



Charter School Site Visit Protocol

Tennessee Public Charter School Commission
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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. 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.

The Commission conducts one annual site visit for its schools to augment data that cannot otherwise be obtained through the Charter School Performance Framework, Commission Policy 3.700, and other monitoring procedures. An additional site visit may take place with the Commission's School Program and Supports team for additional monitoring as needed. 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.

II. Preparing for the Visit

Scheduling Visit Dates

Starting in July, the Commission will work with schools to schedule the site visit. 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 needs a full-day site visit include:

- A school within its interim year of operation, and thus the Commission is completing an interim review;

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](#).

- A school is within its renewal term, and thus the Commission is completing a renewal site visit;
- A school is on a plan of correction or is not meeting a substantial number of standards on the Commission's School Performance Framework; or
- Other rationale as determined by Commission staff and communicated with the school.

The Commission will alert the school as to whether it will receive a full- or half-day site visit for the following year during its July 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 trainings for both fall and spring semester site visits as an opportunity for operators to ask questions and learn more about the site visit process.

Operators who are new to the Commission's portfolio should plan to attend these trainings.

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.

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 Team³
 - 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 at 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 The Commission requests the discussion be with the principal and any other school leader who can speak to the data presented.

3. Interviews with⁴:

a. If half-day:

- i. Governing board member or board chair (may be completed over the phone within a week of the site visit)
- ii. School Principal
- iii. Director of Operations
- iv. Two teachers
 1. One new teacher to the network or school
 2. One returning teacher to the network or school⁵
- v. One student
- vi. One parent
- vii. Other staff:
 1. SPED teacher(s) and/or coordinator
 2. EL teacher(s) and/or coordinator
 3. Staff responsible for overseeing school and federal level compliance

b. If a full-day visit:

- i. Governing board member or board chair (may be completed over the phone within a week of the site visit)
- ii. School Principal
- iii. Leadership team members including assistant principals, deans, etc.
- iv. Director of Operations
- v. (If applicable) Director of Finance or Chief Financial Officer ("CFO")
- vi. (If applicable) Dean of Culture
- vii. Two teachers
 1. One new teacher to the network or school
 2. One returning teacher to the network or school
 3. Should reflect different content areas and grade levels.
- viii. Two students
 1. Should reflect different grade levels.
- ix. Two parents
- x. Other staff:

⁴ 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.

⁵ Does not apply to schools in the first year of operation.

1. SPED teacher(s) and/or coordinator
2. EL teacher(s) and/or coordinator
3. Staff responsible for overseeing school and federal level compliance

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. School Safety Walkthrough

- a. Commission staff will conduct a school safety walkthrough of the building in alignment with the provided school safety walkthrough checklist.

6. Document Review (as applicable)

- a. Commission staff may review a random sample of the following documentation:⁶
 - i. IEPs and service log⁷
 - ii. Section 504 plans⁸

⁶ All Commission LEA procedures and LEA policies, including all referenced in this document, are found on the [Commission's website](#).

⁷ LEA Procedure 1018 – Special Education Monitoring Procedures

⁸ LEA Procedure 1028 – 504 Plan Monitoring Procedure

- iii. EL student records and ILPs⁹
- iv. ILP-Ds¹⁰
- v. Student cumulative records¹¹
- vi. Employee personnel files ¹²
- vii. School Discipline Policy¹³

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 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		

⁹ LEA Procedure 1019 – Special Populations On-Site Monitoring Procedures, 1010 – English Learner Individual Learning Plan Procedures

¹⁰ LEA Procedure 1010 – English Learner Individual Learning Plan Procedures

¹¹ LEA Policy 6600 – Student Records and Confidentiality

¹² LEA Policy 5114 – Personnel Records

¹³ LEA Policy 6313 – Student Discipline

IV. Evaluation Criteria

During the site visit, the Commission will gather evidence about the school, as aligned with the Commission's School Performance Framework¹⁴, 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 school leadership 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 materials 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?

¹⁴ Commission Policy 3.700

- 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?
 - 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.