has made in demonstrating academic progress. |
| **Other documents, data, and information** | The Department analyzes other documents, data, and information reported to the Department pertaining to the school’s operation and performance over the charter term. These sources of evidence include, but are not limited to: * Tiered Focused Monitoring Reports, Coordinated Program Review Reports, Corrective Action Plans, Progress Reports, Mid-Cycle Review Reports, and findings issued by the Problem Resolution System Office;
* The school’s compliance with state and federal requirements, including those for teacher qualifications;
* The extent to which the school has followed and enhanced its recruitment and retention plan;
* Disaggregated demographic data pertaining to enrollment;
* Disaggregated demographic data pertaining to attrition and stability;
* Disaggregated demographic data pertaining to discipline;
* The school’s enrollment and waitlist history over the charter term; and
* Other relevant information, as appropriate.
 |
| **Application for Renewal** | A charter school seeking renewal of its charter must submit a completed Application for Renewal to the Department no earlier than March 1 of the third year of the charter term and no later than August 1 after the end of the fourth year of the charter term ([603 CMR. 1.11(1)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr1.html?section=11)). The Application for Renewal presents evidence of the school’s performance during the current charter term, offers explanations for any performance or operational issues, identifies actions taken to correct past problems, and provides information regarding the school’s plans for improvement in the future. The Application for Renewal also reports on the school’s progress relative to each objective and measure in the school’s Accountability Plan and provides information regarding the school’s plans for the next charter term. |
| **Renewal Inspection Evidence** | Evidence gathered during the renewal inspection visit and summarized in the RIE provides the Department with the most currently available information about the school’s performance relative to the Criteria. The renewal inspection is conducted in accordance with the Charter School Renewal Inspection Protocol. The renewal inspection team does not make any recommendations regarding renewal or regarding the school’s operation. |
| **Summary of Review** | The SOR is a summary of the school’s performance over the five-year charter term in terms of a subset of the Criteria relating to faithfulness to charter, academic program success, and organizational viability, taking into account all of the documents, reports, and data listed above, together with other information as appropriate. A draft of the SOR is presented to the school for factual corrections before it is finalized. The school may also issue a formal response to the SOR, which is appended to the document. The final SOR is presented to the commissioner and provides the context for the commissioner’s renewal determination or recommendation. |

# Planning the Renewal Inspection

## Scope of Renewal Inspections

The Criteria provide the framework for the renewal inspection team’s collection and analysis of evidence related to each of the three areas of charter school accountability: faithfulness to charter, academic success, and organizational viability. Renewal inspections typically focus primarily on the following criteria and key indicators, aligning with statutory requirements for renewal of a public charter:

* Criterion 1: Mission and Key Design Elements
* Key Indicator 6.2: Instruction
* Key Indicator 8.3: Contractual Relationships (if applicable)
* Criterion 9: Governance

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. For example, if discipline rates at the school were high during the charter term, the renewal inspection team may gather evidence related to Key Indicator 7.1: Safe and Supportive Environment. If the school is operating with conditions, the renewal inspection team may gather information about the school’s efforts to meet the conditions. If there are concerns about academic performance, the renewal inspection team may gather information about the school’s efforts to improve academic performance and evidence related to Key Indicator 6.4: Supports for All Learners.

The Department notifies each school of the scope of the renewal inspection prior to the visit.

## Renewal Inspection Documents

[*Appendix C: Renewal Inspection Documents*](#_Appendix_C:_Renewal)lists all of the documents that schools *may* be asked to provide for the renewal inspection. When the Department notifies each school of the scope of the renewal inspection, 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 of the required documents in a timely manner and for schools to use the file-naming conventions provided in *Appendix C*. This will facilitate the renewal inspection team’s task of reviewing the documents.

## Preparing the Renewal Inspection Schedule

As noted above, the scope and length of the visit depend on a number of factors. Schools are notified of the scope and approximate length of the visit well in advance of the visit. [*Appendix B: Overview of Renewal Inspection Activities and Responsibilities*](#_Appendix_B:_Overview)outlines the responsibilities of the renewal inspection team, the school, and the Department before, during, and after the visit. For example, the renewal inspection team leader speaks with the school leader (or designee) two to three weeks prior to the renewal inspection site visit to begin the planning process. 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 designee should be knowledgeable of the school’s schedule, be able to communicate quickly with various stakeholders, and work with colleagues to resolve any scheduling issues. From this point forward, the team leader and the school leader (or designee) communicate as frequently as necessary to prepare for the visit.

The renewal inspection team’s work during the renewal inspection requires advance scheduling to enable the team to obtain the evidence required to complete the RIE. However, the site visit schedule requires enough flexibility to enable the team to follow up on evidence reviewed or to pursue issues that warrant further inquiry. Since the issues that emerge from the evidence collected cannot always be predicted in advance, the team must be able to move about the school, observe classrooms or other activities without advance notice, engage in further conversations with administrators, staff members, and teachers; and review documents other than those requested in advance.

Major activities that should be incorporated into the site visit schedule are discussed below. In addition, the schedule should enable the renewal inspection 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 are included in [*Appendix D: Sample Schedules*](#_Appendix_D:_Sample).

## Renewal Inspection Components

| Component | Description |
| --- | --- |
| **Team meeting** | The team leader welcomes the team, establishes the purpose and context of the renewal inspection, provides relevant materials, reviews the renewal inspection 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 for the purpose of making introductions, confirming logistical details of the visit, and asking 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 renewal inspection team should schedule enough classroom observations to ensure coverage of a sampling of all grades and core subjects. The renewal inspection 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://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.doe.mass.edu%2Fcharter%2Fguides%2FClassroomObservationForm.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK) 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 E: Focus Groups*](#_Appendix_E:_Focus) for a complete list of the focus groups that *may* be conducted during the renewal inspection. When the Department notifies each school of the scope of the renewal inspection, 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 renewal inspection team leader should discuss 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 renewal inspection 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 renewal inspection 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, and records and discusses observations, data and other evidence, identifies issues for further review, and develops preliminary summary statements regarding the school’s performance and progress to be included in the RIE.  |
| **Exit meeting with school leader** | The renewal inspection 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 renewal inspection. The team does not report any findings during the meeting. Summary statements and supporting evidence from the visit will be contained in the RIE. |

# Analyzing Renewal Inspection Evidence

Following the renewal inspection, the renewal inspection team completes the Renewal Inspection Evidence (RIE) template prepared by the Department. The template requires the team to produce a series of summary statements about the school’s performance and to support each statement with further analysis of evidence gathered during the renewal inspection. Summary statements require high-quality evidence, as discussed below.

Summary statements describe the school’s performance in terms of the relevant Criteria and respond to the areas of inquiry identified in the scope of the renewal inspection. These statements synthesize the renewal inspection team’s analyses of evidence collected from multiple sources prior to and during the renewal inspection visit. The team should develop at least one summary statement for each guiding question in the RIE template. The guiding questions associated with each criterion and key indicator are listed in *[Appendix A: Guiding Questions](#_Appendix_A:_Guiding)*.

Each summary statement must be supported by sufficient evidence collected during the renewal inspection process and, when appropriate, corroborated from multiple sources, including but not limited to observations, documents, data, and information derived from focus groups and interviews. In conducting the renewal inspection and writing the RIE, the renewal inspection team must ensure that the evidence collected and analyzed by the team is of high quality. High-quality evidence is both *sufficient in quantity* to support the finding and *appropriate in nature*. The team must use its professional judgment to determine the sufficiency of the evidence collected. In assessing the appropriateness of the evidence, the team must ensure that the evidence is relevant, valid, and reliable:

* Relevant evidence is logically related and important to the matter or issue under consideration.
* Valid evidence is based on accurate information and sound reasoning.
* Reliable evidence is verifiable and consistent.

Triangulation is one method of testing the reliability of evidence. For example, if administrators tell the renewal inspection team that a particular behavior management technique is in use at the school, the team should seek corroboration of this statement through documents, direct observations, and interviews with the school’s teachers and students. If the team finds a written policy requiring use of this technique, observes many teachers using this technique in the classrooms, in the hallways, and at recess, and learns through interviews with teachers and students that this technique is used, the team may reasonably conclude that the information provided by administrators is accurate. Accordingly, the team might report in the RIE that the school uses the specific behavior management technique; as supporting evidence, the RIE would cite the team’s direct observations and interviews with administrators, teachers, and students.

# Appendix A: Guiding Questions

The renewal inspection 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.  |
| All renewal inspections | * 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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## 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. |
| Only renewal inspections that include this key indicator in the scope  | * 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** |
| --- |
| 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. |
| All renewal inspections | * Are classroom environments conducive to learning?
* Does instruction reflect cultural proficiency?
 |
| Renewal inspections if there are concerns about academic performance | * Does instruction reflect high expectations for all students?
* Does instruction foster student engagement?
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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.  |
| Only renewal inspections that include this key indicator in the scope | * 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. |
| Only renewal inspections that include this key indicator in the scope | * 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 subgroups? (Evidence must address the following questions.)
	+ What are some of the main Tier 1 academic and SEL 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 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?
* 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.  |
| Only renewal inspections that include this key indicator in the scope | * 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.  |
| Only renewal inspections that include this key indicator in the scope | * 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.
 |
| Only renewal inspections that include this key indicator in the scope | * 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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| Only renewal inspections that include this key indicator in the scope | * 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. The board of trustees works to ensure that the memorandum or memoranda, as applicable, are implemented appropriately.
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| Only renewal inspections that include this key indicator in the scope | 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. |
| All renewal inspections | * 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 B: Overview of Renewal Inspection Activities and Responsibilities

This appendix summarizes the major activities and participant responsibilities for the renewal inspection process.

## Responsibilities of the Renewal Inspection Team

*Before* the renewal inspection, the renewal inspection team has the following responsibilities:

* Assemble a team of individuals whose professional backgrounds and expertise are relevant to the school’s mission, operations, program, population, and/or environment. Ensure that the team includes a member or members who can provide expertise related to providing programs for all learners including students with disabilities and English learners.
* Ensure that all team members have a sufficient understanding of charter schools and the legal and programmatic requirements for charter schools in Massachusetts.
* Ensure that the team includes enough team members so that two team members are present for each focus group and the team is able to conduct a sufficient number of classroom observations.
* Disclose to the Department any prior or current business or personal relationship between a team member, or an organization employing the team member, and the school.
* Designate a renewal inspection team leader who will serve as the team’s point of contact with the school and the Department, coordinate the work of team members while on site, and, if appropriate, lead the team’s work in preparing the Renewal Inspection Evidence (RIE) as well as the site visit notes.
* Ensure that all team members participate in training provided by the Department to renewal inspection teams.
* Consult the letter from the Department to the school that identifies the scope of the visit and that lists the focus groups to be conducted. Then use the guidance found in [*Appendix E: Focus Groups*](#_Appendix_E:_Focus) and [*Appendix D: Sample Schedules*](#_Appendix_D:_Sample) to develop the visit schedule.
* Schedule a meeting/phone call during which the school leader and the renewal inspection team leader will begin the planning process and discuss the requirements of the renewal inspection.
* Participate in a call with Department staff two weeks prior to the renewal inspection to confirm the scope of the renewal inspection and logistics for the visit as well as to discuss potential concerns based on a review of previous accountability documents.
* Assign two team members to be present during focus groups and interviews.
* Assign multiple team members to conduct classroom observations.
* Work with the school to adapt the Department’s classroom observation so that it incorporates items that are specific to the school. While it is the responsibility of the school to add information that is specific to the school, it is the responsibility of the renewal inspection team leader to ensure that the final version of the form only includes items that members of the renewal inspection team can expect to observe in most classrooms during a 10 to 20 minute observation and that each item uses language that will be clearly understood by members of the renewal inspection team when they use the form.
* Schedule enough classroom observations to ensure coverage of a sampling of all grades and core subjects. The renewal inspection 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. There should typically not be more than 5 observations per grade level or 40 total observations, unless it is a large school with multiple campuses and/or there are concerns about instruction. There should typically not be fewer than three observations per grade level or 15 total observations, unless it is a small school and this would mean observing each teacher more than twice. The length of classroom observations depends on the scope of the visit, with observations ranging from 10 to 20 minutes.
* Ensure that team members have reviewed the documents and information provided to the team in advance and developed focus group questions and inspection tasks that are informed by that review and that allow the team to gather sufficient data and evidence in the areas of inquiry. Also ensure that team members are familiar with the final version of the classroom observation form that has been adapted to incorporate items that are specific to the school.
* Conduct a call with the school leader just before the visit to confirm details of the visit, including logistics, the schedule, and the list of focus group attendees.

*During* the renewal inspection, the renewal inspection team has the following responsibilities:

* Bring lunch and/or snacks. Based on Department guidelines, the renewal inspection team is not permitted to partake of snacks or lunch provided by the school without compensation.
* Take accurate, pertinent notes during interviews and observations. Recollections of statements or events are unreliable and inappropriate sources of evidence.
* Conduct enough classroom observations to ensure coverage of a sampling of all grades and core subjects. The renewal inspection team should observe all types of classrooms: general education, special education, ESL, and classrooms providing sheltered SEI instruction. The length of classroom observations depends on the scope of the visit, with observations ranging from 10 to 20 minutes. Completed classroom observation forms must contain sufficient evidence to justify each of the assigned ratings.
* Avoid conducting observations of instruction led by short-term substitute teachers.
* Review all academic and other mission-related programs provided by the school, including general education, inclusion, ESL, SEI, and pull-out classrooms.
* Use a team moderation process to share, sort, and substantiate relevant evidence. The team leader is responsible for guiding the team through a process during which team members share the evidence that they have collected and use their professional expertise to evaluate the quality of the evidence collected. After conducting focus groups and classroom observations and after reviewing documents and other data document reviews, members of the team accumulate a significant volume of information. During and after the site visit, the team members’ individual viewpoints on this body of information must evolve into a collective perspective on the school’s performance and progress. For example, team members might discuss whether comments by certain school community members are relevant to the team’s evolving assessment. Team leaders also ensure that individual members’ interpretations are not distorted by their personal or professional biases. The team moderation process thus provides an essential filter that will, if used effectively, produce summary statements that are substantiated by sufficient, appropriate, high-quality evidence, and that represent the consensus of the team.

*After* the renewal inspection, the renewal inspection team has the following responsibilities:

* Draft, review, and edit summary statements and evidence. Incorporate them into the RIE template.
* Contact the school by telephone or email only for clarification of important questions. In most cases, minor factual issues do not warrant continued communications with the school.
* Send the first draft of the RIE to the Department for review, along with notes taken during focus groups and completed classroom observation forms.
* Complete revisions requested by Department staff. Department staff work with the renewal inspection team to ensure that the evidence included in the RIE is clearly aligned with the Criteria, that it is of sufficient quality, and that it is clearly presented.
* Meet the scheduled deadlines for submitting the draft RIE to the Department and for completing revisions. Schedule delays can affect the charter renewal process.
* After revisions to the RIE have been completed, the Department incorporates the contents of the RIE into the Summary of Review (SOR). After the SOR is sent to the school for factual corrections, Department staff may request the assistance of the renewal inspection team in making corrections to the parts of the SOR that were incorporated from the RIE.
* Cease communicating with the school after the factual correction process is complete. Direct any further inquiry from the school to the Department.

## Responsibilities of the School

*Before* the renewal inspection, the school has the following responsibilities:

* Review this Protocolin its entirety.
* Explain the charter renewal process and Protocol procedures to school community members.
* Submit all documents requested by the Department and the renewal inspection team leader in a timely manner.
* Participate in a meeting/phone call during which the school leader and the renewal inspection team leader begin the planning process and discuss the requirements of the site visit.
* Work with the renewal inspection team leader to develop the site visit schedule and inform the school community of the schedule and the team’s open access to classrooms and activities taking place in the school. Work with school staff to ensure that the renewal inspection team will be able to observe instruction when they visit classrooms—teachers should not schedule field trips or assessments that take the whole period to administer.
* Work with the renewal inspection team leader to adapt the Department’s classroom observation so that it incorporates items that are specific to the school. While it is the responsibility of the school to add information that is specific to the school, it is the responsibility of the renewal inspection team leader to ensure that the final version of the form only includes items that members of the renewal inspection team can expect to observe in most classrooms during a 10 to 20 minute observation and that each item uses language that will be clearly understood by members of the renewal inspection team when they use the form.
* Gather a representative group for each focus group to be conducted during the renewal inspection through an open invitation and inform each participant of the time and place of the meeting.
* Designate a contact person (typically the school leader) who will be available to respond to team inquiries and requests prior to and during the visit.
* Reserve a comfortable, private, and secure working space for the renewal inspection team that will not be used for other purposes during the visit.
* Reserve a private space for the renewal inspection team to conduct focus groups and interviews. Be sure the space is large enough to comfortably accommodate the largest focus group.
* Reserve suitable parking and send school entry procedures to the renewal inspection team leader.

*During* the renewal inspection, the school has the following responsibilities:

* The school should *not* provide breakfast, snacks, or lunch for the team. Based on Department guidelines, the renewal inspection team is not permitted to partake of snacks or lunch provided by the school without compensation.
* The school leader (or designee) should be available to respond to team inquiries throughout the visit.
* Provide Wi-Fi access.
* Ensure that team members can easily access all areas of the school. This includes providing copies of any keys or passes needed to enter buildings, classrooms, and staff restrooms.
* Post a copy of the schedule for each classroom (an any other instructional spaces) on or just outside the door.
* Post a notice on the door of any instructional space where a substitute teacher is in charge.
* If teachers at the school are typically expected to prepare lesson plans, printed copies should be available to members of the renewal inspection team when they conduct classroom observations.
* Provide access to all personnel and instructional spaces requested by the team.
* Ensure that focus group participants arrive on time and that the space used to conduct focus groups is private.
* Focus group and interview participants are expected to provide informative, accurate, and responsive answers to team questions. Assume that all responses are “**on** the record.”
* Communicate any concerns regarding the team’s actions or behavior to the team leader and to the Department.

*After* the renewal inspection, the school has the following responsibilities:

* Respond promptly to any requests for clarification from the team.
* Review the draft SOR and notify the Department of any factual errors by the scheduled deadline. Examples of factual errors would include errors in the titles of school staff or documents, dates, or statistical information.
* Submit to the Department a written response to the SOR, if the school so desires.

## Responsibilities of the Department

*Before* the renewal inspection, the Department has the following responsibilities:

* Review the school’s Application for Renewal for clarity and completeness and follow up with the school as needed to request any missing information.
* Notify the school of the type of team that will conduct the renewal inspection: vendor or Department.
* Notify the school and renewal inspection team of the scope of the renewal inspection, the documents to be submitted by the school, and the list of focus groups to be conducted.
* Ensure that the selected renewal inspection organization and team have the requisite expertise and capacity to conduct all assigned facets of the renewal inspection.
* Provide required documents, data, and information to the renewal inspection team.
* Coordinate with the renewal inspection team and the school regarding the dates of the renewal inspection.
* Inform the renewal inspection team if the school has unique circumstances, such as: a contract with an EMO, an MOU, or operates at multiple campuses.
* Prepare the RIE template for use by the renewal inspection team.
* Schedule and conduct a call with the renewal inspection team leader two weeks prior to the renewal inspection to confirm the scope of the renewal inspection and logistics for the visit as well as to discuss potential concerns based on a review of previous accountability documents.

*During* the renewal inspection, the Department has the following responsibilities:

* Contact the school during the renewal inspection to monitor the conduct and progress of the renewal inspection team’s work.
* Communicate as necessary with the renewal inspection team and the school regarding the progress of the visit.

*After* the renewal inspection, the Department has the following responsibilities:

* Review the draft RIE for writing quality and adherence to this Protocol.
* Notify the renewal inspection organization when the draft RIE requires revisions and when it has been accepted by the Department.
* Provide a draft Summary of Review (SOR) to the school for review and factual corrections. Work with the renewal inspection team lead to incorporate any factual corrections.
* Finalize the SOR summarizing the school’s performance over the five-year charter term, taking into account the multiple sources of evidence.
* Notify the school of the option to issue a formal response to the SOR, which is appended to the document.

# Appendix C: Renewal Inspection Documents

All the documents that schools ***may*** be asked to provide for the renewal inspection are listed and described in this appendix. When the Department notifies each school of the scope of the renewal inspection, 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 renewal inspection 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] 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 renewal inspection 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 renewal inspection to gather further information about [staff qualifications](http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/guidance/2020-1.html). |
| [SI] Classroom Observation Form | A version of the Department’s [**classroom observation form**](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.doe.mass.edu%2Fcharter%2Fguides%2FClassroomObservationForm.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK) 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 renewal inspection, 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 for members of the renewal inspection 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 renewal inspection.*  |
| [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. 14):* 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] 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] 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] 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 renewal inspection 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 renewal inspection 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 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] Other | **Any other materials** that the school believes will assist the team in efficiently reviewing the school’s performance in relation to the Criteria, 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.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 D: Sample Schedules

This appendix includes sample schedules for the renewal inspection team’s work at the school. The schedules illustrate the types of activities that occur during a typical renewal inspection. 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 E: Focus Groups*](#_Appendix_E:_Focus), focus groups are typically an hour in length, but the renewal inspection team leader may schedule longer or shorter meetings depending on several factors. 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 renewal inspection team leader should review the list of questions for each focus group and determine an appropriate amount of time.

## Renewal Inspection 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: General Education, Special Education, and ESL Staff |
| 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 (including Special Education and ESL Administrators) | Classroom Observations |
| 3:00-4:30 | Team Moderation |
| 4:30-4:45 | Exit Meeting with School LeaderTeam Departs |

## Renewal Inspection 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 |
| 7:30-7:45 | 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 | Meeting 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 Services 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 E: Focus Groups

A few focus groups must be scheduled for the renewal inspection. Following is a complete list of the focus groups that *may* be conducted during the renewal inspection. When the Department notifies each school of the scope of the renewal inspection, 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 renewal inspection 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 renewal inspection 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.

|  |  |
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| 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 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 renewal inspection 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 renewal inspection 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 renewal inspection 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 renewal inspection, 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. The focus group must include teachers of English language arts and mathematics. If *Key Indicator 6.4: Supports for All Learners* is included in the scope of the renewal inspection, 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 F: Conducting Renewal Inspections at Schools with Multiple Campuses

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.

The Department will let the renewal inspection team know if a school has multiple campuses. It is important that the renewal inspection team gather evidence at each individual campus; this will allow the team to paint a clear and accurate picture of the education provided at each of the school’s locations. The guidelines in this appendix provide the renewal inspection team with information to assist in the effective planning and execution of the evidence-gathering and writing processes.

## Responsibilities of the Renewal Inspection Team

* During the planning process, the renewal inspection team leader should seek confirmation from the school leader (or designee) that information about the charter renewal process is being communicated to school community members at all campuses.
* The renewal inspection team is responsible for gathering evidence from all campuses. At least two team members should visit each campus for the purposes of conducting focus groups and classroom observations.
* Planning the number of focus groups for a renewal inspection at a school with multiple campuses needs to take into account the number of campuses, the distance between campuses, and the number of renewal inspection team members. The renewal inspection 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 renewal inspection team will need to hold a focus group with each of these groups at each campus.
* Conduct enough classroom observations at each campus to ensure coverage of a sampling of all grades and core subjects. The renewal inspection 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 Renewal Inspection Evidence (RIE), provide specific evidence from each campus.
* If applicable, articulate any major distinctions between campuses in the RIE. Provide individual, campus-based descriptions of the evidence for the following criteria and key indicators, if applicable: Criterion 1: Mission and Key Design Elements, Key Indicator 6.2: Instruction, and Key Indicator 6.4: Supports for All Learners, and Key Indicator 7.1: Safe and Supportive Environment.

# Appendix G: Renewal Inspection Team Code of Conduct

The renewal inspection team’s conduct throughout the renewal inspection 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 renewal inspection process and report. This Code of Conduct provides guidance for 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 renewal inspection 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 renewal inspection 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.
* Bring lunch and/or snacks. Based on Department guidelines, the renewal inspection 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.
* Where appropriate, ensure the confidentiality of school information such as student names, health records, 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.”
* Do not provide reassurance or warnings regarding charter renewal to school personnel; remind school personnel that the renewal inspection is only one of many sources of evidence used by the Department in developing a charter renewal recommendation.
* Do not evaluate the performance of individuals, either orally or in written descriptions of the evidence.
* Treat the draft Renewal Inspection Evidence, notes, and related evidence as confidential.
* Refrain from communications with outside groups or individuals. Do not discuss the status of the renewal inspection, your opinions regarding individuals working at the school, or renewal of the school’s charter with outside groups or individuals, including the media.
1. The charter school statute, at [G.L. c. 71, § 89(dd)](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section89), provides as follows.

A charter granted by the board shall be for 5 years. The board shall develop procedures and guidelines for revocation and renewal of a school's charter; provided, however, that a charter for a Horace Mann charter school shall not be renewed by the board without a majority vote of the school committee and local collective bargaining unit in the district where said charter school is located; provided, however, that a commonwealth charter shall not be renewed unless the board of trustees of the charter school has documented in a manner approved by the board that said commonwealth charter school has provided models for replication and best practices to the commissioner and to other public schools in the district where the charter school is located.

When deciding on charter renewal, the board shall consider progress made in student academic achievement, whether the school has met its obligations and commitments under the charter, the extent to which the school has followed its recruitment and retention plan by using deliberate, specific strategies towards recruiting and retaining the categories of students enumerated in paragraph (3) of subsection (i) and the extent to which the school has enhanced its plan as necessary. The board may impose conditions on the charter school upon renewal if it fails to adhere to and enhance its recruitment and retention plan as required. When deciding on charter renewal, the board shall take into account the annual attrition of students. The board shall also consider innovations that have been successfully implemented by the charter school and the evidence that supports the effectiveness of these practices. Upon renewal of its charter, a school shall update and enhance its recruitment and retention plan as necessary to account for changes in enrollment. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. The charter school regulations, at [603 CMR 1.11(2)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr1.html?section=11), provide as follows.

The decision by the Board to renew a charter shall be based upon the presentation of affirmative evidence regarding the faithfulness of the school to the terms of its charter, including the extent to which the school has followed its recruitment and retention plan and has disseminated best practices in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, § 89(dd); the success of the school's academic program; and the viability of the school as an organization. The Department will gather evidence regarding these issues from the renewal application and from other information, including but not limited to, a school's annual reports, financial audits, test results, site visit reports, and the renewal inspection report.

All charter schools will be evaluated on the same performance criteria as provided in the guidelines, provided, however, that the criteria will take into account each school's charter and accountability plan. Evidence of academic success for all students is essential for charter renewal. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)