



New Mexico Public Education Department Options for Parents and Families Division

Charter School Renewal Site Visit Protocol 2021-2022

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Purpose and Overview

PEC Performance Review and Accountability System

The Public Education Commission (PEC) serves as the authorizer of charter schools for the state of New Mexico. Under Section 22-8B-12 of the New Mexico Statutes Annotated (NMSA) 1978, the PEC evaluates charter schools through its own student academic outcomes, organizational viability, and ability to operate in a fiscally sound manner.

The annual evaluation, based on the PEC [Performance Framework](#), is conducted by the PEC's authorized representatives in the Charter Schools Division (CSD) of the Public Education Department (PED). The CSD conducts annual reviews by means of both desktop monitoring and site visits. As part of the monitoring process, charter schools are required to submit academic, financial, and organizational data to PEC, various PED divisions, and other governmental entities. The CSD will obtain much of the data required to produce the school's Annual Report by obtaining information through the STARS data system and by request from other PED divisions. Other documents will be requested from charter schools prior to, and in some cases following, the site visit.

As part of renewal consideration, PEC will consider a schools' annual school performance, school visit reports, information contained in the school's renewal application, and other relevant information in their decisions. Renewal decisions are based on the statutory standards in Section 22-8B-12(K) New Mexico Statutes Annotated.

Charter School Renewal Application

By October 1 of the year before the charter contract expires on June 30, charter schools seeking renewal from the PEC must submit a renewal application. The application is available on the PEC's [Charter Renewal Application](#) web page and consists, as mandated by NMSA § 22-8B-12(J), of:

- Part A: Summary Data Report and Current Charter Contract (provided by CSD);
- Part B: Progress Report (provided by the school);
- Part C: Financial Statement (provided by the school);
- Part D: Petitions of Support (provided by the school); and
- Part E: Description of the Charter School Facilities.

Schools authorized by a local school district but seeking authorization by the PEC must also provide:

- Current Charter Contract, Performance Framework, and Annual Reports from local authorizer.
- All financial statements and audit findings for any audits performed within the current contract.
- Membership figures for STARS 80-day and 120-day within the current contract.
- 910-B5's within the current charter contract.
- Site Visit Documents from within the current charter contract.
- Any Corrective Action Plans or Other Actions taken by the district or the PED.
- Special Education Maintenance of Effort (MoE) Reports from within the current contract.
- A Recent Cash Report submitted to the New Mexico Public Education Department.

Expedited Renewals

According to the PEC Performance Framework, schools that have maintained a Tier 1 or 2 rating for the previous four years of the charter contract and earned a "met expectations" rating on the organizational

and financial frameworks for the previous four years are eligible for an expedited renewal process. The expedited process may require less information in the renewal application and a condensed renewal site visit as appropriate. Schools eligible for Expedited Renewals were given an Expedited Renewal Application kit, but will not be eligible to receive a site visit that utilizes a modified protocol in 2021-22 since site visits were modified in 2020-21.

Renewal Schedule 2021-2022

September 3, 2021	CSD provides Part A to schools whose contracts expire June 30, 2022.
September 7-24, 2021	CSD schedules renewal site visits with schools.
October 1, 2021	Renewal applications submitted by schools via Google Drive
October 1 – November 11, 2021	CSD conducts renewal site visits, reviews and analyzes renewal applications, and seeks any additional data required from schools
November 12, 2021	CSD provides Preliminary Analysis to schools
November 25, 2021	Schools submit responses to CSD
December 1, 2021	CSD provides Final Analysis to PEC and schools.
December 6-10, 2021	PEC renewal hearings

Renewal Site Visit

Coordinating and Scheduling the Site Visit

The CSD will conduct the site visits starting in October through early November. CSD assumes the Head Administrator will serve as the main point of contact for the renewal site visit, responsible for coordinating the visit; however, the school has the option of designating another person to assume this role. CSD will work with the designated person to ensure the visit is well coordinated, focus groups are scheduled and any documents that are requested by CSD are provided prior to the site visit.

The CSD will work with the school to schedule the visit on mutually-agreeable dates. Once dates have been selected, they should not change unless there is an emergency. No testing, field trips or other events outside of the normal schedule should be conducted on the day(s) of the visit.

Pre-Visit Team Lead

The CSD will designate a liaison to the school that will serve as the point person responsible for communicating and coordinating with the school and as the team lead for renewal site visits. This person will request documents from the school, develop a schedule for the visit (in consultation with the school's head administrator or designee), lead the site visit team, and take lead in writing the site visit report. The site visit team will include other CSD staff members and may include consultants or other

PED staff members with expertise in fiscal management, governance, special education, curriculum, instruction and assessment, or other areas specific to the school's mission.

Requested documents *may* include: a school map, master class schedule (teacher, subject, time and location), organizational chart, staff roster, student/family handbook, staff handbook, professional development plan, recruitment materials, teacher and/or school leader evaluation tools, board documents, foundation documents, school policies, curricular materials/plan, and academic or organizational improvement plans.

All documents requested should be uploaded into the school's **Google folder** where the renewal application is also uploaded. *Note:* this expectation varies from the renewal application kit, which references an upload to WebEPSS.

Renewal Site Visit Purpose

A team from CSD will visit the school in order to:

- Interview the school leader, the governing board and other staff as needed to review data and responses from the school as submitted in their Renewal Application, follow up regarding previous years' annual report ratings, and/or clarify any questions from part B of the renewal application;
- Observe classroom instruction and the implementation of any school improvement plans and/or ways in which the school is providing support for students; and
- Conduct focus group interviews with teachers and students, and families in order to corroborate information provided by the school.

Site Visit Evidence

CSD will gather evidence from multiple sources prior to making a preliminary analysis of the renewal application. By triangulating information, CSD will be able to verify information provided in the application, including uniqueness, innovation, and the school's improvement efforts. For example, if the renewal application describes a tutoring program is used to accelerate student academic achievement, and the site visit team directly observes the tutoring, sees the tutoring schedule, learns through interviews with students and families that the tutoring program is used, and teachers describe how the tutoring program has resulted in improvement, the team can reasonably conclude the information in the application is accurate and verified.

When considering evidence, the site visit 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.

Renewal Site Visit Components

Activities	Time	Purpose
Team Meeting (prior to meeting on campus)	45 min	To set the purpose and context of the visit, review the site visit schedule, confirm documents to be reviewed onsite, review the site visit code of conduct, and answer questions from team members.
Meet with Head Admin/Leadership Team Meeting	90 min	The team meets with the head administrator and school leadership team for introductions, to review the schedule and to confirm logistical details of the visit. The team may request additional meetings with the school leader during the visit as needed.
Governing Board Focus Group	45-60 min	Focus groups with different groups will be scheduled for the site visit. It is the school's responsibility to gather a representative group for each interview through an open invitation, and to inform each participant of the time and place of the meeting. Focus groups should include no more than 10 individuals and only include the individuals representing that group (for example, the head administrator will not participate in the teacher focus group). CSD expects that each participant is allowed complete freedom to speak regarding their knowledge of and experience with the school, with no limits or repercussions imposed.
General Education Teacher Focus Group	30-45 min	
Special Education/EL teacher Focus Group	30-45 min	
Student Focus Group	30-45min	
Family Focus Group	45 min	
Student/Family Support staff (dean, counselor, social worker, etc.)	45 min	
Additional interviews with other staff may be scheduled (for example, the team may want to meet with the school's curriculum director to ask specific questions about curricular documents).		The site visit schedule, developed prior to the visit, will indicate the composition of focus groups to ensure that focus group membership does not overlap and that the appropriate staff members will be present.
Classroom Observations	60-120 min (no more than 20 min in each)	The site visit schedule should include enough classroom observations to ensure coverage of a sampling of all grades and core subjects. The site visit team should observe all types of classrooms: general education, special education, English language development (ELD) instruction, and classrooms providing interventions for academic support.

		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.
Team Time	60 min lunch 30 min end of day	
Exit with Head Administrator and Leadership team	30 min	The site visit concludes with an exit meeting with the school leader. This meeting provides the team with an opportunity to obtain clarification about any outstanding questions or issues and to thank the school leader for the assistance provided during the site visit.

Responsibilities of the School

Before the renewal site visit:

- Complete the Renewal Application and upload to the Google Folder designated for the school and review this Protocol.
- Explain the charter renewal process and Protocol procedures to school community members.
- Submit all documents requested by the CSD and the renewal team leader in a timely manner.
- Participate in a meeting/phone call with the renewal team leader to begin the planning process and discuss the requirements of the site visit.
- Work with the renewal 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.
- Gather a representative group for each focus group to be conducted during the renewal site visit through an open invitation and inform each participant of the time and place of the meeting.
- Designate a contact person (typically the head administrator) 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 site visit team that will not be used for other purposes during the visit.
- Reserve a private space for the renewal site visit team to conduct focus groups and interviews. Be sure the space is large enough to comfortably accommodate the largest focus group.
- Provide Wi-Fi access.

During the renewal site visit, the school has the following responsibilities:

- Ensure COVID-safe practices are followed throughout the school during the site visit
- The Head Administrator (or designee) should be available to respond to team inquiries throughout the visit.
- Post a copy of the schedule for each classroom (and 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 site visit 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.
- 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 CSD Director.

After the renewal site visit, the school has the following responsibilities:

- Respond promptly to any requests for clarification from the team.
- Review the Preliminary Analysis and notify the CSD 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 CSD a written response to the Preliminary Analysis, if the school so desires.

Responsibilities of the Renewal Site Visit Team

Before the renewal site visit:

- Assemble a team of individuals from the Charter Schools Division, PED colleagues and/or contractors whose professional backgrounds and expertise are relevant. The team may include a member or members who can provide expertise related to the school's mission, operations, academic program, population, and/or environment and who have expertise in understanding the needs of diverse learners, including students with disabilities and English learners.
- Ensure that all team members have a sufficient understanding of charter schools and the legal requirements of charter schools in New Mexico.
- 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 CSD 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 team leader who will serve as the team's liaison with the school and the CSD, coordinate the work of team members while on site, and lead the team's work in preparing for the visit, collecting the site visit notes, drafting the Renewal Preliminary Analysis, and the Final Analysis.
- Engage in renewal site visit training.
- Schedule a meeting/phone call with the head administrator of the school to begin the planning process and discuss the requirements of the renewal site visit.
- Schedule enough classroom observations, ensure focus groups are set.
- Ensure that team members have reviewed the school's renewal application, annual performance reviews, and other relevant documents and information provided to the team in advance and developed focus group questions and observations that are informed by that review and that allow the team to gather sufficient data and evidence in the areas of inquiry.
- Conduct a call with the head(s) of school just before the visit to confirm details of the visit, including logistics, the schedule, and the list of focus group attendees.

During the renewal site visit:

- Engage in COVID-safe practices.
- Bring water, lunch and/or snacks.
- Take detailed, accurate and relevant notes during interviews and observations.
- Conduct enough classroom observations, documenting what is observed.
- Avoid conducting observations of instruction led by short-term substitute teachers.

- Review all academic and other mission-related programs provided by the school, including regular education, inclusion, Special Ed, pull-out classrooms, and after-school programs.
- Facilitate the team 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 facilitation process thus provides an essential filter that will, if used effectively, produce analyses that are substantiated by sufficient, appropriate, high-quality evidence, and that represent the consensus of the team.

After the renewal visit::

- Draft, review, and edit summary statements and evidence. Incorporate them into the Preliminary Analysis.
- Contact the school by telephone or email only for clarification of important questions.
- Prepare a draft of the Preliminary Analysis for review to the CSD Director, along with notes taken during focus groups and classroom observations.
- Complete revisions requested by CSD Director. The CSD Director will work with the team to ensure that the evidence included in the draft is clearly aligned with the rubric for evaluating Part B and criteria for renewal as specified in the Performance Framework, that it is of sufficient quality, and that it is clearly presented.
- Meet the scheduled deadlines for submitting the draft reports.
- After revisions have been completed, the Preliminary Analysis is sent to the school for factual corrections.
- Once the school has responded to the Preliminary Analysis, the CSD will evaluate all information available and provide a Final Analysis for renewal, with recommendations for renewal, renewal with conditions, or non-renewal to the PEC.
- The following questions guide the CSD's Final Analysis regarding renewal and are based upon the four reasons that a chartering authority must determine a charter school has violated in order to refuse to renew a charter pursuant to Subsection K of Section 22-8B-12 NMSA 1978. *(1) Has the school committed a material violation of any of the conditions, standards, or procedures set forth in the charter contract? (2) Has the school failed to meet or make substantial progress toward achievement of the department's standards of excellence or student performance standards identified in the charter contract (3) Has the school and, if applicable, the school's foundation failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management? (4) For a charter school located on tribal land, failed to comply with ongoing consultations pursuant to the Indian Education Act; or (5) Has the school violated any provision of law from which the state-chartered charter school was not specifically exempted?*

- Renewal applicants will receive a copy of the Final Renewal analysis.
- Limit communication with the school after the factual correction process is complete to discussions of logistics of next steps. Direct any further inquiry from the school to the Director of the CSD.

Sample Schedule

This is a sample schedule for the site visit team’s work at the school. The schedule illustrates the types of activities that occur during a typical site visit. The actual schedule will be developed by the CSD team leader in consultation with the school’s head administrator or designee.

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	Governing Board Focus Group	Continue meeting with School Leader	
9:00-10:00	Classroom Observations		
10:00-11:00	Classroom Observations		
11:00-12:00	Classroom Observations	Teacher Focus Group: General Education, Special Education, and ELD Staff	
12:00-1:00	Lunch/Document Review		
1:00-2:00	Student/Family Support Staff Focus Group	Classroom Observations	Student/Family Support Staff Focus Group
2:00-2:30	Student Focus Group		Classroom Observations
2:30-3:00	Family Focus Group		Classroom Observation
3:00-4:30	Team Time		
4:30-4:45	Exit Discussion with School Leader Team Departs		

Note: in some cases and because of COVID, focus groups with the Governing Council or Parents may be conducted via Zoom. The school should decide.

Site Visit Team Code of Conduct

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

- Acknowledge and respect the Code of Ethics (NMAC 6.60.9.8) and Standards of Professional Conduct for Educators (NMAC 6.60.9.9)
- Ensure that you review all necessary materials, including this *Protocol* and the documents and information provided in advance of the site visit by the CSD and the school.
- Approach the review of a school with a clear understanding of the school's mission, grade levels, and population served.
- Understand your obligation to conduct the site visit without personal or professional bias and act accordingly, including disclosing any possible conflicts of interest, e.g., prior relationships with school staff, students, or families.
- Ensure that all of your communications with the school are professional and courteous in tone.
- Arrive at the school on time and closely follow the schedule for the day. Inform the school contact immediately of any changes to the agreed-upon schedule.
- Refrain from using your cell phone during classroom observations, focus groups, and team meetings. Site visitors may use the lunch break to use cell phones and check email.
- Avoid unnecessary disruptions to school and classroom routines while performing your assigned tasks such as classroom observations.
- Under no circumstances criticize the work of a teacher or anyone else involved with the school during an observation or focus group.
- Where appropriate, ensure the confidentiality of school information such as student names and personnel information.
- Do not offer personal or professional opinions or recommendations, even if solicited by interviewees.
- Reject requests from those interviewed to speak "off the record"; all conversations and other evidence gathered during the site visit are considered "on the record."
- Bring water bottles, lunch and/or snacks.
- Do not evaluate the performance of individuals, either orally or in written descriptions of the evidence.
- Findings must be supported by evidence in documents, focus groups and observations.

- Treat the draft site visit report, notes, and related evidence as confidential.
- Refrain from communications with outside groups or individuals. Do not discuss the site visit or your opinions regarding individuals working at the school with outside groups or individuals, including the media.
- Contact the CSD Director immediately in a private setting if you observe any egregious, illegal or violent behavior that poses an immediate threat to the students or staff at the school.

Acknowledgements

The site visit protocol has been adapted from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's [Renewal Inspection Protocol - Revised July 2021](https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PEC-Charter-Performance-Review-and-Accountability-System_2020-final-FinPF.pdf) and the PEC Performance Framework https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PEC-Charter-Performance-Review-and-Accountability-System_2020-final-FinPF.pdf