



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. 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 3.300 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 LEA student support 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

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 first year of operation and/or is a new operator to the Commission's portfolio;
- A school within its interim year (fifth year) of operation, and thus the Commission is completing an interim review;
- 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.

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.

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](#).

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. English learner ("EL") and special education ("SPED") teacher service schedules (weekly snapshot)
 - iv. Completed team interview schedule (from provided template) including student names, staff names, and classroom numbers.
 2. Commission staff will provide an agenda and topics of conversation ahead of the site visit for the data meeting during the site visit. Schools no longer need to submit a data presentation ahead of time.

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. Leadership team will walk Commission staff through an update on school performance using internal assessment data. Commission staff recommends having a PowerPoint or handout to review during this discussion, and materials will be provided to Commission staff at that time. The school team should also discuss school culture updates, chronic absenteeism, and other items as needed.
 - b. The Commission's site visit team will share an agenda and questions for this discussion ahead of the site visit.
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

³ The Commission requests the discussion be with the principal and any other school leader who can speak to the data presented.

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.

- iv. Two teachers
 - 1. One new teacher to the network or school
 - 2. One returning teacher to the network or school
- 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 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. Director of Finance or Chief Financial Officer (“CFO”)
- vi. Two teachers
 - 1. One new teacher to the network or school
 - 2. One returning teacher to the network or school⁵
 - 3. Should reflect different content areas and grade levels.
- vii. Two students
 - 1. Should reflect different grade levels.
- viii. Two parents

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 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.
- 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.
- e. 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.
- f. 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 Does not apply to schools in the first year of operation.

5. Document Review

- a. Commission staff will review a random sample of the following documentation:⁶
 - i. IEPs and service log⁷
 - ii. Section 504 plans⁸
 - iii. EL student records and ILPs⁹
 - iv. ILP-Ds¹⁰
 - v. Student cumulative records¹¹
 - vi. Employee personnel files¹²
 - 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		

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

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

¹⁰ Guidance will be shared later spring 2024.

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. 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 the governing board within thirty days of the site visit and will encompass the three key performance areas outlined below.

Academic Performance: Is the educational program a success?

1. **Mission:** The school is faithful to its mission, implements the material terms of the education program outlined in its charter.
 - a. Do all school stakeholders share a common and consistent understanding of the school's mission as outlined in the charter?
 - b. Has the school fully implemented its mission in the approved charter?
 - c. Is the school implementing the materials terms of its education program?
 - d. Is the school on track to meet its mission-specific goal?
2. **Student Performance:** The school consistently meets state student performance standards for academic growth, proficiency, and college and career readiness.
 - a. Is the school trending to meet standard as measured by the Commission's School Performance Framework?
 - b. How does the school track and respond to internal assessment data?
 - c. 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?
3. **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.
 - a. Are the curricula, instruction, and assessments effective in increasing learning for all students?
 - b. Are teacher expectations, lesson structures, etc. consistent across grade levels and classes?
 - c. Are students engaged in the lessons observed and are all students supported in their learning?
 - d. Is the school evaluating the program for effectiveness and adjusting as necessary?
 - e. Does the school have a sound and effective RTI² program?
4. **Access and Equity:** The school ensures program access and equity for all students eligible to attend the school.

¹⁴ Commission Policy 3.700

- a. 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?
 - b. 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?
 - c. Does the school protect the rights of students with disabilities and English Learners?
5. **Culture and Family Engagement:** The school supports students' social and emotional health in a safe and respectful learning environment that engages families.
- a. Are classroom environments consistent across the school?
 - b. Is the school actively engaging families through effective means of communication?
 - c. Is the school actively monitoring and responding to chronic absenteeism with students and families?
 - d. Does the school effectively provide student academic information to families?
 - e. Do families report satisfaction with the school?
 - f. Are the student discipline protocols effective?
 - g. Are students' social, emotional, and health needs being met?
 - h. Is the school complying with facilities and transportation requirements?
 - i. Is the school complying with health and safety requirements, including building safety requirements?
 - i. Commission staff will check for compliance during the site visit for health and safety requirements including locked doors, posted evacuation routes, etc.

Financial Performance

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

Organizational Performance: Is the organization effective and well run?

2. **Governance:** Members of the governing board provide competent and appropriate governance to ensure the success and sustainability of the school.
- a. Are board members active and engaged in fulfilling their legal responsibilities and obligations to the school?
 - b. 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?
 - c. 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?
3. **Capacity:** The school sustains a well-functioning organizational structure and creates a professional working climate for all staff.
- a. Is the school leadership being held accountable?



- b. Is there a productive professional climate within the school?
 - c. [If applicable] Is there a productive and effective relationship between the network/CMO and school leadership?
 - d. Is the school working to attract and retain highly effective teachers, leaders, and staff?
- 4. Compliance:** The school compiles a record of compliance with the terms of its charter and applicable state and federal laws and regulations.
- a. 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). On all communication regarding site visits, please include the Commission's Authorizing Coordinator, Trent Carlson (Trent.Carlson@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.