



CMSD COMPREHENSIVE SITE VISITS:

Purpose and Protocol

As a charter school sponsor, CMSD is legally and contractually obligated to monitor and evaluate the charter school's compliance with all applicable law and rule. The site visits are an essential tool for CMSD to perform its obligation as a sponsor. Ohio Administrative Code defines site visit as "a visit made in person by a representative of the sponsor, or of the department, on-site at the location of the school with the school administrator, fiscal officer, and/or member(s) of the governing authority to review and verify contractual, local, state, and federal compliance" in a variety of areas, including but not limited to health and safety, the educational program (including provision of student learning opportunities), state-required assessments, fiscal operations, governance and administration, and other assessment and accountability measures as defined in the charter contract.¹

Pursuant to state law, sponsors must conduct comprehensive site visits of each sponsored school while class is in session at least twice a year.² Sponsors must also make written reports of information obtained during site visits and provide these to the Ohio Department of Education upon request.

Additional details regarding the site visit protocol are provided for in each school's charter contract. This document outlines the process and protocols for the site visits. More specific information about the protocols and procedures for elements of the site visit, including classroom observations and focus groups, can be found in the attached appendices.

CMSD's comprehensive site visit protocol meets the criteria for exemplary sponsors as defined in the Ohio Department of Education's Quality Practice Rubric.³ Exemplary sponsors collect data from a variety of school employees and other stakeholders, such as board members, students, parents, and management company staff, during site visits. Exemplary sponsors also provide written reports following each site visit that details the information collected during the site visit, summarizes the findings, and notes areas of improvement and strength.

¹ See <http://codes.ohio.gov/oac/3301-102-02v1>

² See <http://codes.ohio.gov/oac/3301-102-04>

³ See *2016-17 Sponsor Quality Practices Rubric*, available online at <https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Community-Schools/Sponsor-Ratings-and-Tools/2016-2017-Sponsor-Evaluations-Tools/Quality-Practices-Rubric.pdf.aspx>



A. Purpose of Comprehensive Site Visits

CMSD conducts at least two comprehensive school site visits per year while classes are in session. The purpose of these visits is to verify contractual, federal, state, and local compliance in a variety of areas, including health and safety, the educational program (including provision of student learning opportunities), state-required assessments, fiscal operations, governance and administration, and other assessment and accountability measures as defined in the charter contract. The comprehensive site visits help inform the performance of the school according to the Organizational Performance Framework, which is part of the charter contract.

B. Comprehensive Site Visit Elements

The following elements are part of the fall and/or spring site visit. CMSD reserves the right to modify the times at which these elements are utilized, provided they notify schools when they send out their site visit letters. Site visit letters must be sent out to the schools at least one week prior to the site visit.

1) Classroom observations

Classroom observations will take place during the fall for all schools. During the spring visits, classroom observations will take place for all new schools (schools that have been opened for less than two years) and for other schools if deemed necessary by CMSD. Schools will be notified in their site visit letter if classroom observations will be conducted. For more information about observation protocol, see [Appendix A](#).

2) Focus Groups

During the spring visit, CMSD will conduct focus groups with students, teachers, parents, and/or other stakeholders. The school administration can select the participants but school administration will not be present during any of the focus group sessions. A focus group should include four to eight students in a range of grade levels served by the school; four to eight teachers also from a range of grades and subjects; and three to five parents of students in different grade levels. For more information about focus group protocol, see [Appendix B](#).

3) Enrollment records review

During the fall visit, CMSD will randomly review a select number of enrollment records (approximately 10 percent of a school's population). If CMSD staff has identified issues with 20 percent or more of the records reviewed, CMSD may elect to do another enrollment record review in the spring. CMSD will let the school know this in their site visit letter. For more information about records review protocol, see [Appendix C](#).

4) Special education

Special education records will be reviewed during both the fall and spring site visits. Special education records include, but are not limited to, case management folders; data supporting implementation of Individualized Education Plans and/or Section 504 plans; and school policies and procedures for special education and students with disabilities. A site walkthrough will also be conducted during both visits, although items on the walkthrough may not always be the same. Any areas of concern identified during the fall visit are expected to be addressed prior to the spring visit. No identifying information for individual students will be collected. For more information, see [Appendix D](#).



5) Walkthrough

During both the fall and spring site visit, CMSD will do a walkthrough of the building. CMSD shall provide schools with a copy of the walkthrough sheet prior to the site visit.

6) Compliance review

CMSD will review compliance documentation submitted to date and address school concerns.

7) Other

CMSD reserves the right to add additional elements to its comprehensive site visits in accordance with state law and the charter contract. CMSD will provide schools with notice of additional elements in the site visit notification.

C. Overview of Site Visit Procedures

1) Scheduling

CMSD will work with the principal, operations leader, and management company staff (if applicable) to schedule site visits at times that are minimally disruptive.

2) Notification

CMSD will send a letter via email at least one week prior to the site visit to the principal, operations leader, and board chair of each school notifying them of the visit. The letter should at a minimum inform the school of the elements to be covered during the site visit and should identify the school and other personnel who need to be present during the visit. The email shall also include an attached version of the walkthrough sheet to be used during that visit.

3) Visit

CMSD staff will report to the office on the date of the visit. In the event the entire site visit cannot be completed in one day, CMSD staff will notify the school and work with the school to set up another time to complete the visit.

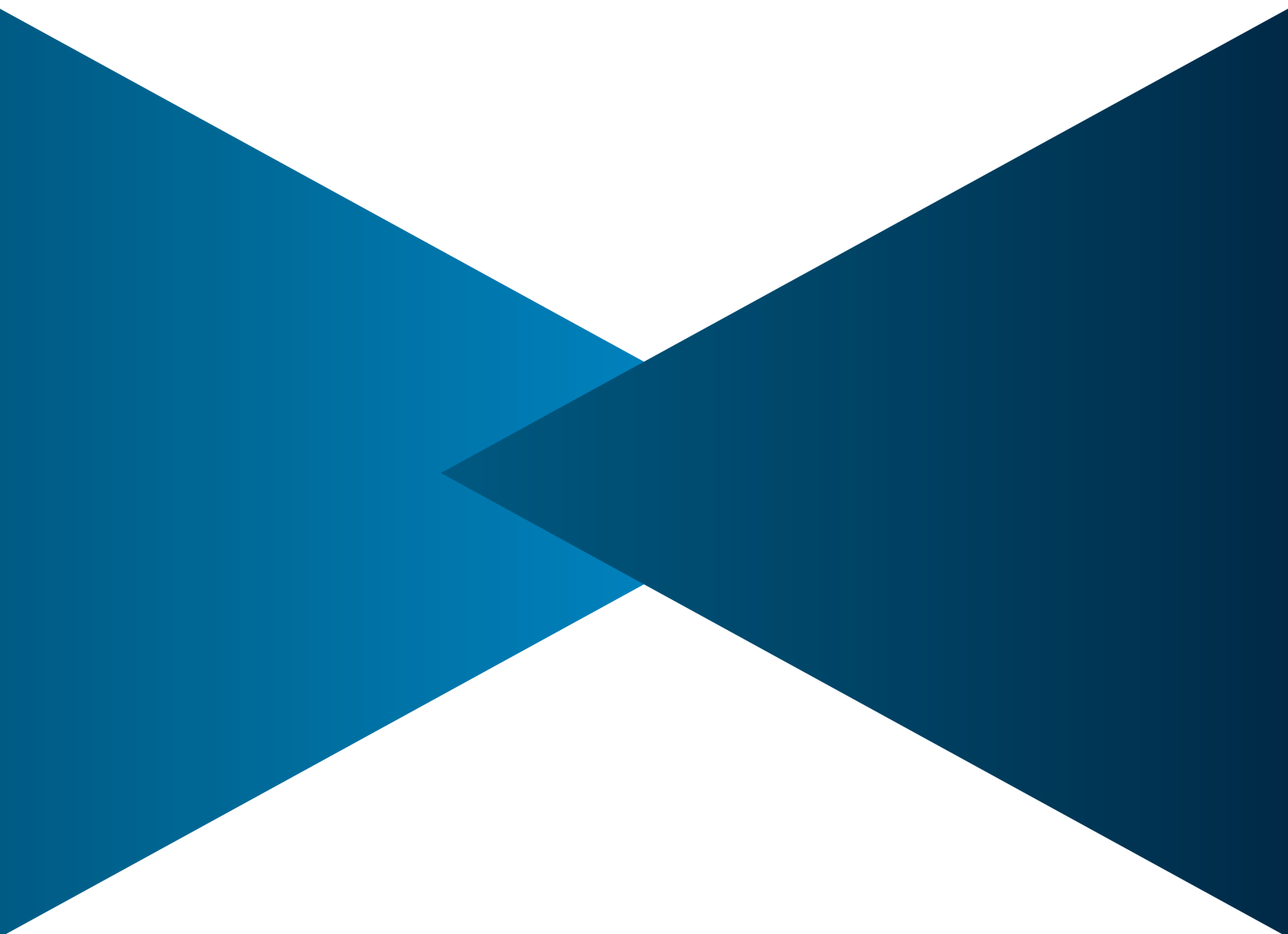
4) Post-visit report

Within two weeks of the visit, CMSD staff will draft a report that includes a summary of findings and that notes areas of strength and areas for improvement. If the report identifies areas needing improvement, the report shall specify the steps or timeframes for doing so and shall require status updates from the schools pursuant to these steps. CMSD will also share the report with the school's board.

5) Monitoring

CMSD will monitor the school's follow through with any concerns identified in the site visit report. If concerns are not addressed in a timely manner, CMSD will take necessary steps described in the Intervention Protocol, which is part of the school's contract.

APPENDICES





Appendix A. Classroom Observation

CMSD will visit a range of classrooms across the subject areas and grade levels at the school with at least 25% of the classrooms in a school for 15-20 minutes each. CMSD will not visit classrooms that are staffed by substitutes. CMSD will document the classroom visits on the CMSD Charter Sponsor Observation Tool. CMSD may speak quietly to students in the course of the observation or take photos of the classroom environment and student work, in accordance with state and federal law and the charter contract. CMSD will strive to be as least disruptive to the learning environment as possible. CMSD will not provide feedback to individual teachers, or report on individual teachers to school administration. After the site visit, CMSD will summarize the observations in writing and report to the Executive Director of Charter Schools.

Appendix B. Focus Groups

CMSD will conduct focus groups with students, teachers, and parents at a sponsored school during the spring site visits. The school administration will select the students, teachers, and parents for the focus groups. A student focus group should include 4 - 8 students in multiple grade levels. A teacher focus group should include 4 - 8 teachers in multiple grade levels and subject areas, including special education. A parent focus group should include 3 – 5 parents of students in multiple grades levels. If necessary, the school will provide coverage for teachers attending a focus group. If necessary, students will be excused from class to attend a focus group. School administration will not attend any of the student, teacher, or parent focus groups. CMSD will not provide personally identifiable information to school administration about the discussions during the focus groups. After the focus groups CMSD will summarize the discussions in writing and report to the Executive Director of Charter Schools.

Sample Student Questions

- What are the expectations for your academic performance in class?
- What are the expectations for your behavior in class?
- How do you know how well you are doing in your classes?
- How do you get support if you are struggling academically or emotionally?
- Is the school safe physically and emotionally?
- Does the school celebrate and recognize your accomplishments?
- What is the most challenging assignment you have had to compete this year?
- How is the school preparing your for college (or high school)?

Sample Teacher Questions

- What is the school's mission and vision?
- What is the common approach to instruction?
- How do you assess students during the lesson?
- How does the school support students who are struggling or at risk?
- How does the school support your professional learning?
- How do you receive feedback on instruction?

Sample Parent Questions

- What is the school's mission and vision?
 - How are you informed about your child's progress?
 - How does the school support students who are struggling or at risk?
 - What activities does your child participate in?
 - How is your child recognized for his or her accomplishments?
 - How does the school communicate with you?
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Appendix C. Enrollment Review Protocol

CMSD will randomly select a variety of enrollment records from each grade served by the school. CMSD will review the school's proof of residency policy and ensure that the records are consistent with state law and school policy. CMSD will also check to ensure that applications are complete, emergency medical authorizations are signed, and immunizations forms are up to date. CMSD will also verify birth certificates or other appropriate documents are on file. Note that some of the records might be contained electronically. CMSD will summarize the findings in the written report but will notify the school during the site visit of any immediate concerns, such as lack of residency verification.

Appendix D. Special Education

In order to determine if the school materially complies with all policies and procedures relating to the education of students with disabilities, CMSD will review a subset of case management folders representing at least 10% of the enrolled population of students with disabilities at the school. Additionally, CMSD may gather and review supporting evidence from classroom visits, interviews with key staff members, and review of the methods used to measure progress toward mastery of IEP goals and objectives (including, but not limited to, assessments, work samples, checklists, observations, and rubrics).

During the fall site visit, "red flag" and "yellow flag" issues will be identified. "Red flag" issues are to be addressed immediately as they constitute a violation of federal law, Ohio Revised Code, and/or school policies and procedures. "Yellow flag" issues are to be addressed through professional development and quality assurance practices.

Policy Questions - Required by Ohio Revised Code

- Does the school have a confidentiality policy with regard to special education students?
 - Does the school have a written policy regarding the "child find" program to identify special education children?
 - Does the school have a written policy to provide free and appropriate education to special needs children?
 - Does the school have a written policy to ensure that students with disabilities are being educated in the least restrictive environment?
 - Does the school have a written policy to ensure compliance with IDEIA?
 - Does the school provide eye exams for special education students?
 - Does the school receive "excess costs" for special education students? If yes, does the school ensure that it does not exceed the amount received to educate the student?
 - Does the school have one or more students who could not attend school due to the student's disabilities? If yes, does the school provide home instruction?
 - Has the school submitted a plan to ODE for providing education to students with disabilities?
 - Does the school provide parents with information about the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship program and the Autism Scholarship program as appropriate and specified in ORC 3314.19?
 - Does the school serve any students with visual impairments? If yes, does the school annually assess the reading and writing skills of each student with a visual impairment in a medium deemed appropriate by the student's IEP?
 - Is an agency other than the school responsible for transition services in a student's IEP? If no, does the school take steps regarding transition services?
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Sample Questions Regarding FAPE, LRE, and IEPs

- Do Evaluation Team Reports, the eligibility determination process, and supporting documentation meet federal and state requirements for both process and content?
 - Do Individualized Education Plans and supporting documentation meet federal and state requirements for both compliance and quality of content?
 - What is the evidence that students with disabilities have meaningful access to the general education curriculum?
 - What is the evidence that students with disabilities make meaningful progress toward mastery of IEP goals and objectives?
 - What is the evidence that specially designed instruction is occurring with the frequency, intensity, and duration specified by students' IEPs?
 - In practice, does the school provide a continuum of services in the least restrictive environment?
 - Do students with disabilities have the same access to extracurricular and nonacademic activities as typical peers?
 - Does the school follow Ohio Revised Code which designates appropriate student-teacher ratios for special education services? Does the school have adequate staffing to meet the needs of all learners?
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