



Charter School Site Visit Protocol

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I. Overview

The Tennessee Public Charter School Commission holds all charter schools under its authorization accountable for providing students with a high-quality public education. With regard to its role as an appellate authorizer of charter schools, the Commission provides positive academic and life outcomes for Tennessee's students through access to high-quality public charter schools.¹ Therefore, the Commission conducts an annual formal site visit during each year of the school's charter term as required under Commission Policy [3.30 – Oversight and Evaluation](#) and aligned to the Commission's [Core Authorizing Principles](#).

The Commission conducts one annual site visit for its schools to augment data that cannot otherwise be obtained through the [Performance Framework](#) and Federal Programs Sub-recipient Monitoring. The site visits are conducted to ensure a thorough performance review of each school and to provide an opportunity for evaluators to see the school in action. This protocol is designed to provide practical information about the site visit so that stakeholders know what to expect and how to prepare. Familiarity with the procedures, protocols, and responsibilities will help to ensure that the visit runs smoothly, provides useful evidence for the school's annual performance review and for the renewal process, and ultimately produces a useful feedback report for the school.²

II. Preparing for the Visit

Scheduling Visit Dates

At the beginning of the fall semester, the Commission will contact schools to schedule the visit, and the visit may be scheduled for the fall semester or the spring semester. Once a date has been scheduled, the school leader should share that information with school staff to begin preparation for the visit. Schools should also designate a school-based point-of-contact for all scheduling, logistical planning, and day-of coordination for the visit.

Commission staff have the discretion to complete a full day or a half day site visit for each school. Some criteria that could indicate a school needing a full day site visit include:

- A school within their first year of operation
- A school within their interim (5th year) of operation, and thus the Commission is completing an interim review
- A school is within their renewal term, and thus the Commission is completing a renewal site visit
- A school is not meeting academic standards within the Commission's School Performance Framework for the prior school year
- A school is on a plan of correction
- Other rationale as determined by Commission staff and communicated with the school

¹ TPCSC Mission Statement [1.000 – Tennessee Public Charter School Mission Statement](#)

² TPCSC Oversight and Evaluation [3.300 – Tennessee Public Charter School Commission Oversight and Evaluation](#)

The Commission will alert the school as to whether they will receive a full or half day site visit for the following year during their July closeout meeting.

Submission of Pre-Visit Documents

The Commission uses pre-visit documents to gain familiarity with the organizational structure, begin gathering evidence ahead of the visit, and craft questions based on the school's current performance. This practice allows the visiting team to maximize time spent in classrooms and speaking with school stakeholders during the visit. Schools are required to upload the following documents to the shared Teams account three weeks before the date of the site visit.

1. General Site Visit Documentation
 - a. Logistics and Scheduling
 - i. Map of school/classrooms, including room numbers and teacher names and a meeting room to be used as the site visit team's home base
 - ii. Master class schedule and bell schedule
 - iii. Intervention schedule, teachers, and locations
 1. Including schedules for both internal and/or contracted service providers
 2. EL and SPED teacher service schedules (weekly snapshot)
 - iv. Completed team interview schedule (from provided template) including student names, staff names, and classroom numbers
 - b. A Performance PowerPoint Presentation on Data and Assessment³ which includes:
 - i. Student culture data (e.g. attendance, chronic absenteeism, suspensions, expulsions, etc.). Including both whole school and subgroup data
 - ii. Internal assessment data with whole school and subgroup data (e.g. benchmarks, unit tests, nationally normed tests, RTI data, universal screener, etc.)
 - iii. Overarching academic and culture trends, successes, challenges, and adjustments for second semester

III. Site Visit Structure

Site visits will generally follow the structure below. Changes may be made to the structure of the visit based on Commission priorities and identified areas of need.

1. Introduction/Morning Orientation
 - a. Commission and school team leaders welcome the team, make introductions
 - b. Commission establishes the context for the visit, orients team members to the purpose, goals, and norms for the day, as well as the guiding questions and criteria.

³ While collected in advance, the school leaders will be expected to have the presentation ready to discuss with the team during the site visit.

- c. Team leaders share expectations around common instructional techniques and school-wide classroom management strategies the team should observe and any areas where feedback would be particularly helpful.
2. Discussion of Performance PowerPoint Presentation on Data and Assessment with school leadership team⁴
 - a. Leadership team does not need to review data slide by slide, the Commission team has already reviewed this data and is solely using this time for questions and garnering further information.
 - b. The Commission's site visit team will share an agenda for this discussion ahead of the site visit.
3. Interviews/Focus Groups with⁵:
 - a. Governing board chair (may be completed over the phone within a week of the site visit)
 - b. School leadership/administration:
 - i. School principal and assistant principal(s)
 - ii. Director of Operations
 - iii. Director of Finance or CFO
 - c. Other staff:
 - i. SPED teacher(s) and/or coordinator
 - ii. EL teacher(s) and/or coordinator
 - iii. Staff responsible for overseeing school and federal level compliance
 - d. Up to two core content teachers, one new and one returning (if applicable)
 - e. Up to two students of different grade levels (if applicable) and gender
 - f. Up to two parents/families, one new to the school and one returning, if possible (may be completed via phone within a week of the site visit)
4. Class Observations
 - a. The purpose of classroom visits is to collect evidence and observe school-wide trends. It is not to evaluate individual teaching or teachers.
 - b. The site visit team will observe multiple grade levels and subjects on a drop-in basis to see a variety of lessons at different stages. We will strive to have no more than one member of the site visit team present in a classroom at one time.
 - c. Class visits should not disrupt the classroom or lesson. Teachers and students should be prepared for drop-in visitors on the site visit day.

⁴ The Commission requests the discussion be with the principal and any other school leader who can speak to the data presented. The presentation must be provided to the Commission by deadline above.

⁵ The Commission will coordinate with the school's point of contact to determine who will participate in interviews. With the exception of school leadership, interview participants should differ each year.

- d. Commission staff will also observe examples of co-teaching of special education students and English learners with the respective accommodations and intervention classrooms.
 - i. As a component of these observations, staff will review curricular materials used in school's direct special education services.
 - ii. Additionally, staff will check for evidence of the school's provision of adaptive/assistive technology or accessibility accommodations within the campus.

5. Document Review

- a. Commission staff will review a random sample of the following documentation:
 - i. [IEPs](#)
 - ii. [Section 504 plans](#)
 - iii. [EL student records](#) and [ILPs](#)
 - iv. [Student cumulative records](#)
 - v. [Employee personnel files](#)
 - vi. [School Discipline Policy](#)

Sample Schedule:

Sample Schedule			
	TPCSC Staff Member 1	TPCSC Staff Member 2	TPCSC Staff Member 3
8:30am - 8:45am	Introduction with TPCSC team and school leaders		
8:45am - 9:00am	Discussion of Performance Presentation with principal and leadership team		
9:00am - 9:15am			
9:15am - 9:30am			
9:30am - 9:45am	Principal Interview	Classroom Observation	Director of Operations Interview
9:45am - 10:00am		Classroom Observation	
10:00am - 10:15am	Asst. Principal Interview	Classroom Observation	Teacher Interview
10:15am - 10:30am			Special Populations File Audit
10:30am - 10:45am		Classroom Observation	
10:45am - 11:00am	Asst. Principal Interview	Director of Finance Interview	Classroom Observation
11:00am - 11:15am		Classroom Observation	Classroom Observation
11:15am - 11:30am	Asst. Principal Interview	Classroom Observation	EL/SPED Teacher Interview
11:30am - 11:45am			
11:45am - 12:00pm	TPCSC Lunch and Debrief		
12:00pm - 12:15pm			
12:15pm - 12:30pm	Classroom Observation	Special Populations File Audit	Classroom Observation
12:30pm - 12:45pm	Classroom Observation		Classroom Observation
12:45pm - 1:00pm		Student Interview	Student Interview
1:00pm - 1:15pm	Classroom Observation		
1:15pm - 1:30pm		Student Interview	Classroom Observation
1:30pm - 1:45pm	Classroom Observation		
1:45pm - 2:00pm		Special Populations Coordinator Interview	Governing Board Member Interview
2:00pm - 2:15pm			
2:15pm - 2:30pm	Classroom Observation	Parent Interview	Parent Interview
2:30pm - 2:45pm	Classroom Observation		
2:45pm - 3:00pm	Site Visit Wrap up with Leadership Team		
3:00pm - 3:15pm			
3:15pm - 3:30pm			
3:30pm - 3:45pm	Site Visit Wrap Up and Closeout - TPCSC		
3:45pm - 4:00pm			

IV. Evaluation Criteria

During the site visit, the Commission will gather evidence about the school, as aligned with the Commission's [Charter School Performance Framework](#), the LEA and School Plan, and ESEA and IDEA federal monitoring requirements.

After the site visit, the Commission will produce the Site Visit Report. Additional information about the report is included below.

Site Visit Report

The Site Visit Report shares insights with the school based on the evidence gathered with the site visit and in alignment with the following elements from the Performance Framework. The Site Visit Report will be shared with school leadership and Commission members within thirty (30) days of the site visit and will encompass the three key performance areas outlined below.

Academic Performance: Is the educational program a success?

- **Mission:** The school is faithful to its mission, implements the material terms of the education program outlined in its charter.
 - Do all school stakeholders share a common and consistent understanding of the school's mission as outlined in the charter?
 - Has the school fully implemented its mission in the approved charter?
 - Is the school implementing the material terms of its education program?
 - Is the school on track to meet its mission-specific goal?
- **Student Performance:** The school consistently meets state student performance standards for academic growth, proficiency, and college and career readiness.
 - Is the school trending to meet standard as measured by the Commission's School Performance Framework?
 - How does the school track and respond to internal assessment data?
 - How are internal assessments, standardized benchmark tests, etc. Trending in regard to student performance on end-of-year state assessments to which the school will be held accountable in the Commission's School Performance Framework?
- **Program Delivery:** The school delivers an academic program that provides improved academic outcomes and educational success for all students through its curriculum, instruction, assessment and program evaluation, and supports for diverse learners.
 - Are the curricula, instruction, and assessments effective in increasing learning for all students?
 - Are teacher expectations, lesson structures, etc. consistent across grade levels and classes?
 - Are students engaged in the lessons observed and are all students supported in their learning?
 - Is the school evaluating the program for effectiveness and adjusting as necessary?
 - Does the school have a sound and effective RTI² program?

- **Access and Equity:** The school ensures program access and equity for all students eligible to attend the school
 - Does the school implement a student recruitment and retention plan that includes deliberate, specific strategies to ensure the ongoing provision of equity before, during, and after enrollment?
 - Does the school eliminate barriers to program access by ensuring that information regarding non-discriminatory enrollment practices and the availability of specialized services are readily available to parents, students, and the general public?
 - Does the school protect the rights of students with disabilities and English Language Learners?
- **Culture and Family Engagement:** The school supports students' social and emotional health in a safe and respectful learning environment that engages families.
 - Are classroom environments consistent across the school?
 - Is the school actively engaging families through effective means of communication?
 - Is the school actively monitoring and responding to chronic absenteeism with students and families?
 - Does the school effectively provide student academic information to families?
 - Do families report satisfaction with the school?
 - Are the student discipline protocols effective?
 - Are students' social, emotional, and health needs being met?
 - Is the school complying with facilities and transportation requirements?
 - Is the school complying with health and safety requirements, including building safety requirements?
 - Commission staff will check for compliance during the site visit for health and safety requirements including locked doors, posted evacuation routes, etc.

Financial Performance

- **Financial Monitoring and Reporting:** The school manages its finances through a sufficient budget process, sustainable spending, and regular financial reporting.
 - Does the school have clear budgeting and reporting processes?
 - Is there board involvement in the financial decisions of the school?
 - Is the school utilizing Generally Accepted Accounting Principles as the basis for financial reporting?
 - Is the school in default on loan covenant(s) and/or debt obligations?

Organizational Performance: Is the organization effective and well run?

- **Governance:** Members of the governing board provide competent and appropriate governance to ensure the success and sustainability of the school.
 - Are board members active and engaged in fulfilling their legal responsibilities and obligations to the school?



- Does the board demonstrate appropriate oversight of the charter school's leaders, financial health, progress towards meeting academic goals, and alignment with the mission while remaining a governing authority?
- Does the board engage in strategic and continuous improvement planning by setting, and regularly monitoring progress relative to goals/priorities that are aligned with the school's mission, vision and core values?
- **Capacity:** The school sustains a well-functioning organizational structure and creates a professional working climate for all staff.
 - Is the school leadership being held accountable?
 - Is there a productive professional climate within the school?
 - [If applicable] Is there a productive and effective relationship between the network/CMO and school leadership?
 - Is the school working to attract and retain highly effective teachers, leaders, and staff?
- **Compliance:** The school compiles a record of compliance with the terms of its charter and applicable state and federal laws and regulations.
 - Is the school complying with federal, state, and local reporting requirements?

Commission Point of Contact

Your main point of contact for the annual site visit is Trent Carlson (trent.carlson@tn.gov). Please reach out to Trent with any questions regarding this document or details for the site visit. Please also be sure to share your organization's point of contact for the site visit with Trent to ensure effective communication. We are looking forward to observing and learning more about all the great things you and your team are doing soon.