Virtual/Blended School
Site Visit Protocol Overview

Introduction

The Center for Charter Schools conducts virtual/blended school site visits in accordance with the standard established protocol for the following identified visits: Educational Program Review, School Support Visit and New School Support Visit. The *EPR Standards* inform the site visit process; however, due to the nature of the virtual/blended models, a few variances to the protocol may occur as deemed necessary by the review team lead.

First and foremost, reviewers must have a complete overview i.e., guided tour of the Academy's online platform utilized for curriculum, instruction and assessment. This overview should occur at the beginning of the site visit as part of the leadership focus group discussion or prior to the site visit in a separate meeting.

For classroom observations, reviewers can choose to observe lessons individually or in tandem with another review team member and in real time or via recordings. For staff and student focus group discussions and document examination, the reviewers follow the standard protocol as closely as possible. Focus group discussions can occur face-to-face or via an online platform or conference call. Document examination can occur prior to the site visit if documents are provided electronically to the review team.

The review team can choose to ask additional or alternative questions to the standard *Focus Group Discussion Questions* document. Also, document examination may include additional items or focus beyond the *Document Checklist* document. A few examples are as follows:

Curriculum

- Explore course consistency. Look for logical sequence, adequate resources and tools, similar formatting/layout within the online platform.
- Review course syllabi (if available) and/or the scope and sequence.
- Ensure that each course is aligned to Michigan Academic Standards and meets the high school graduation requirements as outlined in the Michigan Merit Curriculum.
- Examine instructional rigor and student engagement opportunities provided by the online platform.

Instructional Delivery

- Ask for evidence of teacher/student interaction e.g., emails/logs of communication.
- Explore student engagement in an online environment e.g., chat boxes, polls, cameras, audio.
    - Are students completing the courses as outlined in the platform? Is completion timely? How is completion monitored/tracked?

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- - Examine interactions between students and teachers to show evidence the teacher is interacting with the student on a regular basis and note any type of student feedback that teachers provide to students.
- Observe content and the Academy's typical mode of instruction to look for key elements such as rigor and differentiation.
- Pose virtual/blended learning-specific discussion stems/questions to student focus groups.
  - Describe any unique things about learning at your school.
  - Describe a typical day of learning.
  - How do teachers instruct the class? Mostly lecture? Synchronous discussion? Collaborative learning--students working together? Independent Study?
  - What is the biggest difference between this learning environment and when you were face-to-face with your teacher?
  - How does your school prepare you for your future?
  - How much interaction do you have with your teacher(s)?
  - Is there timely, beneficial feedback provided by the teacher?
  - What types of supports are available to you if you need help?
  - Describe your assessments. Can you re-take assessments to improve scores?
  - Describe the grading process. Can you re-do assignments to improve scores?

Monitoring Student Progress

- How do you ensure accountability for student learning? e.g., assurances that the student is the one completing the required work.
- How does the online platform monitor/track student progress and academic content mastery?

Leadership Skills and Instructional Leadership

- Ask about the mission/vision and the demonstration of both in the online environment.
- How does the academy involve parents and conduct parent / teacher conferences?
- Ask to see templates for teacher observations and evaluations and explore the processes.
- Determine how leaders involve staff and foster collaboration and community.
- Examine evidence of professional development in a virtual environment.

The final report, issued to the Board of Directors and school administrator, follows the standard report format and addresses each area of the *EPR Standards*. Follow-up support is provided as needed e.g., presentation of the report at a public Board meeting, phone conference with chairman of the Board's Academic committee; phone conference with the Academy administrator or management company.

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