



Charter School Site Visit Protocol

Tennessee Public Charter School Commission
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Updated: May 2026

I. Overview

The Tennessee Public Charter School Commission (“Charter Commission” or “Commission”) holds all charter schools under its authorization accountable for providing students with a high-quality public education. As a trusted partner, the Charter Commission provides access and support to excellent charter schools through rigorous oversight, transparency, and accountability.¹ Therefore, the Commission conducts an annual, formal site visit during each year of the school’s charter term as required under Commission Policy 3.300 Oversight and Evaluation² and aligned to the Commission’s Core Authorizing Principles, Commission Policy 3.000. This one formal annual site visit augments data that cannot otherwise be obtained through the Charter School Performance Framework, Commission Policy 3.700, and other monitoring procedures.

In addition to a formal site visit as outlined in this protocol, Commission staff, as the authorizer and LEA, may also conduct informal site visits outside of the formal process. Informal site visits may be used as check-ins, meetings, or collaborative opportunities. These visits will be coordinated with the school ahead of time, and the purpose of the visit will be shared.

Additional site visits may take place with the Commission’s School Program and Supports team for additional monitoring as needed. All 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.

II. Preparing for the Visit

Scheduling Visit Dates

Starting in July, the Commission will work with schools to schedule the site visit for the upcoming school year. 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

¹ TPCSC Mission Statement Policy 1.000 – Tennessee Public Charter School Mission Statement

² All Commission rules and policies, including all referenced in this document, are found on the [Commission's website](#).

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.

There are three types of formal site visits, and a school's type is determined through a risk-based analysis. All schools, by default, will have half day site visits unless they meet specific other criteria. Schools that are high performing³ and meet rigorous criteria will receive a truncated or condensed site visit that will last no longer than 2.5 hours. Schools meeting certain criteria, that serve a large grade span, or schools in high stakes review years will receive a full day visit. Commission staff will use the following criteria as guiding principles to determine the appropriate visit length.

- Schools that are within the following criteria will have a full day site visit:
 - Schools within their interim year (typically Year 5 unless otherwise noted);
 - Schools within the renewal process (typically Year 9 unless otherwise noted);
 - Have significantly large grade band structures such as K-12
 - Schools receiving higher levels of intervention or having specific concerns that cannot be addressed in a half day site visit
- Schools that are within the following criteria will have a half day site visit:
 - Schools that are in the first two years of operation
 - Schools that are not within high-stakes review years such as interim and renewal and do not have any specific concerns
 - Schools may be on interventions and still receive a half day site visit at the discretion of Commission staff
- Schools that are within the following criteria will earn a condensed site visit:
 - Schools that are considered high performing in alignment with T.C.A. § 49-13-121(e) and are meeting automatic renewal criteria as outlined in Commission Policy 3.600
 - Schools that meet all major categories on the Commission's School Performance Framework and not on any sort of intervention
 - Schools that do not have any significant concerns in service of special populations and do not require a file audit
 - Schools that are not within high-stakes review years such as interim and renewal or Years 1 and 2 of operation

³ As outlined in T.C.A. § 49-13-121(e) and Commission Policy 3.600 – Renewal of Commission-Authorized Charter Agreements



The Commission will inform the school as to which length of visit it will receive for the following year during its closeout meeting. This is subject to change throughout the school year depending on the school's status in alignment with the criteria outlined above.

Commission staff will hold optional office hours for all site visits in the fall as an opportunity for operators to ask questions and learn more about the site visit process. Operators new to the Commission's portfolio will receive individualized training prior to their first visit.

Submission of Pre-Visit Documents

The Commission uses pre-visit documents to gain familiarity with the organizational structure, school schedule, and logistics prior to the visit. Schools are required to upload the following documents to the shared Microsoft Teams account two weeks before the date of the site visit.

General Site Visit Documentation:

- Logistics and Scheduling
 - 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.
 - Master class schedule and bell schedule
 - Intervention schedule, teachers, and locations
 - Including schedules for both internal and/or contracted service providers
 - English learner ("EL") and special education ("SPED") teacher service schedules (weekly snapshot)
 - Completed team interview schedule (from provided template) including student names, staff names, and classroom numbers.
- Commission staff provide topics for the discussion of performance below for the site visit meeting with school leadership. Schools do not need to submit a data presentation ahead of time but will need to provide copies of all materials reviewed during the meeting. Commission staff will also provide a historical data sheet that the site visit team uses in preparation for the visit.

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 and 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.
 - 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 with School Leadership Team⁴
 - a. School leadership and Commission team will talk through the following items at the data meeting:
 - i. Successes and challenges of the current school year
 - ii. Internal academic assessment data, as tracked by the school
 - iii. School culture data including suspension, suspension rate by subgroup, positive behavior intervention systems, discipline tracking and response to data
 - iv. Teacher retention trends and adult culture in buildings
 - v. School's progress toward the mission-specific goal
 - vi. Enrollment trends year over year and throughout the school year
 - vii. Chronic absenteeism and attendance trends
 - b. Any areas of focus for the school and items Commission staff should keep in mind during the site visit.
 - c. School and/or network leadership should attend the meeting and be prepared to discuss the items above. PowerPoint presentations or additional documentation may be helpful as necessary.
 - d. Please be prepared to provide Commission staff with a copy of all data shared and documentation.
3. Interviews with stakeholders

⁴ The Commission requests the discussion be with the principal and any other school leader who can speak to the data presented.

- a. The Commission will interview school stakeholders as part of the site visit process. Interview participants will be outlined within the components of the different site visit lengths below.
 - b. 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.
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. There will be no more than one member of the site visit team present in a classroom at one time.
 - c. Class visits will not disrupt the classroom or lesson. Teachers and students should be prepared for drop-in visitors on the site visit day.
 - d. Commission staff will also observe examples of co-teaching of special education students and English learners with the respective accommodations and intervention classrooms.
 - e. As a component of these observations, staff will review curricular materials used in school's direct special education services.
 - f. Additionally, staff will check for evidence of the school's provision of adaptive/assistive technology or accessibility accommodations within the campus.
 - g. Commission staff will outline which classrooms may be visited during a pre-determined time slot. This will allow the observer flexibility in moving between classrooms as needed and allow school staff to prepare for the visits.
 - h. Schools should alert Commission staff of any substitute teachers, vacancies, testing, or schedule changes that could impact observations the day of the site visit.
5. Coordinated School Health Check-In
- a. Commission staff will check in with the point of contact at the school for Coordinated School Health during the site visit.
6. Document Review (as applicable)
- a. Commission staff may review a random sample of the following documentation:⁵
 - i. IEPs and service log⁶

⁵ All Commission LEA procedures and LEA policies, including all referenced in this document, are found on the [Commission's website](#).

⁶ LEA Procedure 1018 – Special Education Monitoring Procedures

- ii. Section 504 plans⁷
- iii. EL student records and ILPs⁸
- iv. ILP-Ds⁹
- v. Student cumulative records¹⁰
- vi. Employee personnel files ¹¹
- vii. School Discipline Policy¹²
- viii. Enrollment materials, procedures, and records

Below are the components of site visits based on the type of visit a school may receive:

- Full day visits include:
 - Extended data meeting with school leadership
 - Full day of class observations
 - Full rotation of interviews including governing board member, leaders, two teachers, special populations staff, two students, parents, etc.
 - Closeout touchpoint with school leadership
- Half day visits include:
 - Data meeting with school leadership
 - Class observations
 - Full rotation of interviews including governing board member¹³, leaders, teachers, special populations staff, students, parents, etc.
 - Closeout touchpoint with school leadership
- Condensed visits include:
 - Shortened data meeting with school leadership
 - Fewer class observations

⁷ LEA Procedure 1028 – 504 Plan Monitoring Procedure

⁸ LEA Procedure 1019 – Special Populations On-Site Monitoring Procedures, 1010 – English Learner Individual Learning Plan Procedures

⁹ LEA Procedure 1010 – English Learner Individual Learning Plan Procedures

¹⁰ LEA Policy 6600 – Student Records and Confidentiality

¹¹ LEA Policy 5114 – Personnel Records

¹² LEA Policy 6313 – Student Discipline

¹³ For larger networks of schools, the Commission will interview one governing board member per network, not per school.

- Truncated rotation of interviews including a governing board member, teacher, student, and special populations staff.
- Brief closeout touchpoint with school leadership

Sample Half-Day 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 Academic Data with Principal, network leadership, and any other members of leadership team		
9:00am - 9:15am			
9:15am - 9:30am			
9:30am - 9:45am	Classroom Observation Rotation 1	Governing Board Interview	Special Populations File Audit
9:45am - 10:00am	Rooms 101, 102, 103, 104	Teacher Interview	
10:00am - 10:15am		Principal Interview	
10:15am - 10:30am	Classroom Observation Rotation 2	Parent Interview	
10:30am - 10:45am	Rooms 210, 211, 212, 213	Student Interview	
10:45am - 11:00am		Teacher Interview	Classroom Observation
11:00am - 11:15am	Classroom Observation Rotation 3	Operations Interview + Facility Walkthrough	Classroom Observation
11:15am - 11:30am	Rooms 121, 122, 123, 124		
11:30am - 11:45am			
11:45am - 12:00pm	Site Visit Debrief		

IV. Evaluation Criteria

During the site visit, the Commission will gather evidence about the school, as aligned with the Commission’s School Performance Framework,¹⁴ the LEA and School Plan, and ESEA and IDEA federal monitoring requirements.

After the site visit, the Commission will produce the Site Visit Report.

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 evaluative criteria, in alignment with components of the Commission’s School Performance Framework. The Site Visit Report will be shared with the

¹⁴ Commission Policy 3.700

executive director and the governing board within thirty days of the site visit and will encompass the 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.
 - Is the mission of the school reflected in the classroom culture and program delivery of the school?
 - Are there specific practices happening within the school building that align with the school's mission and do stakeholders share a consistent understanding of the school's mission?
 - Is the school implementing the material terms of its education program?
 - Is the school on track to meet its mission-specific goal?
- **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.
 - Is the mission and overall program of the school present consistently in all classrooms?
 - 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?
 - Are the resources provided for staff through professional development helpful in terms of program delivery?
 - How does the school differentiate for diverse learners?
 - 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?
- **Access and Equity:** The school ensures program access and equity for all students eligible to attend the school and the school adequately serves all students.
 - 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, including throughout the application and lottery process?
- Does the school protect the rights of students with disabilities and English Learners?
- Is the school compliant in its service of special populations of students, and how does the school ensure appropriate provision of services?
- **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?
 - Does the school have an outlined discipline system and is it being implemented consistently across the school?
 - Are students' social, emotional, and health needs being met?
- **School Environment:** The school building is safe, clean, and well designed to accommodate student learning.
 - Do stakeholders report feeling safe within the school building?
 - 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.

Organizational Performance: Is the organization effective and well run?

- **Material Terms:** Is the school fulfilling the material terms outlined within the charter agreement?
- **Governance:** Members of the governing board provide competent and appropriate governance to ensure the success and sustainability of the school.
 - Does the board have an effective governance structure and a productive relationship with the school leader?
 - The board receives and engages with sufficient information from the school to make effective decisions for the institution.

- The board manages its key functions (financial, managerial, and administrative) and assesses its own performance in addition to the performance of the school leader.
- **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?

V. Commission Point of Contact

The school's main point of contact for the annual site visit is the Commission's Deputy Director of Authorizing, Maggie Lund (Maggie.Lund@tn.gov). Please reach out to the Deputy Director of Authorizing 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 the Deputy Director of Authorizing to ensure effective communication. The Commission staff is looking forward to observing and learning more about all the great things you and your team are doing soon.