



Great Schools for Connecticut Charter Schools Program Site Visit Report

School	Odyssey Community School (OCS)
Site Visit Date	May 14, 2025
Monitoring Team	Faiza Mawjee (GSCT Project Director) & Benjamin Feit (Consultant)

Purpose and Goals

The Connecticut Charter Schools Association (CTCSA) was awarded funds through the United States Department of Education's Charter Schools Program - State Entities (CSP-SE) program in 2022 to administer the Great Schools for Connecticut (GSCT) grant project. In accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations (2 CFR § 200.332(d)), CTCSA engages in robust and comprehensive monitoring activities designed to ensure that all subgrantees are (1) implementing with fidelity the activities described in their applications, (2) meeting their project goals, and (3) adhering to federal rules and regulations.

To complement desk reviews of pertinent documentation compiled and submitted by subgrantees, CTCSA conducts periodic site visits to assess compliance with key programmatic, financial, and governance indicators. The purpose of the site visit is threefold: (1) to complement the desk review in allowing monitors to assess how grant-supported programs are being implemented and grant funds are being expended; (2) to identify areas of need in which technical assistance would be beneficial; and (3) to assist subgrantees as they transition toward planning for post-grant sustainability. Site visits consist of a physical inventory of non-consumable items purchased with CSP funds; observations of classroom instruction, school-wide systems, and health and safety protocols; and interviews with key stakeholders.

GSCT's site visit protocol is informed by the Department of Education's *Monitoring Handbook for State Entity Grantees*. In general, GSCT structures its site visits to assess compliance within three of the compliance indicators developed by the Department:

- Indicator 1.3: Definition of Charter School
- Indicator 2.3: Supporting Charter School Access and Model Diversity
- Indicator 3.2: Fiscal Control and Fund Accounting Procedures

Monitors also assess the degree to which subgrantees are implementing the key design elements outlined in their approved grant applications.

This Site Visit Report summarizes GSCT's findings and recommendations and identifies any outstanding items that a subgrantee must address in order to remain in good standing.

Noncompliance with any follow-up measures required by the GSCT team results in a subgrantee being identified as higher risk and, consequently, being subjected to heightened monitoring and, potentially, having subgrant awards reduced, suspended, or terminated. This report must be shared with a subgrantee's Board of Trustees and made publicly available on a school's website.

Summary of Findings

Indicator 1.2: Definition of Charter School

Compliance Status: In Compliance

OCS furnished evidence that it satisfies the federal definition of a charter school. The monitoring team observed visual evidence of adherence to federal and state regulations for health and safety. Emergency signage (Egress Plans, Code Red / Code Yellow protocols) were visible in each room. Fire extinguishers and AEDS were observed throughout the facility. Lower elementary school students eat in their classrooms; allergy lists were posted and go-bags with EpiPens are accessible. Students in Grades 3–8 eat in the Cafeteria / Swing Space; emergency equipment and notices were observed in that location as well. The monitoring team observed the school's recreational space, which includes both playground equipment and fields. Classrooms were well-lit and orderly. Bathrooms were functional and well-maintained.

Evidence of compliance with federal civil rights laws was observed. Entrances are ramp-accessible for individuals with mobility impairments. The school employs four paraprofessionals and maintains space for pull-out instruction in between its Grade 1 and Grade 2 classroom areas. The monitoring team observed a classroom reserved for the provision of instructional services to English Learners. An auditor spends a week on site each October reviewing employee records, purchases, and reimbursements.

The school enrolls students via random lottery. A video recording of the school's admissions lottery, held on April 23, 2025, is made publicly available on the school's website. OCS admits new students until it initiates the lottery process for the ensuing school year, which would permit students to enroll on an over-the-counter basis as late as January or February. Parents of students who were awarded seats in the lottery are afforded two weeks to complete their registration packages. OCS attempts to communicate with those parents via email (on a nearly daily basis) and over the phone (twice weekly). Parents called off the waitlist have between 3 and 7 days to enroll depending on proximity to the start of the school year. Sibling preference does not apply until the following year's lottery, meaning that a parent could have one child awarded a seat while another remains on the waitlist. All students who apply following the lottery go to the bottom of the waitlist at their respective grade levels.

Indicator 2.3: Supporting Charter School Access and Model Diversity

Compliance Status: In Compliance

The monitoring team observed the two PreK classrooms whose seats were added with the support of a GSCT subgrant. The school has purchased supplies that are appropriate for PreK classrooms, which were observed during the site visit and confirmed through the reimbursement packets the school has submitted for approved, eligible expenses. Items appeared to have been tagged, and OCS stated that a consultant has been engaged to tag equipment and CSP-funded furniture. The district of residence provides busing services, with five buses dedicated to OCS students. The monitoring team did not observe arrival or dismissal but were afforded a walkthrough of how buses enter the property and pull on to a side street for students to disembark. OCS partners with rural schools through EASTCONN's Interdistrict Grant that allows students from participating schools to connect with peers for field trips and mindfulness activities.

Indicator 3.2: Fiscal Control and Fund Accounting Procedures

Compliance Status: In Compliance

OCS has adopted financial policies — internal controls, inventory systems, independent audits — that are fully compliant with the requirements set forth in the Code of Federal Regulations (2 CFR 200). The monitoring team conducted a physical inventory of movable, non-consumable items purchased with CSP funds including a large shed on the premises adjacent to the outdoor recreational grounds. In the PreK classrooms, CSP-funded supplies were commingled with non-CSP-funded supplies, making it difficult to determine whether all inventory purchased with GSCT funds were appropriately tagged. The OCS team stated that it had retained a consultant to complete an inventory appraisal and tagging exercise that is currently ongoing and which will be completed after the close of the CSP project period.

The monitoring team observed that personnel files, vendor records, checks, stamps, and deposit books were stored in locked filing cabinets. Student records are stored in a separate, dedicated room to which access is restricted via keypad door lock.

Follow-Up From Desktop Monitoring

Compliance Status: In Compliance

In addition to verifying compliance with the three indicators identified above, the monitors used the site visit as an opportunity to follow up with OCS leadership about items from the [GSCT Monitoring Rubric](#) (MRS) tool that remained open (i.e., Partially Met or Unmet). All items on Tabs 4 (Programmatic Compliance), 5 (Fiscal Compliance), and 6 (Grant Governance) of the

Monitoring Rubric Sheet were satisfactorily addressed. An OCS board member attended the GSCT-sponsored Board Governance training in New Haven on June 12, 2025.

Several SMART project goals remained unfulfilled at the time of the site visit. In order to satisfy these goals, OCS will need to demonstrate (1) full enrollment of available seats in CSP-funded grades; (2) 80% of preschool students falling within their age's color band on at least 90% of all standards assessed within the Teaching Strategies GOLD system; and (3) year-over-year improvement on the school's Next Generation Accountability Index score. GSCT anticipates these items will be complete within calendar year 2025 and will follow up with the school to complete tab 7 of the MRS.