

Purpose and Overview

The site visit will primarily focus on corroborating and augmenting the information found in the charter renewal application and the CSI Annual Review of Schools (CARS) Report, and to verify that the school is implementing improvement strategies with fidelity. The site visit also offers a unique opportunity for schools to showcase aspects of their school community that are not captured through data and document review.

Additionally, the site visit affords the CSI review team the opportunity to dig into areas of growth and strength that may have surfaced over the prior contract term. The site visit protocol is intentionally flexible; the CSI review team lead and the school leader will design an agenda that is appropriate to the school's programming and current areas of improvement.

The site visit culminates in a narrative report written by the CSI site visit team lead. This report will be included in the final charter renewal report, and provides valuable qualitative and contextual information to the CSI Board as they make their renewal decisions.

Structure

The site visit will draw on the major improvement strategies identified in the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) and improvement strategies identified by the school leader during the pre-visit call. If organizational or financial concerns have been flagged for the school, CSI staff may ask to discuss those concerns during the site visit. Site visits will include instructional observations, focus groups with staff, students, and families, and may include additional components as determined during the planning call.

The site visit is designed primarily to be informational and to facilitate access to observational and anecdotal information about the school's performance. However, the review team and the school leader will establish clear and observable outcomes for the site visit through the pre-visit questionnaire and pre-visit planning meeting. During the site visit, the CSI team will look for evidence to support the areas identified in the pre-visit planning meeting. In addition, the CSI team may request to gather information (via observation, interview, or document review) based on other areas of need.

After the visit, the CSI team will compile evidence gathered during the site visit and provide a summary narrative to school leaders within three weeks. The summary narrative will be included in the renewal report provided to the CSI board.

Visits may range in length from half a day to one day; however, most visits will take about four hours.

Scheduling and Preparation

Site Visit Coordinator

CSI assumes that the school leader will act as the coordinator and liaison for the renewal site visit; however, the school has the option of designating another person to assume this role. CSI will work with the designated person to ensure that key documents are provided to CSI and the review team prior to the site visit.

Scheduling

CSI typically conducts renewal site visits in September and October. Once renewal applications are released in early spring, CSI will schedule an initial renewal phone call to review the renewal process and site visit components. The renewal site visit should be scheduled by early August and a pre-visit planning meeting (via phone or in person) should be scheduled by mid-August. These are general guidelines and may vary depending on the date of the site visit (schools may choose to schedule a site visit in the spring of the application release, if their UIP is updated). Typically, the pre-visit planning meeting should be scheduled at least three weeks prior to the site visit. The site visit should be scheduled on a “normal” school day and the school leaders should ensure that the site visit does not occur during schoolwide testing, field trips, or when other events are scheduled outside of the normal academic program. CSI strongly encourages school leaders to schedule the site visit on the same day as the geographic meeting or a local school board meeting.

Preparation for the Site Visit (5 Weeks Prior to the Visit)

Since the academic component of the site visit will draw on the major improvement strategies identified in the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP), it is important to review the most recent UIP prior to the pre-visit planning meeting. CSI will provide the school leader with the most recent copy of the school’s UIP Action Plan in advance of the pre-visit meeting. During their review of the Action Plan, the school leader should make note of any observable action steps or implementation benchmarks and note any aspects of the school’s improvement efforts that may have changed since the UIP was finalized.

Additionally, the organizational and financial components (if applicable) of the site visit will focus on areas identified for improvement in the CARS Report, the CSI Compliance Process, or through conversations with CSI staff.

Most importantly, the school leader should review the Renewal Pre-visit Questionnaire prior to the pre-visit planning meeting. The Renewal Pre-visit Questionnaire will guide the conversation during the pre-visit planning meeting and ultimately inform the various outcomes that the review team will look to observe during the site visit. Please note that

the school leader is not expected to complete the Renewal Pre-visit Questionnaire prior to the meeting.

Pre-visit Planning Meetings (3-4 Weeks Prior to the Visit)

During the pre-visit planning meeting, CSI and the school leader will complete the Renewal Pre-visit Questionnaire. This questionnaire will help to establish the clear and observable outcomes that the CSI team will look for during the site visit.

Responses to the questions are expected to be brief and succinct and reflect observable Implementation Benchmarks or Action Steps from the UIP Action Plan that the CSI review team will have a high likelihood of observing during the site visit. Additionally, a draft schedule for the site visit will be produced during this meeting. School leaders should anticipate that this meeting will last approximately 45 minutes.

Logistics

Site Visit Team Members

Site visit teams will consist of CSI staff, and may include a CSI board member representative. School leaders will be notified of the makeup of the CSI site visit team at least a week prior to the visit occurring.

Week Prior to the Visit

CSI staff will contact the school leader to finalize the visit schedule and logistics. The school leader should ask any additional questions about the visit and protocol at this time.

The Day of the Visit

The site visit begins with a meeting with the school leader and the review team. The site visit team will review the schedule for the day, orient themselves to the school building/site, and review the Renewal Pre-visit Questionnaire. Depending on the schedule and the questionnaire, the site visit teams may also conduct interviews, perform a document review, and meet to calibrate preliminary findings. Any classroom/instructional observations will be accompanied by a school staff representative with instructional expertise.

Closing meeting

At the end of the site visit, the CSI team will meet with school leader(s) to review next steps and answer any questions the school leader(s) may have. The CSI team will avoid making any evaluative statements related to the site visit; however, if any additional concerns arise during the visit, the CSI team may request additional documents or information, as well as sharing the specific cause for concern.

After the Visit

If requested, school leaders will be provided with a summary narrative within three weeks of the visit. School leaders may respond to the narrative with feedback or questions if they so choose.. The narrative will be included as part of the renewal report provided to CSI's board.