Massachusetts Department of
ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY
EDUCATION

School Redesign Grant Monitoring Site Visit Protocol

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Overview

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) is undertaking an integrated approach to grant monitoring and school accountability. This integrated approach will establish common data collection processes to gather information that will be immediately useful to schools in their work, as well as useful to long-term accountability requirements. Of equal importance, an integrated approach will minimize the impact on school and district time required to participate in monitoring and accountability.

What is the purpose of the Monitoring Site Visit?

The purpose of the spring 2011 Monitoring Site Visit (MSV) is to analyze the implementation of School Redesign Grant (SRG) goals and benchmarks in order to help districts and schools understand where implementation is successful or lagging and, also, how plans for year two can be improved. The MSV will also begin to collect data necessary for a Year Three school accountability review.

How is the MSV process designed?

In alignment with the SRG application process, the MSV process is designed around the 11 Essential Conditions for School Effectiveness (Essential Conditions). The Essential Conditions were developed in 2009 and voted into regulation by the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in 2010 to represent a research- and practice-based consensus of practices for effective schools. The Essential Conditions are central to ESE's systems for accountability and assistance. The MSV focuses on the following Essential Conditions: Effective School Leadership; Aligned Curriculum; Effective Instruction; Assessment; Tiered Instruction and Adequate Learning Time; and Student Social, Emotional, and Health Needs. The remaining Essential Conditions will be examined only when relevant to a school's SRG benchmarks.

Site visit teams will utilize interviews, document review, and classroom visits to collect evidence regarding the progress that each school is making toward meeting goals identified within the SRG application.

What does the MSV entail?

The MSV process includes several key events to ensure a comprehensive evidence base. Evidence collection begins with a review of all relevant documents provided to the site visit team. The MSV will make use of existing data sources and those already planned for grant evaluation; districts and schools will not be asked to create anything beyond what is currently planned. While on site, evidence collection continues through classroom visits and focus group interviews with district and school leadership, instructional staff, and key grant partners.

Feedback to districts and schools – both verbal and written – will describe strengths and areas for improvement in current SRG implementation. As part of the MSV process, the site visit team will conduct a consultation to assist schools in understanding the root causes of any issues with current implementation. The site visit findings will inform the school's preparation of the annual SRG renewal application for Year Two.

The MSV process places a high value on engaging the district and its school(s) in understanding progress toward implementation of SRG goals and benchmarks. The process is evidence-based and can also be described as an open, frank professional dialog between the district, its school(s), and the site visit team. The professionalism of the district, schools, and site visit team is essential in the process. There are clear roles and responsibilities that are designed to promote good rapport and clear communication among all parties. All site visit team members are governed by a code of conduct. Honesty, integrity, objectivity, and a focus on the best interests of students and staff are essential to the success and positive impact of the MSV.

Process and Results

The site visit team is guided in its work by a code of conduct. Adherence to the code of conduct improves the quality of the site visit; districts and schools do not provide reliable evidence under unnecessary stress. Adherence to the code of conduct also creates a frank, professional tone, which the site visit team, the district, and the school may use to discuss evidence and emerging themes.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SITE VISIT TEAMS*

1. **Carry out work with integrity**.
   a. Treat all those you meet with courtesy and sensitivity. Try to minimize stress.
   b. Allay anxiety through mutual respect and valuing opinions. Show an interest in what is said.
   c. Focus attention and questions on topics that will reveal how well students are learning.
   d. Assure confidentiality.
2. **Act in the best interests of students and staff.**
   a. Emphasize that students come first and are at the center of the site visit.
   b. Wherever possible, work to others' convenience.
   c. Under no circumstances, criticize the work of a teacher or anyone else involved with the school.
   d. Classroom visits are used only to understand instruction at the school. Classroom visits are not evaluations. Specific feedback and information about individual teachers will not be shared with any school or district personnel.
   e. Teacher interviews and focus groups are confidential. Any information reported to the team will remain anonymous in both oral and written reports.
   f. Try to understand what leaders and teachers are doing and why. Be supportive.
3. **Be objective; base findings on evidence, not opinion.**
   a. An individual's perception can be evidence, especially if supported by others' observations.
   b. Findings must be robust, fully supported by evidence, defensible and must inform the key questions.
   c. Findings must be reliable in that others would make the same finding from the same evidence.
   d. Be prepared to ask questions to establish whether a view is based on opinion or evidence. This applies, as well, to site visit team members' findings.
   e. Discussion with staff and site visit team members is part of the process to create a fair and secure evidence base from which corporate findings are made.
   f. If a given piece of evidence is not affecting students' learning or experience, it is then irrelevant.

Acknowledgement of Massachusetts Charter School Site Visit Protocol and the OFSTED code of conduct.

DETAILED STEPS IN THE PROCESS

Following is an overview of the MSV, including preparation for the MSV, on-site evidence gathering, development of findings, feedback to the school, and the written report of findings.

Preparation for the MSV

1. The project manager communicates with the district to determine dates for the site visit and to introduce district and school leadership to the protocol.
2. The project manager works with the district and its school(s) to begin establishing a specific schedule for the site visit.

   NOTE: *There are a number of scheduling tasks to be completed. It is important that the district, school, and site visit team work collaboratively to identify a site visit schedule that is both mutually convenient and allows the site visit team to conduct all MSV activities as outlined in the protocol (see Appendices).*
3. Throughout the pre-visit planning, the project manager is available to assist the district and its school(s) in planning and to answer any questions.
4. The district and its school(s) use the site visit checklist (see Appendix A) to ensure that all preparation has been completed prior to the visit.
5. All members of the site visit team are responsible for reviewing documents provided by ESE and the district prior to the site visit.

Evidence Gathering On Site and Feedback

1. The site visit team continues to review documents and conduct focus groups and school visits in accordance with the visit schedule. It meets regularly during the visit to share evidence.
2. Since it is not possible to predict what will emerge from the evidence collected, the site visit team requires flexibility. The site visit team leader works with the district and its school(s) to define as much of the schedule as possible without restricting the team's ability to pursue important evidence.
3. While on site, the site visit team leader communicates with leadership to keep the school informed of the team's progress and to seek the school's input on that progress.
4. Through its finding statements, the site visit team evaluates the extent to which the school has made progress toward, or has met, SRG goals and benchmarks. To come to consensus on a set of findings, the team works together to collate and discuss available evidence.
5. At the end of the second day, a high level, brief report of the site visit team's findings is presented verbally to district and school leadership. This report will indicate the extent to which the school has made progress toward, or has met, SRG goals and benchmarks, as well as describe strengths and areas for improvement in current SRG implementation.

Prioritization Process

1. On day three of the site visit, the site visit team and school will work together to review the findings, explore the root causes and prioritize the school's next steps. The purpose of the prioritization process is to assist school leaders in thinking through areas for improvement that are most important/most likely to impact student achievement and outcomes. These areas should be addressed first, thereby setting the stage for developing the annual SRG renewal application as well as implementation plans for Year Two.
2. There are several steps that are addressed during prioritization. These steps are described in further detail in Appendix C.

Written Report

1. The site visit team member responsible for completing the written report gathers all notes and other key evidence that has been collected by the team during the site visit to use in drafting the report.
2. The writer develops a draft report detailing the team's findings and the evidence collected throughout the site visit.
3. Before it is sent to the school, all site visit team members participating in the MSV provide comments on the draft report.
4. The district, school, and ESE review the draft for factual errors.
5. The report is finalized and submitted to the district, school, and ESE.

Roles and Responsibilities

In order to develop an accurate portrait of a district and its school(s), all participants have key roles in preparing for and conducting the monitoring site visit. This section explains the roles and responsibilities of the representative from SchoolWorks, team members, and the districts and its school(s). Participants should read this section carefully to learn how to prepare for the site visit.

Project Manager and/or Team Leader

1. *Modeling and enforcing the code of conduct*
   - The site visit team leader should exhibit the highest professional standards and is responsible for ensuring that the team does so, as well.
2. *Coordination with the district and its school(s)*
   - Before the visit, the project manager will be in contact with the district and its school(s) to ensure that the schedule is made available in a timely manner.
   - The project manager ensures that the school has secured adequate meeting space for the site visit team.
   - The district and it(s) schools are likely to have questions about the process. The project manager should serve as the contact person to address these questions.
3. *Coordination of materials and assignment of site visit team members*
   - Before the site visit, the project manager identifies team members and ensures that all materials have been provided prior to the site visit.
   - Once the site visit schedule has been established, the site visit team leader must make sure that team members are assigned to all site visit events.

4. Facilitation and management of logistics for the site visit days

   - Once on site, the site visit team leader is responsible for facilitating all team meetings.
   - The site visit team leader ensures that all focus groups and classroom visits are attended and go smoothly and also conducts a daily review of the schedule with the team.
5. *Communication with the district / schools while on site*
   - The site visit team leader:
     - Is responsible for maintaining good channels of communication with the district and schools at all times.
     - Keeps district and school leadership informed of the team’s progress and developing findings throughout the visit.
     - Takes appropriate actions to follow up on any responses to the team’s findings.
   - At the end of the second day, a brief report of the team’s findings is presented verbally to district and school leadership.
6. *Reporting*
   - The project manager oversees the writing of the site visit report.

Site Visit Team Members

Success of the visit relies heavily on site visit team members:

1. *Adherence to the code of conduct*
   - Site visit team members should exhibit the highest professional standards.
2. *Preparation for the site visit*
   - In advance of the visit, each team member reviews district and school documents and arrives at the site visit knowledgeable about the school.
3. *Collection of evidence*
   - Site visit team members complete the visit schedule under the direction of the site visit team leader as it has been established by the district and/or the school.
   - Site visit team members secure their evidence in notes and provide all necessary data to the site visit team leader at each team meeting:
     - Pre-visit reading has been completed.
     - Notes and classroom visit forms are completed and organized for end-of-day meetings.
     - All notes are in order and completed in a timely manner for all meetings.
4. *Collaborating with others under the site visit team leader's direction*
   - Site visit team members support and take direction from their leader. They recognize that the site visit team leader has to make executive decisions and trusts in his/her judgment.
   - Site visit team members actively participate in team meetings and support others' efforts to reach unified findings based on evidence.
5. *Reporting*
   - Site visit team members provide feedback on the draft of the site visit report, ensuring that the report contains sufficient evidence and reflects the consensus of the team.

District and School(s)

To be an effective partner in the process, the district and its school(s):

1. *Acts as an essential partner in the site visit process*
    - The district and its school(s):
        - Make the purpose and process of the site visit team's visit clear to all faculty and staff.
        - Welcome the site visit team and recognize its efforts are on behalf of its students.
        - Work with the site visit team to ensure that the visit runs smoothly.
        - Engage faculty and other stakeholders to reflect on the school's performance.
2. *Designates a meeting room*
    - The site visit team will need a meeting space during each day on site. The space should allow for confidential meetings and should be available to site visit team members for the full visit.
    - To the extent possible, interviews and focus groups should not be scheduled in this space but planned for elsewhere in the building.
3. *Communicates with the site visit team*
    - District and school leadership:
        - Works collaboratively with the site visit team leader prior to the site visit to ensure that a schedule is established, additional documents are provided in a timely manner and that all faculty and staff is aware of the visit and its purposes.
        - Works collaboratively with the team leader during the site visit to provide any additional documents requested.
        - Maintains good communication with the site visit team leader throughout the process, honestly expressing concerns and feedback from staff.
4. *Feedback*
    - District and school leadership responds honestly and frankly to the site visit team's feedback by stating their position and making available additional evidence to support its position, should it differ from other members of the site visit team.

Monitoring Site Visit Evidence Collection Framework

The 11 Essential Conditions for School Effectiveness (Essential Conditions)[1] guide the actions taken by both districts and the ESE at all levels of the accountability and assistance system, and will serve as the framework against which evidence will be collected by the site visit team. In addition, the site visit team will incorporate the Year 1 Goals and Benchmarks for each district and school into the evidence collection framework. The resulting body of evidence will be utilized by the site visit team to measure school progress toward implementation of SRG goals and benchmarks. Particular attention will be given to school implementation of the following Essential Conditions: Effective School Leadership; Aligned Curriculum; Effective Instruction; Student Assessment; Tiered Instruction; and Student Social, Emotional, and Health Needs. These Essential Conditions are highlighted in the following framework. The remaining Essential Conditions (those not highlighted) will be examined only when relevant to a school's SRG benchmarks.

1. **Effective district systems for school support and intervention.** The district has systems and processes for anticipating and addressing school staffing, instructional, and operational needs in timely, efficient, and effective ways, especially for its lowest performing schools.

1.1 Oversight, Supports, and Interventions

- The district regularly communicates with schools and reviews their performance data to anticipate staff, instructional, and operational needs.
- The district regularly monitors the school activities, initiatives, and results (including implementation and outcome benchmarks) central to the turnaround process.
- The district has clear strategies to intervene in a helpful and timely manner when schools are not meeting implementation or outcome benchmarks.

1.2 Operational and Technical Support

- The district provides guidance, oversight, tools, and expertise to efficiently respond to schools' staffing, instructional, and operational needs.
- District leaders support schools in managing the change process by providing sufficient expertise, guidance, and resources.

[1] Conditions for School Effectiveness Self-Assessment. http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/review/school/process.html?section=essential. Retrieved January 14, 2011.

2. **Effective school leadership.** The district and school take action to attract, develop, and retain an effective school leadership team that obtains staff commitment to improving student learning and implements a clearly defined mission and set of goals.

2.1 Focus on learning

- The principal acts strategically and purposefully in pursuit of a clear educational mission, while empowering others to do the same.
- An Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), representing the school's grades and content areas, meets regularly to address topics of instruction and learning. It has sufficient authority to make decisions and engages all staff through effective communication.
- There is a school-wide, results-oriented focus on teaching, learning, and student success.

2.2 Effective planning

- The school has an improvement plan focused explicitly on instructional improvement and student learning; the plan drives school-level processes and practice.
- The school improvement plan: 1) aligns with the district improvement plan; 2) reflects input from all staff; 3) is based on data; 4) accurately reflects the academic, social, and emotional needs of students; and 5) sets actionable and measurable goals that target school improvement.
- Staff can state the school's mission, understand the school's improvement goals, and demonstrate a sense of ownership for both.

2.3 Effective decision-making

- School leadership uses the school improvement plan to guide how time, personnel, funds, and other resources will be used to achieve the school's mission.
- School leadership uses data and current research to drive decisions and measure progress toward school goals, and encourages staff to do so, as well.
- Inquiry, reflection, and feedback are encouraged as part of developing and monitoring plans.
- Staff generally agrees that decisions are made transparently and fairly, and that the school culture is collaborative, open to dialogue, and based on trust.

2.4 Shared learning and accountability

- As reflective practitioners, school leadership models and supports life-long learning.
- Supervision and evaluation are tied to results and promote the growth and development of all staff, including the principal.
- There are clear avenues of support to help all professionals within the school improve their abilities and advance the school's mission.
- There is evidence that staff feel accountable for results to students, school leadership, colleagues, families, and the community.

3. **Aligned curriculum.** The school's taught curricula are aligned to state curriculum frameworks and the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) performance level descriptions, and are also aligned vertically between grades and horizontally across classrooms at the same grade level and across sections of the same course.

3.1 Curricular guidance

- The district/school provides teachers curriculum maps aligned to the state curriculum frameworks and MCAS performance level descriptions; teachers use these maps to frame their teaching.
- Instructional staff access and unpack standards so that they have a working knowledge of what all students need to know and be able to do in order to be proficient.
- The district/school provides pacing guides that are utilized by teachers.
- Instructional staff can describe how the content they teach builds on, or relates to, content in other subjects/grades.
- Curriculum documents include guidelines that help with the instruction of English language learners, such as the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes for English Language Learners (ELPBO).

3.2 Taught curriculum

- Instructional staff develops and implements lessons based on curriculum maps/curricular guidance; these lessons reflect high expectations for all students.
- Instructional staff engage in regular discussions of student learning expectations – both horizontally (with colleagues in their grade or subject) and vertically (across grades).
- Instructional staff aligns assessments and evaluates student work based on a common understanding of what mastery looks like.
- Instructional materials and technologies that align to curriculum maps are available to, and used in, all classrooms.

3.3 Ongoing improvement

- Lesson plans are monitored for alignment to curriculum maps and pacing guides.
- Periodic reviews of student learning inform revisions to curriculum maps, lesson plans, and related resources.
- Instructional staff receives support in creating and refining curricula. The school uses a process to vet curricular refinements that staff recommends.

4. **Effective instruction.** Instructional practices are based on evidence from a body of high-quality research and on high expectations for all students and include use of appropriate research-based reading and mathematics programs; the school staff has a common understanding of high-quality evidence-based instruction and a system for monitoring instructional practice.

4.1 High expectations

- Instructional staff provides students with lessons that: 1) are appropriate to their developmental and language proficiency levels; 2) engage them with content and address academic and social/emotional needs; and 3) promote higher-order thinking.
- Student assignments contain rigorous, embedded learning objectives that reflect high expectations; instructional staff ensures that students understand the objectives.

4.2 Differentiated instruction

- Instructional staff use multi-modal pedagogical techniques – as well as a range of instructional tools, technologies, and supplemental materials – to meet the needs of all learners. Instruction aligns with student learning needs that have been identified through the use of universal screening and formative assessment.

4.3 Common understanding

- Leaders and instructional staff agree on criteria for effective instruction. Criteria focus on pedagogy and content knowledge and, when possible, are based on research.
- Teachers engage in ongoing focused discussion and collaborative reflection on instructional practice. Effective instruction is modeled for teachers by leaders, coaches, and colleagues.

4.4 Monitoring practice

- Leaders regularly gather evidence on instructional practice.
- Instructional staff have opportunities to observe and provide feedback on their colleagues' practice.
- Leaders regularly analyze evidence of instructional practice along with student achievement, professional development (PD), and other data; analysis guides next steps for improvement, including supports for instructional staff.

5. Student assessment. The school uses a balanced system of formative and benchmark assessments.

5.1 Assessment systems

- Instructional staff use a range of assessments (formative and benchmark) that are aligned to state standards and grade-level learning outcomes.
- Performance on formative and benchmark assessments predicts performance on MCAS and other summative assessments.
- Common formative and benchmark assessments are horizontally/vertically aligned.
- Assessments support the school's system of tiered instruction. Instructional staff receives PD and supports to help in developing assessments, analyzing assessment data, and drawing meaningful conclusions from results.
- Instructional staff work collaboratively to develop and score common assessments.
- Instructional staff embed formative assessments in daily classroom practice and use results to target and modify instruction.
- The school utilizes well-defined processes to periodically collect, analyze, review, and report results of assessments of student learning.

5.2 Analysis of assessment data

- Instructional staff analyze assessment data to identify promising practices, determine enrichment and remediation needs, and assess needs for systems change.
- Students are taught how to assess themselves and plan for improvement.

5.3 Use of assessment data

- Leaders and instructional staff use data for individual and organizational learning, not just external compliance. Instructional staff work in teams to delve into the implications of data and to make changes to instructional practice.
- Assessment data are used to place students, monitor progress, and drive timely interventions as part of a system of tiered instruction. Students receive constructive feedback based on data analysis, as well as guidance on how to improve.
- Leaders use assessment data to target PD activities.

6. **Principal's staffing authority.** The principal has the authority to make staffing decisions based on the school improvement plan and student needs, subject to district personnel policies, budgetary restrictions, and the approval of the superintendent.

6.1 Staffing decisions

- Working within district guidelines, the principal recruits, deploys/redeploys, promotes, and retains those with qualifications and proven results in serving the school's mission.
- The principal utilizes the district's process for posting jobs and screening candidates to assemble an effective school team.
- The principal works within district guidelines to effectively support or remove staff whose performance does not meet the needs of the school.
- The principal assigns (and revises) roles, responsibilities, and duties in a way that best supports the school improvement plan and meets student needs.
- All staff members are placed in roles for which they have skills, qualifications, and licensure.
- School leaders instill in staff members a sense of duty to perform to highest capacity for the benefit of all students.

6.2 Support and intervention

- The principal and other leaders clearly communicate to staff schoolwide expectations for performance.
- A clear process is used to evaluate staff, offer feedback, develop professional improvement goals, and provide support in meeting those goals.
- The school's process for evaluation, feedback, PD, and support is in accordance with district tools, systems, and processes related to staffing and support.
- To the extent possible, staff performance is tied to student outcomes.

7. **Professional development (PD) and structures for collaboration.** Professional development for school staff includes both individually pursued activities and school-based, job-embedded approaches, such as instructional coaching. It also includes content-oriented learning. The school has structures for regular, frequent collaboration to improve implementation of the curriculum and instructional practice. Professional development and structures for collaboration are evaluated for their effect on raising student achievement.

7.1 PD plan/system

- The Instructional Leadership Team designs a coordinated PD plan that aligns with state standards for school performance and student achievement, as well as with district and school priorities.
- The PD plan addresses the individual and collective needs of staff. (See National Staff Development Council's [NSDC's] definition of professional development, http://www.nsdc.org/standfor/definition.cfm.)
- PD is embedded as an integral part of daily routines (e.g., through coaching, staff meetings, and/or collaborative time).
- Teams embedded in the school (see NSDC's definition) take active roles in promoting, creating, and leading PD, leveraging internal expertise.
- When external trainers/partners are needed, leaders enlist their assistance.
- Job-embedded coaching and other supports provide follow-up on the implementation of what is learned through PD.
- Coaches and teacher leaders are trained in effectively engaging/teaching adults.
- Staff members hold one another accountable for implementing what is learned through PD and, ultimately, for the improved student performance that should result from its implementation (see NSDC's definition).

7.2 Accessing PD

- All staff access relevant PD (both voluntary and required PD) that is tied to specific professional learning goals.
- Time is built into the school schedule for staff collaboration, with collaboration serving as PD.
- Collaborative time is focused on taking instruction/learning to the next level of development, and addressing the needs (health/behavior/family) of the whole child.
- There are established systems and protocols to guide collaborative discussions.

8. **Tiered instruction and adequate learning time.** The school schedule is designed to provide adequate learning time for all students in core subjects. For students not yet on track to proficiency in English language arts or mathematics, the school provides additional time and support for individualized instruction through tiered instruction, a data-driven approach to prevention, early detection, and support for students who experience learning or behavioral challenges, including – but not limited to – students with disabilities and English language learners.

8.1 Core instruction

- The school provides high-quality, challenging core instruction for all students.
- Teachers demonstrate responsibility for the learning of all students.
- All lessons integrate differentiated instruction so that 80-90% of students learn key concepts through core instruction and without the need for tiered support.
- Leaders routinely monitor the effectiveness of the core curriculum/instruction.

8.2 Screening and monitoring

- A universal screening system is used to assess academic and behavioral strengths and challenges of all students, and to identify students needing additional support.
- Leaders and instructional staff regularly monitor students' progress in relation to interventions that have been applied.
- A progress-monitoring system is in place; data from this system drive instructional decisions throughout the tiered process.
- The system of interventions allows students to move along a continuum of services and change placements according to identified progress or needs.

8.3 Supports and interventions

- Flexible tiers of research-based interventions supplement, enhance, and provide access to the core curriculum for students needing additional support.
- The school schedule is flexible and provides adequate time for core instruction and, as needed, additional academic and/or behavioral supports.
- Staff utilizes resources to support students with a range of academic needs.
- An effective system of communication is in place among staff, families, and community partners and ensures coordination of services in support of learning.
- Increasing levels of student support match instructional approaches/intensity to the specifics and severity of need: 5-10% of students receive Tier II interventions, while 1-5% receives intensive Tier III interventions.
- School culture promotes ongoing reflection on how instructional time is used; leaders adjust schedules in response to what is learned.
- The school provides opportunities for academic and other support outside school hours; barriers to participation are minimized.
- Interventions are research-proven, taught by qualified professionals, and aligned to student needs and district and state frameworks.

9. **Students' social, emotional, and health needs.** The school creates a safe school environment and makes effective use of a system for addressing the social, emotional, and health needs of its students that reflects the behavioral health and public schools framework.

9.1 Learning environment

- School leaders and staff create a safe and supportive learning environment through clearly established safety and behavioral expectations.
- All classrooms create predictable environments, and a climate that supports learning.
- Staff identify issues arising in the lives of students (e.g., poverty, mobility, family dynamics) and work to address them to minimize their impact on learning.
- Social and emotional supports are clinically, linguistically, culturally, and developmentally appropriate for students.
- Leaders and staff encourage students to share their perspectives and experiences; student perspectives influence what is taught and how the school prepares students for college and for 21st century learning and work.
- Students are supported in taking responsibility for their own learning and behavior.

9.2 Physical and behavioral health

- Healthy lifestyles are promoted through access to nutritious food/physical activity.
- A school nurse or other appropriate healthcare provider screens students for health issues and to identify behavioral needs, and coordinates with families to address needs that arise.

9.3 Systems and procedures

- The system of supports includes school-wide efforts (for example, universal breakfast), as well as short- and longer-term targeted interventions.
- Staff culture models a healthy school climate, including social, emotional, and physical health that is desired for the students. Supports are available to staff.
- Students in crisis, students at risk of dropping out, and others who require intensive assistance are identified and linked to appropriate supports in a timely manner.
- PD is provided to all staff on topics needed to enhance the school's capacity to improve students' behavioral, emotional, and physical health – including PD in the use of resources and community partners.
- Leaders identify and coordinate community services that the school needs.
- The school collaborates with families to increase its capacity to address students' social, emotional, and health needs, as well as the families' capacity to do the same.
- Leaders regularly assess the impact of policies, procedures, and programs on the academic and social environment, and revise them as needed.
- There is a mutually beneficial relationship between community partners and school.

10. **Family-school engagement.** The school develops strong working relationships with families and appropriate community partners and providers in order to support students' academic progress and social and emotional well-being.

10.1 Strategic relationships

- Leaders ensure that students, families, and community partners understand the school's improvement plan and learning goals; leaders strategically leverage family and community resources in service of these goals.
- Leaders solicit and act on the input of families and community partners when developing and implementing the school's strategic plan.
- The school actively overcomes barriers to family engagement and participation.
- Under-represented groups are actively recruited and trained to be effective participants in the improvement of school performance.
- Families and community partners are encouraged to help plan meaningful events and programs.
- Families and community partners report satisfaction with opportunities to engage with the school and believe that the school values their perspectives.
- The school provides community partners with the support and resources they need to undertake their work.
- Strong relationships with families and community partners contribute to student learning and students' social, emotional, and physical well-being.

10.2 Communications

- The school ensures effective two-way communication with both families and community partners, addressing language and other potential barriers.
- Leaders and staff regularly provide families and community partners with information on student status and progress.
- The principal or a designee meets regularly with the school council, parent, and student government/leadership groups and keeps them informed of current school issues, concerns, and solutions.
- The school jointly analyzes student performance data with families, community partners, and other constituent groups.
- The school, in conjunction with community partners, offers families the resources and activities that support student academic and social/emotional success.
- Leaders evaluate the school's efforts to communicate with and engage families and community partners, and adjustments are made as necessary.
- There is evidence that the concerns, requests, and needs of families and community partners are addressed by the school in a timely and professional manner.

11. **Strategic use of resources and adequate budget authority.** The principal makes effective and strategic use of district and school resources and has sufficient budget authority to do so.

11.1 Strategic use of resources

- Leaders use a variety of data to inform decisions related to budget, time on learning/scheduling, staffing/human resources, materials, and the physical plant.
- Leaders seek, coordinate, and leverage resources that support the school improvement plan, in accordance with district policies.
- Leaders carefully align budget, staffing, and other resources to student needs and school goals; decisions are made and resources are integrated to serve the big picture.
- Leaders evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of resource allocations; the principal uses the full authority granted by the district to adjust resources as needed.
- All staff report that they are able to access needed materials and other resources in a timely manner.

11.2 Coordination between school and district

- Leaders ensure ongoing communication across school and district units, as well as within the school, regarding the need, availability, and allocation of resources.
- School leadership regularly accesses available updated and accurate financial reports.
- The principal has sufficient authority and flexibility to adjust resources as needed.

Appendix A: Scheduling Guidance

Once the district has established site visit dates for schools, the project manager or site visit team leader will work collaboratively with the school to establish a specific schedule for the site visit. Alternatively, some districts may wish to coordinate site visit schedules internally. The site visit team is open to the option that works best for its districts and its schools.

Sample Site Visit Schedule

Following is a sample schedule. The site visit team leader will work to construct a schedule for the visit, based on schedule documents and guidance provided by district and school leadership. Schedules will vary from school to school, depending on the size of the school and the number of team members.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">Sample Monitoring Site Visit Schedule</th></tr>
<tr><th></th><th>Day 1</th><th>Day 2</th><th>Day 3</th></tr>
<tr><td>7:00 AM</td><td rowspan="3">Team arrival, initial meeting and orientation</td><td>Team meeting</td><td>Team meeting</td></tr>
<tr><td>8:00 AM</td><td rowspan="2">Focus group / mid-report to school leadership</td><td rowspan="5">Prioritization session with site visit team and school/district leadership</td></tr>
<tr><td>9:00 AM</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">9:30 AM</td><td rowspan="2">Focus group with school leadership</td><td>Classroom visits</td></tr>
<tr><td>Teacher and specialist focus groups</td></tr>
<tr><td>11:00 AM</td><td>Classroom visits</td><td>Interview with key grant partner (if applicable)</td></tr>
<tr><td>12:00 PM</td><td colspan="2">Working lunch for site visit team</td><td>Team departs</td></tr>
<tr><td>1:00 PM</td><td>District interview</td><td>Teacher and specialist focus groups</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>2:30 PM</td><td>Document review</td><td>Follow-up, as needed</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>3:00 PM</td><td>Teacher and specialist focus groups</td><td rowspan="3">Team meeting, deliberations and document review</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>4:00 PM</td><td rowspan="3">Team meeting, deliberations and document review</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>5:00 PM</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>6:00 PM</td><td>Report of findings</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Sample Daily Schedule

Below is a sample daily schedule. Different team members will participate in various events throughout the course of the day. While team meetings require the participation of all site visit team members, for example, other events can be scheduled simultaneously.

All efforts will be made to ensure that teacher focus groups occur during non-instructional time. Teacher focus groups can be conducted either at the end of the school day or during teacher preparatory time.

Note: Times may not match your school schedule and will be adjusted to make the schedule site-specific. The following is designed to provide a general overview of what a day on site will look like.

Sample Daily Site Visit Schedule (Day 1)		
Time	**Team Members #1 and #2**	**Team Members #3 and #4**
7:00 AM	Team arrives at school and morning meeting	
9:00 – 10:00 AM	Focus group with school leadership	
10:00 – 11:00 AM	Focus group with specialists	Teacher focus group
11:00 – 12:00 PM	Classroom visits	Interview with key grant partner (if applicable)
12:00 – 1:00 PM	Working lunch	
1:00 – 2:00 PM	Classroom visits	Classroom visits
2:00 – 2:30 PM	Teacher focus group	Focus group with specialists
2:30 – 3:00 PM	Follow-up as needed	Document review
3:00 – 5:30 PM	Team debrief and moderation; evidence sorting	
5:30 -- 6:00 PM	Report of findings (and recommendations) to school leadership	
6:15 PM	Team departs	

Appendix B: Site Visit Checklist

The site visit checklist may be used by the school to prepare for the site visit. It includes key tasks that should be completed prior to the visit, as well as the list of materials the site visit team is requesting prior to the visit and upon arrival on site. Classroom visits may be scheduled in blocks or by individual classroom, in accordance with district and/or school preferences.

NOTE: *Except for the* ***Electronic Benchmarking Tool,*** *all documents requested in this list should be provided only if the school already has the materials on hand. This list is in* ***NO WAY*** *a request to create new documents or analyses; the site visit team is looking to understand school implementation of SRG benchmarks and timelines.*

ITEMS PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL TO THE TEAM LEADER PRIOR TO THE MSV	
1. School bell schedule	
2. Roster of ALL staff, including grade levels and subject areas taught	
3. Master schedule for all staff, including periods/times teaching and room numbers	
4. A list of teacher preparation times or “free” periods (if not included in either the roster or master schedule)	
5. Electronic Benchmarking Tool	
ITEMS TO BE PREPARED BY THE SCHOOL BEFORE THE SITE VIIST AND AVAILABLE FOR TEAM REVIEW DURING THE MSV	
6. All school faculty and staff are aware of the visit and its purpose	
7. Private meeting space for team secured during days in the school	
8. To the extent possible, meeting space secured for focus groups separate from the team meeting room	
9. Lunch arrangements for the team (the team will reimburse the school for lunch)	
10. The school should also be prepared to provide additional documents requested by the team	

Appendix C: Focus Groups and Interviews

During the site visit, a series of interviews and/or focus groups will be conducted to gather information and evidence aligned to the MSV evidence collection framework. The site visit team leader, with guidance from district and/or school leadership, will work to establish a schedule and focus group composition that is appropriate. The following are examples of interviews/focus groups that will be conducted.

NOTE: *To the extent possible, focus groups should include no more than eight individuals. Supervising staff should not be scheduled with those under their supervision (with the exception of meetings with the leadership team).*

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS		
Interviews/ focus groups	**Description**	**Approximate Time Needed**
District leaders who directly oversee SRG implementation	This focus group/s (or interviews) should include district level administrators who oversee the development and/or implementation of specific initiatives outlined in the SRG. Effectiveness of initiatives and implementation hurdles will be discussed.	**1.5 hour** interview/ focus group
School Leadership	School leadership includes the principal and key assistants (e.g., assistant principals, curriculum director and/or lead teachers). In addition to an interview, school leadership may be asked to provide further guidance and insight throughout the visit. A report on the team's evidence and findings will be presented to school leadership on the second day of the site visit.	**1.5 hour** interview/ focus group **1 hour** follow up interview
Key Partner/Provider	Any key partner in the SRG, such as an external consultant or professional development provider.	**1 hour**
Teacher focus group	Groups of teachers, typically by **grade level,** make up focus groups. The team makes an effort to speak to as many of the school's teaching staff as possible.	**30 minutes** (during non-instructional time)
Specialist interviews	Interviews with specialists may also be conducted. School leaders are asked to identify personnel who play a significant role in school functioning and improvement, such as the school's special education director, ELL coordinator, curriculum coordinators, coaches and other relevant staff.	**30 minutes**
School Support Staff	In some cases, the site visit team may request a focus group meeting with teaching assistants, aides or other personnel to discuss their roles in intervention at the school.	**30 minutes**
Additional staff relevant to the grant	If applicable, the site visit team will meet with key staff implementing the grant, such as grant-funded coaches or key support personnel.	**30 minutes**

Appendix D: Classroom Visits

What is the purpose of the Instructional Inventory Record?

The purpose of the Instructional Inventory Record is threefold:

1. To enable observers to easily identify practices and summarize their evidence base and, therefore, establish findings that characterize classroom practices across the school;
2. To supply the report writer with quantifiable ratings across classes observed that are supported by documented pieces of evidence; and,
3. To gather qualitative evidence about classroom practices that provides additional evidence to inform the team's findings.

How is the Instructional Inventory Record used?

The information collected from classroom visits provides the site visit team an additional source of information that may be used to better understand school practices and to support the team's findings. For each indicator, the site visit team member will place a check mark in the box indicating whether there was solid evidence of a specific classroom practice (S), partial evidence (P), or no evidence (N) of a specific classroom practice. This scale helps classroom visitors to better define classroom practices. Specific definitions are provided in the following table.

Solid =	There is solid evidence of the indicator. The classroom visitor can document 2 or more different observable teacher and/or student behaviors to support the indicator.
Partial =	There is partial evidence of the indicator. The classroom visitor can document only 1 observable teacher and/or student behavior to support the indicator.
No =	There is no evidence of the indicator. The classroom visitor CANNOT document any observable teacher and/or student behaviors to support the indicator.

In addition, site visit team members will document qualitative evidence as it relates to the practices observed (or not observed).

Instructional Inventory Record

District:_______________ **School:**_________________ **Observer:**_______________ **Date:**_______________

Time in:______ **Time out:**_______ **Total time:**______**(min.)** **Part of Lesson:** ☐ Beginning ☐ Middle ☐ End

Subject: ____________________ **If applicable:** ☐ ELL ☐ SPED **Grade:**______ **# students:**_______

 # girls:___________ **# boys:**_________ **# teachers:**_____________ **# assistants:**________________

Key: N=No **P=**Partial **S=**Solid Evidence **observed directly in the lesson**

N	*P*	*S*	*Characteristic*	*Comments*
			Organization of the Classroom	
			1. Classroom **climate** is characterized by respectful behaviors, routines, tone, and discourse.	
			2. A learning **objective** (not simply an agenda or an activity description) for the day's lesson is evident. Applicable language objectives are evident and aligned to the ELPBO for ELL students.	
			3. Available class **time** is maximized for learning.	
			Instructional Design and Delivery	
			4. Instruction links academic concepts to students' **prior knowledge** and experience.	
			5. Supplemental **materials** are aligned with students' **developmental level** and level of English proficiency.	
			6. Presentation of **content** is within the students' English proficiency and **developmental level**.	
			7. Depth of **content knowledge** is evident throughout the presentation of the lesson	
			8. **Instruction** includes a **range of techniques** such as direct instruction, facilitating, and modeling.	

N	***P***	***S***	***Characteristic***	***Comments***
			9. **Questions require** students to engage in a process of **application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation**.	
			10. The teacher **paces** the lesson to ensure that all students are actively engaged.	
			11. Students **articulate** their **thinking and reasoning**.	
			12. Students are **inquiring, exploring,** or **problem solving** together, in pairs, or in small groups.	
			13. Opportunities for students to **apply new knowledge** and content are embedded in the lesson.	
			14. On-the-spot formative assessments **check for understanding** to inform instruction.	
			15. **Formative written feedback** to students is **frequent, timely, and informs revision**.	

NOTES:

Frequently-asked questions about classroom visits

1. *How does the team select the classrooms that will be visited?*

   Classroom visits will be selected on the basis of the school's master schedule and the size of the site visit team. In larger schools, representative classes will be selected to reflect a range of teacher experience, a variety of subject areas, the range of grades served at the school and special services or program classes as they reflect the school's mission. The site visit schedule is developed by the team leader with input from school leadership.

2. *What is the length of a classroom visit?*

   It is expected that classrooms will be visited for no less than 20 minutes to allow the team to derive an understanding of the lesson and the classroom climate. Most visits will be planned and scheduled, but unplanned visits may occur. Unplanned visits may be shorter in duration.

3. *What do teachers need to do to prepare for the classroom visit?*

   Teachers need not do anything to prepare for a classroom visit. Classes should reflect a typical experience for students and teachers. The site visit team is comprised of education professionals who understand that behavior in the classroom may be unpredictable. The site visit seeks to establish trends across the school, not to assess isolated incidents within a single classroom.

4. *Should teachers expect to interact with the classroom visitor?*

   The intent of the classroom visit is to cause as minimal disruption to daily classroom practices as possible. Teaching staff does not need to address the classroom visitor or provide an explanation of the lesson. The classroom visitor may walk around the classroom to review student work and/or classroom postings, if appropriate.

5. *Do teachers receive feedback from the classroom visitor?*

   The site visit team seeks to identify trends across the school, not to provide information on the effectiveness of specific classroom practices or individual teachers. Team members will NOT provide feedback to individual teachers. Class visits are NOT teacher evaluations. They will not be shared with individual teachers or any other school personnel. They are intended to provide information to the site visit team about the implementation of the academic program, the availability of resources and any additional evidence that demonstrates aspects of school practices and operations.

6. *Should the classroom visitor expect to see all of the indicators on the classroom visit tool in a single classroom?*

   The classroom visit tool is aligned with the indicators that reflect a range of effective practices. It is not expected that the classroom visitor would see all of these indicators. The tool serves as a resource for the site visit team to identify and explain practices that are characteristic of each individual school.

Appendix E: Prioritization

Prioritizing Findings: Introduction

A formative site visit process is only as good as the follow-up to the process. If the process is not linked to a clear prioritization and action planning, then its long-term impact on student learning is likely to be minimal. The purpose of the prioritization process is to assist school leaders in thinking through areas for improvement that are most important/most likely to impact student achievement and outcomes and should be addressed first, thereby setting the stage for developing Year Two SRG and annual grant renewal application plans.

The prioritization process occurs during a half-day meeting on the third day of the site visit. It should include key members of the school's leadership, in addition to members of the site visit team.

The following pages are intended to provide the school an overview of the prioritization process, as well as to serve as a guide for the team. This process may vary from school to school because each school has unique needs and different levels of experience with prioritization planning.

What are the steps involved in prioritization?

There are several steps that are addressed during prioritization. These steps are described in further detail on the following pages.

1. Identify key strengths and areas for improvement identified in the site visit.
2. Explore the relationships between various strengths and areas for improvement to understand root causes and in order to identify the areas for improvement that, if addressed, are likely to have the greatest impact on student learning and/or school programs.
3. Assess the school's existing capacity and identify additional resources needed to address areas for improvement, including current resources and areas that are within the school's power to influence.
4. Develop a priority list on the basis of the work completed in the above steps. This will serve as the foundation for an action plan that the school can use moving forward.

Facilitation and decision-making rights

Throughout prioritization, there are many decisions to be made. The very nature of the process forces the participants to narrow their focus. This can be challenging because it means letting go of some things in the short term in order to first address what is most important. Going through such a process is easier if you start by determining how decisions will be made.

Neither the site visit team members nor the team leader will be making decisions for the school. The team leader will present various arguments, play devil's advocate and generally serve as a critical friend/objective third-party voice. The school should decide how it will make decisions throughout the process – through vote, by consensus, one person in the group ultimately deciding or some other method that matches the school's culture.

1. **Identify key strengths and areas for growth identified by the external site visit**
   - Decide on a process to prioritize key strengths and areas for growth. Some participants may choose to place colored stickers or sticky notes next to the findings they feel are the top two strengths of the school and the top two or three areas for improvement that are linked to the desired outcome—improved student learning and achievement. It is often useful to use two different colored sets of stickers/sticky notes to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
   - Ask the school to analyze the results. Discuss where there is agreement and disagreement.

2. **Explore the relationships between various strengths and areas for improvement to understand root causes in order to identify the areas for improvement that, if addressed, are likely to have the greatest impact in student learning and/or school programs.**
   - Identify and discuss the links between the strengths and areas for improvement. For example, are areas for improvement in one domain the cause of issues in another?
   - Look for root causes. Eliminate strengths and areas for improvement that may not be related to the identified performance area.
   - Analyze the root causes. This is likely to yield additional thoughts about what programs and practices have had significant (or limited) impact.
   - Identify which root cause/s should be the focus of improvement efforts. It is often difficult and a mistake to try to make too many changes at once. In addition, some improvement efforts need to follow a specific chronology.

   > *A **root cause** is an initiating cause in a chain – positive or negative – that leads to an outcome. Commonly, **root cause** is used to describe the point in the causal chain where an intervention could reasonably be implemented to change performance and prevent an undesirable outcome.*
   > *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Root_cause*

   Many strengths and areas for improvement will have been identified. The root cause analysis will also yield additional thoughts about what programs and practices have impacted the outcomes. As seen in the example on the previous page, there is often more than one.

   Now that the root causes have been identified, the next step is to identify which root cause(s) should be the focus of improvement efforts. It is often difficult and a mistake to try to make too many changes at once. In addition, some improvement efforts need to follow a specific chronology. Steps 3 and 4 assist in the process of prioritization.

3. **Assess the school's capacity to address areas for improvement.**
   - Identify and discuss the resources the school has available to address the areas for improvement. Since it is often not possible or advisable to try to address all areas for improvement at once, it is important to assess what the school can do within the bounds of its current resources (e.g., time, funding, manpower and expertise). It does not make sense to plan improvement strategies without the available resources.
   - Consider the areas over which the school has control at the current time and what may be available in the future – for example, financial resources or the expertise of staff and materials.

There may be ways that a school can make better use of current resources, or ideas for reallocation in the future may also be beneficial.

- It's also important to assess whether the school has real influence over an area for improvement. While some areas for improvement might be quite important (if they are beyond the school's power to influence), it might not be wise to dedicate resources to this area at the current time.
- Consider how you can build upon your strengths to address areas for growth.

4. **Develop a priority list.**

- The list should consider the actions that could be taken that will have the greatest impact. It might be helpful to consider a list of questions about each root cause to assist in the creation of a priority list. Your answers might further focus your efforts.
- The list should consider the potential (or currently available) resources that could be committed to addressing the areas of improvement. These resources were identified in the previous step.
- The list should also consider the sequence of events that needs to occur to initiate improvement efforts into action. This ensures that the foundations are in place before taking more advanced steps.
- The priority list will serve as the foundation for an action plan that the school, moving forward, can use.

Priority List

The following could be used by the site visit team collectively or as a survey for individuals (i.e., each person responds to the information and responses are tallied) to determine priorities. Fill in the root cause that is being discussed on the top line. Respond to each of the questions. You may want to add a few of your own.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">What is the root cause?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Circle one of the three answers:</td></tr>
<tr><th>Key Questions</th><th colspan="3">Answers</th></tr>
<tr><td>1. How much direct impact will you have on outcomes if you choose to address this root cause?</td><td>Minimal</td><td>Some</td><td>Substantial</td></tr>
<tr><td>2. How much control do you have over this root cause?</td><td>Minimal</td><td>Some</td><td>Substantial</td></tr>
<tr><td>3. What resources do you have (time, personnel, materials, knowledge) to address this root cause?</td><td>Minimal</td><td>Some</td><td>Substantial</td></tr>
<tr><td>4. Other</td><td>Minimal</td><td>Some</td><td>Substantial</td></tr>
<tr><td>Based on your answers to the questions above and other considerations, how high of a priority is this root cause?</td><td>Low</td><td>Medium</td><td>High</td></tr>
</table>

Alternatively, the team leader might ask participants to cast votes for what they think are the highest priorities for the school to address. Once all participants have shared their perspectives, it is up to the school to choose its own priorities. It may be prepared to do so at the end of the prioritization meeting or may need to step back for several days before deciding.