



CONDUCTING EFFECTIVE SCHOOL VISITS

In the Fair Futures model, all Coaches working with students in high school should visit the high school at least once per semester. (A best practice is once per month for struggling students!)

Middle School Specialists should also visit students' schools at least once per year, or more depending on their caseload.

THE MOST IMPORTANT TIP IN THIS DOCUMENT IS...

DON'T BE AFRAID TO CONDUCT A SCHOOL VISIT!

YOU CAN'T SCREW IT UP! This is a team approach and a gradual process.

The worst outcome is if no one goes to the school to advocate for and support that student.

WHY SHOULD FAIR FUTURES STAFF CONDUCT SCHOOL VISITS IF CASE PLANNERS ALREADY DO?

- It shows the student you care and are a partner on their academic journey.
- It helps the Coach/Specialist better understand the student's academic progress and needs so they can better support that young person, emotionally and academically.
- It ensures that the student is receiving any needed supports from the school/program as outlined in their IEP/504 Plan.
- It helps form a working relationship with key staff, so that the school knows to reach out to the Coach/Specialist if any challenges, issues, or opportunities arise for that young person.

BEFORE THE VISIT

SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT.

Email the school counselor, receptionist, and parent/foster parent to schedule and explain the purpose of the visit. Ask to meet everyone who works with the student, including the guidance counselor, classroom teachers if possible, and any other service providers (e.g., a speech therapist).

Be sure to remind school personnel that the student's placement in foster care is a sensitive matter and should only be shared with staff on a need-to-know basis. Ask them to be mindful of confidentiality when discussing the student around other staff or students in the building.

TIP: Make sure your email is warm, grateful, and enthusiastic!
This will help set the tone and will likely get you a faster response.

IF APPROPRIATE, INVITE THE PARENT OR FOSTER PARENTS TO COME WITH YOU.

If they do not come, be sure to follow up with them afterwards.

LET THE STUDENT KNOW YOU'LL BE VISITING AND EXPLAIN WHY.

Ask if they would like to join and how they'd like you to introduce yourself when you're at their school. Also ask them about their relationships with school staff so you can be sure to help the meeting be strength-based.

TIP: Try your best to schedule during their lunch so they don't miss class. *NYCSA has their student schedule.*

TIP!

If your student is joining your school visit and they are struggling in school, it may be best to first have a call with the Guidance Counselor or other school staff to "hear them out" about any concerns they have.

School visits can be traumatic, and sometimes school staff use the opportunity to reprimand students on their attendance or performance.

Coaches/Specialists should try to discuss any sensitive issues with school staff beforehand so they can help keep the conversation strength-based and supportive!

TAKE TIME TO PREPARE.

Gather the **most recent documents** below and review them before you have the visit, so you can ask informed questions when you're there:

ALL STUDENTS:

- ☐ **Attendance Records**
- ☐ **IEP (for special education students)**
Make sure to read this over in advance and prepare specific questions around whether they are receiving the outlined services.

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS:

- ☐ **Report Card**
If a student has below an 80 in any subject, or if performance has been steadily declining in any subject, flag this to inquire about needed supports.
- ☐ **NYS exam scores**
A score of 3 or 4 on the NYS exams is proficient.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:

- ☐ **Transcript** (Ask for them in September, January, and June)
Students should earn 10/11+ credits each year.
- ☐ [Graduation Requirements Worksheet](#)
- ☐ [New York City High School Promotion and Graduation Requirements](#)
- ☐ [High School Graduation Options for Students with Disabilities](#)

TIPS FOR OBTAINING THESE DOCUMENTS:

For youth in foster care, prepare the [ACS School Records Request Letter](#)

For youth on final discharge, adopted, or over 18, obtain a signed [FERPA Release](#) from the youth's parent, legal guardian, or the youth.

TIP: You can also get the student's educational performance history in the student's NYCSA (MyStudent) account.

DURING THE VISIT

UPON ARRIVING.

Remind the school about the importance of confidentiality related to the youth's placement in foster care. Information should be shared with staff on a need-to-know basis only.

TIP: Engage with the school secretary/administrative staff. They are the gatekeepers to the school and can help with scheduling!

SET THE STAGE - CREATE A STRENGTH-BASED, SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT.

Sometimes these visits can be traumatic, as some young people associate school with another system, and guidance counselors/staff do not always take a strength-based approach, particularly if a young person is struggling academically or has behavioral concerns.

The Coach/Specialist should model the appropriate tone, try to create a circle of support around the young person, and empower the young person to participate in the discussion.

REVIEW THE STUDENT'S ATTENDANCE

Including timeliness and attendance in individual classes

It is common for students to attend school regularly but arrive late, skip academic classes, or leave school early. The student should be given a chance to express their thoughts and concerns and explain why they may not have been attending. It's important to focus on what supports they may need in and/or out of school.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

❑ DISCUSS PERFORMANCE:

See list of potential questions/considerations for middle vs. high school students below.

Is the student's promotion in doubt? If so, what services is the school providing to prevent a holdover? Students are entitled to Academic Intervention Services if they are not meeting grade-level standards.

TIP: If the student is struggling, consider connecting them to 1:1, weekly, quality, in-home tutoring with New York Foundling or Tier NYC!

❑ DISCUSS ANY SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS IF THEY HAVE AN IEP.

Make sure the student is in their mandated classroom setting and getting all required services outlined in the IEP.

TIP: Ask specific questions about services in the IEP – such as, “how many times does the student meet with the speech therapist each week?” Ask for attendance logs if you're unsure!

TIP: The goal is always to have the student integrated in the least restrictive classroom setting, unless their needs require a special class placement for the entire school day. You can always ask the question “Can we discuss the least restrictive setting?”

DISCUSSION ITEMS CONTINUED

☐ **DISCUSS ANY SUPPORTS THE SCHOOL HAS.**

Including afterschool programs, Regents prep, extracurricular activities, etc., and the student's interests in these activities.

☐ **ARE THERE ANY CONCERNS ABOUT THE STUDENT'S BEHAVIOR?**

If so, how is the school addressing them? For serious concerns, ask if the school has done a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) or Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP).

☐ **OVERALL, ASSESS THE SCHOOL FOR QUALITY AND FIT**

If a student is overage/under-credited or struggling with attendance and performance, among the factors influencing this may be the school setting.

In some cases, a small transfer high school, for example, may be a better fit than a larger, traditional one.

[Review Fair Futures Program Manual Section 18D](#) for a full description of alternative high schools, how to assess if a transfer is needed, and next steps.

Review the [Alternative Selection Guide](#)

Use [One Degree](#) to find transfer schools, YABCs, and HSEs.

PERFORMANCE QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

Middle School Questions

- ☐ What is the student's reading level? What should it be at this point in the year?
- ☐ What math skills has the student mastered? What should they be able to do?
- ☐ Can the student complete classwork independently? If not, what support do they need?
- ☐ Does the student complete their homework?
- ☐ Is the student below grade level in any subjects? If so, what supports does the school provide?
- ☐ How does the student get along with peers? Do they have friends? Are there any issues with bullying?

Additional High School Questions

- ☐ How many credits does the student have? Are they on track to graduate? If not, how can the school help them catch up?
- ☐ Has the student taken any Regent exams? What were their scores? Are any appeals possible?
- ☐ Is the student enrolled in any afterschool or Regents prep or other at-school supports?
- ☐ What support does the school offer around the college process? If the student has an IEP, what transition services are they getting?

AFTER THE VISIT

DEBRIEF WITH THE STUDENT

Talk through any feelings the meeting may have produced, particularly if the student's performance is not optimal. This is an important relationship-building moment – it will reinforce that the Coach/Specialist is there for them, no matter how they are doing in school, and that they believe in the young person.

RECORD A NOTE IN BOTH CNNX AND CARE4

Tip: You can copy and paste from CNNX to Care4!

SEND THIS NOTE (OR A SUMMARY EMAIL) TO AGENCY STAFF (The Case Planner, their Supervisor, and your Supervisor)

Be to sure to follow up on any urgent concerns:

- ☐ If the student is already missing classes
- ☐ If there are concerns about bullying
- ☐ If the student's IEP isn't being followed
- ☐ If there's a medication form that needs to be completed, etc.

UPDATE THE PARENT AND/OR FOSTER PARENT IF THEY WERE NOT ABLE TO ATTEND.

SEND A FOLLOW-UP NOTE TO THE SCHOOL STAFF WHO ATTENDED.

Thank them, and outline who is responsible for any next steps. Follow up as needed.

WORK WITH THE YOUNG PERSON ON ANY NEXT STEPS OR GOALS AND KEEP SUPPORTING THEM IN BUILDING THEIR ADVOCACY SKILLS!