



Hosting Your Elected Officials

A TOOLKIT FOR PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

Why You Should Host Elected Officials on Your Campus

(AND HOW THE TEXAS PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION CAN SUPPORT)

Building long-term, durable relationships with your elected officials is essential for your school and for the entire Texas public charter school community.

Elected officials play a critical role in decisions that affect public charter schools—from funding and operations to regulatory oversight. They also have the power to push back against anti-charter proposals that could limit growth, restrict innovation, or add unnecessary red tape.

Inviting a lawmaker to your campus can make a lasting impression. A firsthand visit helps them understand your school’s mission, impact, and needs. In fact, TPCSA has seen lawmakers who were previously considered anti-charter become strong supporters and advocates after experiencing the positive outcomes happening on public charter school campuses.

Hosting an elected official can take as little as an hour, and the planning process need not feel overwhelming. This toolkit walks you through every step. While the guidance focuses on inviting state representatives, state senators, and members of the State Board of Education, the same best practices apply when hosting members of Congress, the Governor, mayors, city council members, or other Texas leaders.

As you begin outreach and plan your visit, remember that TPCSA is here to support you every step of the way. Contact your Director of Regional Advocacy or Director of State Board of Education Engagement to get started. You can also reach out at any time to advocacy@txcharterschools.org or (512) 584-8272 to connect with an advocacy team member who specializes in your region.

Thank you for taking the initiative to welcome elected officials to your campus. Together, we can continue strengthening support for Texas public charter schools and the students we serve.



Natalie Kaharick

Chief Executive Officer

Texas Public Charter Schools Association

School Visit Checklist

Key elements for a successful school visit with an elected official.



STEP 1: Invite & Schedule

- ☐ Meet with your Director of Regional Advocacy
- ☐ Send the invitation
- ☐ Schedule the visit



STEP 2: Plan the Visit

- ☐ Finalize the agenda
- ☐ Select and prepare school voices
- ☐ Gather materials
- ☐ Plan for the media (if applicable)



STEP 3: Host the Elected Official

- ☐ Three weeks prior - Check-in meeting with Director of Regional Advocacy
- ☐ Two weeks prior - Host internal run of show meeting
- ☐ One week prior - School and elected official reminders
- ☐ Day-of visit - Welcome the official and staff & conduct the visit



STEP 4: Debrief

- ☐ On-site or schedule post-visit debrief
- ☐ Cultivate a 1:1 relationship

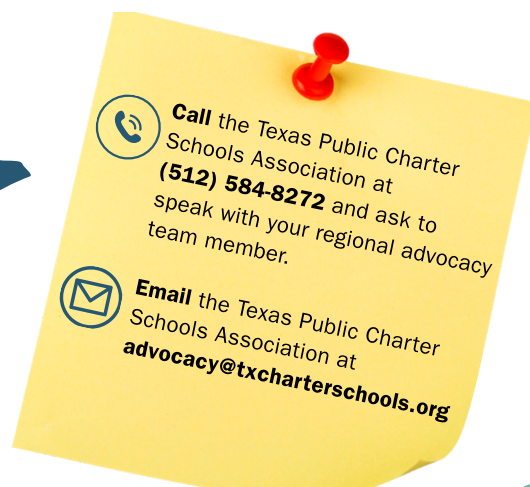


STEP 5: Follow Up

- ☐ Say "Thank You" to the elected official and staff
- ☐ Share the visit on social media (if photo permission is granted)
- ☐ Send out press release (if applicable)

KEEP US POSTED!

If you have confirmed a school visit with an elected official, please let us know!





STEP 1: Invite & Schedule

MEET WITH YOUR DIRECTOR OF REGIONAL ADVOCACY

Connect with your Director of Regional Advocacy before contacting an elected official. They'll help you plan the visit. Email TPCSA at advocacy@txcharterschools.org to be connected with the director for your region.

Come prepared to:

- Look over the official's background
- Clarify the purpose of the visit
- Share your preferred dates and possible time windows
- Talk through what you'd like to highlight at your school
- Note any details that will help the official's office schedule the visit



Once you have a date and a simple outline in place, you're ready to send the invitation.

SEND THE INVITATION

To invite State House Representatives, State Senators, or State Board of Education (SBOE) Members, please contact your Director of Regional Advocacy or email the TPCSA Advocacy team at advocacy@txcharterschools.org to request the elected official or their staff members' contact information and the appropriate invitation email template. When emailing the invitation, CC your respective Director of Regional Advocacy, so they can support throughout the process.

Plan to send your invitation at least two weeks in advance, and ideally four to six weeks before the visit, as scheduling with legislative offices may take some time.

If you do not receive a response within one week, first notify your Director of Regional Advocacy. Then send a follow-up email or call the elected officials' district office to confirm receipt of the invitation and address any questions.



PRO TIP: For state lawmakers, it's best to schedule a school visit for a time outside of the biennial legislative session (January-June of odd years). The legislative session is an extremely busy time and their schedules aren't as flexible.

SCHEDULE THE VISIT

Coordinating schedules can be the most challenging step. Once the office responds to your invitation, confirm the date and time, or adjust as needed to align with the elected official's schedule.

Remember to schedule the visit at a time that highlights your school's strengths, such as a standout classroom, unique program, or special campus event. Include opportunities for students, parents, staff, and board members to meet with the elected official.

After the visit is confirmed:

- Send a calendar invite to the official's office and your TPCSA point of contact(s)
- Ask if additional staff will attend
- Request the best day-of contact information
- Confirm whether media are welcome to attend - if applicable



If the office declines:

Don't be discouraged! Elected officials are busy, and sometimes scheduling conflicts come up. If any office declines due to scheduling, ask them to provide a few dates that work for them.

If a visit can't be scheduled, thank the office and offer to follow up. In the future, you can reach out to the staff member directly to invite the official to graduations, community events, and other school celebrations.



STEP 2: Plan the Visit

FINALIZE THE AGENDA

Review the elected official's background and interests to help decide what to highlight during the visit:

- [Lawmaker's district profile](#)
- [Texas House of Representatives](#)
- [Texas Senate](#)
- [Texas State Board of Education](#)

Next, finalize your goals for the visit. Whether it's their first visit or their tenth, aim to leave them inspired by the impact your school has made.

Consider these core questions:

1. What 2–3 emotions do you want them to feel at the end of the visit? (e.g., excited, hopeful, energized, grateful, enthusiastic)
2. How would you like them to describe your school? (e.g., a welcoming community, student-focused, family-centered)
3. If they remember only one thing, what should it be? (e.g., preparing all students for their best future)

Popular activities to include (choose 1–2 if time allows):

- Campus tour
- Classroom visit, student activity observation, or student Q&A
- Special campus events
- Groundbreaking for a new campus
- Roundtable discussion with key individuals and the official



PRO TIP: If the elected official will participate in a roundtable or student Q&A, review and approve the questions in advance. Share them with the official's office at least one week before sending the agenda.

SELECT AND PREPARE SCHOOL VOICES

Choose a variety of school community members to help the official understand your school's impact.

Consider including:

- Staff with a 1:1 relationship with the official
- Top-performing teachers and staff
- School leaders or principals
- Engaged parents with compelling stories
- Poised and articulate students
 - (academic improvement, school representation, extracurricular achievements, etc.)
- Board members
- Alumni

No matter whom you choose, ensure that everyone is fully prepared to meet the elected official.

To best prepare your spokespersons:

- Provide each person with the agenda, talking points, and planned activities
- Ensure all media releases and photography waivers are signed (contact your TPCSA Director of Regional Advocacy if you need forms)



PRO TIP: In order to avoid the likelihood that some parents may wish to speak with officials on unrelated issues, we recommend against a blanket notification to all parents concerning the visit.

GATHER MATERIALS

Be prepared to share information with the elected official, their staff, and any others present.



Consider providing:

- One-page school fact sheet – include mission, year founded, student enrollment, number of campuses, program highlights, honors, and academic results
- Biographies – one-page document with brief bios of anyone the official will meet (teachers, board members, staff, students, etc.)
- Charter Schools 101 one-pager and other relevant TPCSA materials – contact your Director of Regional Advocacy for support

To make the visit memorable, consider giving the official and their staff a small commemorative item:

- Student-made thank you card
- Student artwork
- School-specific item (shirt, cup, tote bag, etc., items under \$20)



PRO TIP: If you want to discuss specific policies with an elected official, please contact TPCSA for support. We can provide background information, resources, and talking points to help you prepare for a productive conversation.

PLAN FOR THE MEDIA (IF APPLICABLE)

When hosting an elected official at your school, it is ultimately their decision whether the press should be involved. Before suggesting or requesting media coverage, first determine whether it is appropriate for the visit. TPCSA can help evaluate and assist in developing a media plan. Email communications@txcharterschools.org for support.



If media coverage is appropriate, confirm the following with the official's office in advance:

- Are you comfortable with reporters attending the visit?
- Will you bring a photographer?
- Can we share photos on social media or with the press?
- Are you willing to provide a quote for a press release or speak with reporters?
- Do you plan to release your own press release or advisory?

If the official approves media outreach, here are some materials you may need to produce. Use your school's letterhead and obtain approval from the official's office prior to distribution.

- **Media Advisory** – Brief notice to the media with details of the upcoming event (date, time, location, purpose, participants, and on-site contact). Plan to send this 2–3 days before the event.
- **Press Release** – Written announcement that is sent to the media and contains a point of contact for inquiries and quotes from the event. Typically sent on the day of the visit.

For specific reporters you want to attend, reach out individually several days in advance to confirm their participation.



PRO TIP: If the media will attend, clarify that the visit's purpose is for the elected official to learn about the public charter school. Request that reporters submit questions in advance so you can review them and share with the official's office before the visit.



STEP 3: Host the Elected Official

THREE WEEKS PRIOR - CHECK-IN MEETING WITH DIRECTOR OF REGIONAL ADVOCACY

- ☐ Schedule a check-in meeting with your Director of Regional Advocacy.
- ☐ Review the visit agenda, key talking points, and operation plan, including the school map and parking.
- ☐ Update the calendar invite for the official and TPCSA staff with the final agenda, day-of point of contact, parking details, school map, and photo ID reminder.

TWO WEEKS PRIOR - HOST INTERNAL RUN OF SHOW MEETING

- ☐ Host a run of show meeting (Zoom or in-person) with all school participants to review responsibilities.
- ☐ Identify what makes the school unique and incorporate specific locations and talking points into the agenda.
- ☐ Focus on 1–3 highlights (e.g., STEM class, dropout recovery program, language or agriculture class) to ensure the visit showcases your school, not just a tour).
- ☐ Review the day-of agenda, including logistics and timeline.
- ☐ Provide participants with key resources, including [TPCSA research and one-pagers](#).

ONE WEEK PRIOR - SCHOOL & ELECTED OFFICIAL REMINDERS

For the school:

- ☐ Conduct a final run-through with participants, including a walkthrough if needed.
- ☐ Review day-of contact information (security, school point of contact).
- ☐ Have students create a welcome sign.
- ☐ Confirm refreshments (water, coffee).
- ☐ Print all one-pagers and school materials.
- ☐ Confirm the takeaway item for the official (student card, artwork, school item).



For the elected official:

- ☐ Email their point of contact to reconfirm attendance, share the agenda, and remind them to bring photo ID.
- ☐ If a roundtable or student Q&A is planned, vet questions in advance and share them with the official's office.
- ☐ Ask about dietary restrictions if providing food.

DAY-OF VISIT - WELCOME THE OFFICIAL & CONDUCT THE VISIT

- ☐ Send a day-of reminder email to the official's point of contact with the school's point-of-contact phone number, agenda, parking logistics and map, photo ID reminder, and any final details.
- ☐ Meet with your TPCSA Director of Regional Advocacy on campus 30–45 minutes before the visit.
- ☐ Ensure security guards are aware of the visit.
- ☐ Reserve a parking space for the official.
- ☐ Have handouts and one-pagers ready.
- ☐ Greet the official at the front of the school (school point-of-contact, student, or leader).
- ☐ Offer water or coffee.
- ☐ Ask permission to take photos.
- ☐ Highlight the school's mission, vision, values, and unique programs.
- ☐ At the end of the visit, thank the official and present the takeaway item as a reminder of their visit.



PRO TIP: Be flexible and have fun! Follow your plan, but be prepared to adjust — your elected official may want to deviate from the agenda just a bit or ask questions along the way.



STEP 4: Debrief

ON-SITE OR SCHEDULE POST-VISIT DEBRIEF

Plan to debrief with TPCSA staff and participating school community members after the visit.

If TPCSA staff are on-site with you:

Hold a debrief conversation immediately after the visit with TPCSA and school participants to discuss:

- What went well
- What could have gone better
- Insights gathered during the visit
- Most interesting or impactful moments for the official
- Current or potential 1:1 relationship holder
- Next steps and upcoming school events



If TPCSA staff are not on-site for the visit:

For the school: Hold a debrief conversation immediately after the visit with school leadership, spokespersons, and others who participated in the visit or planning process to:

- Review what went well and what could have gone better
- Align on next steps to engage with the elected official
- Identify current or potential 1:1 relationship holders
- Discuss any follow-up actions or questions

For TPCSA: Schedule a Zoom call within 48 hours of the visit with your Director of Regional Advocacy and Director of SBOE Engagement (if applicable) to debrief the visit. Come prepared to share:

- Highlights from the visit
- Any challenges experienced
- Interesting anecdotes, key quotes, or questions the elected official had that require an answer
- Discuss next steps for current or potential 1:1 relationship holder
- Share photos from the visit that have permission to be posted on social media

CULTIVATE A 1:1 RELATIONSHIP

Continue building a durable, two-way relationship with the lawmaker and your school. Designate one person as the primary contact—ideally someone who can maintain a personal, direct connection, even via text.

Review the steps below to deepen the relationship:

- Stay in regular contact: Periodically send personal notes highlighting positive school stories and achievements.
- Include them in communications: Add the lawmaker to your school's mailing lists for newsletters/updates.
- Personal touches: Celebrate milestones like birthdays with a card or small gesture, or arrange a one-on-one coffee chat with the district director.
- Use staff contacts: Leverage the email address of the staff member who attended the visit to share announcements, press releases, and major accomplishments.

Consistently engaging with the lawmaker helps them stay informed about your school's successes and the challenges your school and community face, while building a durable, personalized relationship.



STEP 5: Follow Up

SAY “THANK YOU” TO THE ELECTED OFFICIAL & STAFF

- 1. Mail a Thank You Letter to the Elected Official:** Send a handwritten thank-you note to the elected official, ideally from someone they met during the visit. Alternatively, mail a hard-copy letter to their office expressing appreciation, recapping key highlights, and sharing upcoming events. Contact your Regional Director of Advocacy for a thank-you email template.
- 2. Email the Elected Official (Within 24 hours):** Send a thank-you email using the template from your Director of Regional Advocacy and include:
 - Appreciation for their visit and a recap of key highlights
 - Answers to any follow-up questions from the visit
 - Information about upcoming events or next engagement opportunities
 - Photos from the visit (with permission)
- 3. Email the Elected Official’s Staff Member (Within 24 hours):** Send a thank-you email using the template from your Director of Regional Advocacy and include:
 - Thank them for their time and support
 - Include photos and key highlights from the visit
 - Provide a TPCSA sample social media post for elected officials - contact your Regional Director of Advocacy for templates
 - Address any follow-up questions
 - Share upcoming events or engagement opportunities
 - Invite them to reach out with additional questions



PRO TIP: If the elected official already has a 1:1 relationship holder or you’ve identified someone to serve in that role, coordinate with them to send a personalized thank-you note or email after the visit. A timely, thoughtful follow-up helps strengthen the connection and ongoing, two-way relationship.

SHARE THE VISIT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

If the elected official provided permission to post photos:

1. Select and customize a social media template - contact your Regional Director of Advocacy for templates
2. Tag the official using their handles and @TPCSAnews
3. Use hashtags: #txed #txcharterswork #txlege
4. Send approved photos to your TPCSA Director of Regional Advocacy; TPCSA may reshare

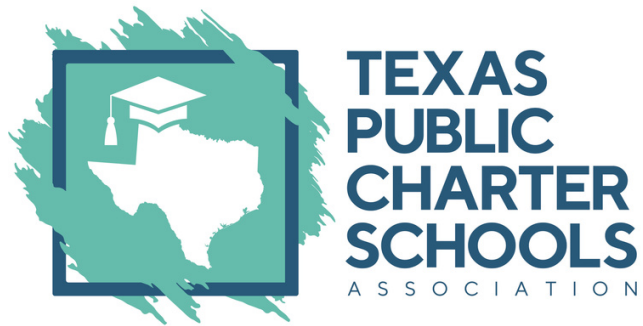


SEND OUT PRESS RELEASE (IF APPLICABLE)

Consider sending a press release to announce the visit and highlight key moments:

- Include photos, quotes from the official, and/or school leader
- Maintain momentum with media contacts
- Prepare in advance and send shortly after the visit
- Monitor media coverage

Email communications@txcharterschools.org for a press release template.



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