Great Schools for Connecticut Charter Schools Program
Final Site Visit Report

School	Edmonds Cofield Preparatory Academy for Young Men (ECPA)
Site Visit Date	April 20, 2026
Monitoring Team	Katie Maron (GSCT Project Director) & Michael Good (Consultant)

Purpose and Goals

The Connecticut Charter Schools Association (CTCSA) was awarded funds through the United States Department of Education's Charter Schools Program - State Entities (CSP-SE) program in 2022 to administer the Great Schools for Connecticut (GSCT) grant project. In accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations (2 CFR § 200.332(d)), CTCSA engages in robust and comprehensive monitoring activities designed to ensure that all subgrantees are (1) implementing with fidelity the activities described in their applications, (2) meeting their project goals, and (3) adhering to federal rules and regulations.

To complement desk reviews of pertinent documentation compiled and submitted by subgrantees, CTCSA conducts periodic site visits to assess compliance with key programmatic, financial, and governance indicators. The purpose of the site visit is threefold: (1) to complement the desk review in allowing monitors to assess how grant-supported programs are being implemented and grant funds are being expended; (2) to identify areas of need in which technical assistance would be beneficial; and (3) to assist subgrantees as they transition toward planning for post-grant sustainability. Site visits consist of a physical inventory of non-consumable items purchased with CSP funds; observations of classroom instruction, school-wide systems, and health and safety protocols; and interviews with key stakeholders.

GSCT's site visit protocol is informed by the Department of Education's *Monitoring Handbook for State Entity Grantees*. In general, GSCT structures its site visits to assess compliance within three of the compliance indicators developed by the Department:

- Indicator 1.2: Definition of Charter School
- Indicator 2.3: Supporting Charter School Access and Model Diversity
- Indicator 3.2: Fiscal Control and Fund Accounting Procedures

Monitors also assess the degree to which subgrantees are implementing the key design elements outlined in their approved grant applications.

This Site Visit Report summarizes GSCT's findings and recommendations and identifies any outstanding items that a subgrantee must address in order to remain in good standing. Noncompliance with any follow-up measures required by the GSCT team results in a subgrantee being identified as higher risk and, consequently, being subjected to heightened monitoring and, potentially, having subgrant awards reduced, suspended, or terminated. This report must be shared with a subgrantee's Board of Trustees and made publicly available on a school's website.

Summary of Findings

Indicator 1.2: Definition of Charter School

Overall Compliance Status: Partially Compliant

The monitoring team looked for evidence of adherence to the federal definition of "charter school." Key areas of adherence include the school's implementation of federal and state health and safety regulations, compliance with civil rights and privacy statutes, use of a tuition-free lottery-based enrollment process, and adherence to audit and financial reporting requirements.

Adherence to federal and state regulations for safety and health

Compliance Status: Compliant

With respect to the requirement that the school adhere to federal and state regulations for health and safety, the monitoring team confirmed that classroom egress routes, fire extinguishers, fire alarms, and exit routes are clearly posted throughout the facility, alongside a valid certificate of occupancy and a comprehensive emergency drill log. The team verified the existence of a safety plan specific to ECPA and, following a consultation with the school nurse, confirmed that student medications are stored securely. The facility maintains an orderly classroom environment, dedicated social worker space, and access to functional water fountains and bathroom water sources. Sufficient recreational areas are also provided for students, including an indoor gym and a fenced-in outdoor field.

Adherence to civil rights and privacy statutes; Access to related services

Compliance Status: Compliant

With respect to the requirement that the school comply with federal civil rights and privacy statutes, the monitoring team confirmed that student records are maintained in locked storage within the main office and verified ADA accessibility via a functional lift and elevator. To support students with disabilities, the school employs a part-time dedicated special education teacher to provide both push-in and pull-out services. Furthermore, the New Haven School District provides additional resources, including an additional social worker and a teacher who visits weekly to support enrolled students from that district.

Tuition-free, lottery-based enrollment
Compliance Status: Compliant

With respect to the requirement that the school utilize a random lottery to admit students if oversubscribed, the monitoring team confirmed that the school participates in the New Haven school choice lottery program and utilizes recruitment materials that clearly identify the institution as an "open," "free," and "public" school. These materials are consistently translated into Spanish, and the school demonstrates extensive outreach efforts through direct mailers, bus and radio advertisements, open houses, and partnerships with grassroots organizations. Despite these efforts and a stated goal to enroll 150 students next year (including approximately 110 new students), current participation in the New Haven Lottery has resulted in only 10 to 15 new applications. The monitoring team notes a significant risk related to the school's ability to meet enrollment targets, which may impact financial sustainability and reauthorization.

Adherence to federal and state regulations for audits and financial reporting.
Compliance Status: Non-Compliant
ECPA has furnished a board-approved financial policies and procedures manual that articulates its responsibilities to adhere to all federal, state, and local regulations for audits and financial reporting. It lays out clear responsibilities among its financial management team to ensure internal controls are enforced and keep relevant stakeholders apprised of the financial health and sustainability of the school. The manual has been posted to a public documents folder on the school's website alongside other board policies.

The school produced their first finalized audit for FY24 in May 2026. The audit as presented was delivered with an unmodified opinion and no findings were included in the management letter. The school board reviewed the audit report as evidenced in their May board meeting minutes, which is a required component of their fiscal oversight.

Finding: The school was unable to produce and complete a board review of their FY25 audit as part of their monitoring. While the school has made significant progress in producing audited financial statements for FY24, this element of Indicator 1.2 remains non-compliant and the GSCT monitoring team will be unable to close out the grant until the FY25 audit is produced and reviewed. The lack of a timely audit raises concern about the level of financial oversight that the board can have into the financial position of the school and also makes it hard to assess whether there are any significant deficiencies or material weaknesses that emerged during the school's final planning year.

Next Steps to Remediate Finding: As the school completes FY25 and eventually the FY26 audits, they should ensure the following:

- The Board reviews the draft of the FY25 audit and that any discussion of the financial statements and any findings reached in the audit are documented as part of board minutes.
- Both the finalized audit reports for FY24 and FY25 and the minutes of the board review of the FY25 audit should be published on the school's website.
- The school should work with their auditors to submit final audit reports to the Connecticut State Department of Education in compliance with annual reporting requirements.

Indicator 2.3: Supporting Charter School Access and Model Diversity

Overall Compliance Status: Compliant

Classroom and school space observation
Compliance Status: Compliant

Monitors observed that classrooms were clean and consistently orderly. Furniture, fixtures, and equipment—including desks, chairs, tables, and Smart Boards—were found to be in good working order and effectively deployed throughout the instructional spaces. The monitoring team noted that both CSP-funded and existing school assets were well-maintained and integrated into the daily learning environment.

The physical spaces are designed with an emphasis on positive messaging, featuring banners and university paraphernalia that reinforce the school's overarching academic focus.

Serving students with special needs (Special Education, Multi-lingual Learners, High Needs Students)
Compliance Status: Compliant

Monitors observed dedicated instructional spaces designed for special education services and a designated area for social work, both of which were well-organized and conducive to student support. In conversations with school leadership, it was noted that the school currently serves nine students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). The Principal articulated a clear process for referring students for special education evaluations. These programs are overseen by an external partner who provides ongoing coaching to teachers to ensure the effective implementation of the instructional model. Currently, services are delivered through a combination of a part-time special education teacher and a district-provided teacher who visits weekly.

Regarding English Learners, or Multilingual Learners (MLLs), leadership mentioned that identification typically occurs during the enrollment process. Through recent survey data, the school has identified three students classified as MLLs. Additionally, the school defines and documents a process for identifying Multilingual Learners (MLLs) as well as delivering required services via their *Student Services Manual.*

District collaboration around transportation

Compliance Status: Compliant

During the January and April visits, GSCT monitors were able to observe the dismissal process and speak with school leadership regarding transportation procedures at the school, respectively. The school reports that about 25 of their 38 students receive transportation through the New Haven Public Schools (NHPS). Two other students receive transportation through DCFS and McKinney-Vento. Given the school's size, grouped student transportation is offered through the use of smaller vans, rather than large yellow school buses. Transportation is assigned through the NHPS when parents register their students. School leaders reported that generally there have been no significant hiccups in students receiving a transportation route when registering with the district and that it typically takes no more than a few days for students to be assigned to a stop.

The district uses a contracted service provider for the van. The van service is a division within the larger contractor's bussing fleet. The school has reported that there can be service challenges with the contractor with occasional delays in reaching the school, skipped stops, and difficulty reaching dispatchers when they have questions. On the day of the site monitoring visit, the school reported that several vans were late for drop-off in the morning after returning from Spring Break. Despite these challenges, the school instituted a policy of documenting service failures and bringing these to the attention of the district. Since making concerted efforts to report these service failures, the district has been responsive and service has improved, showing positive collaboration between the school and NHPS.

Indicator 3.2: Fiscal Control and Fund Accounting Procedures

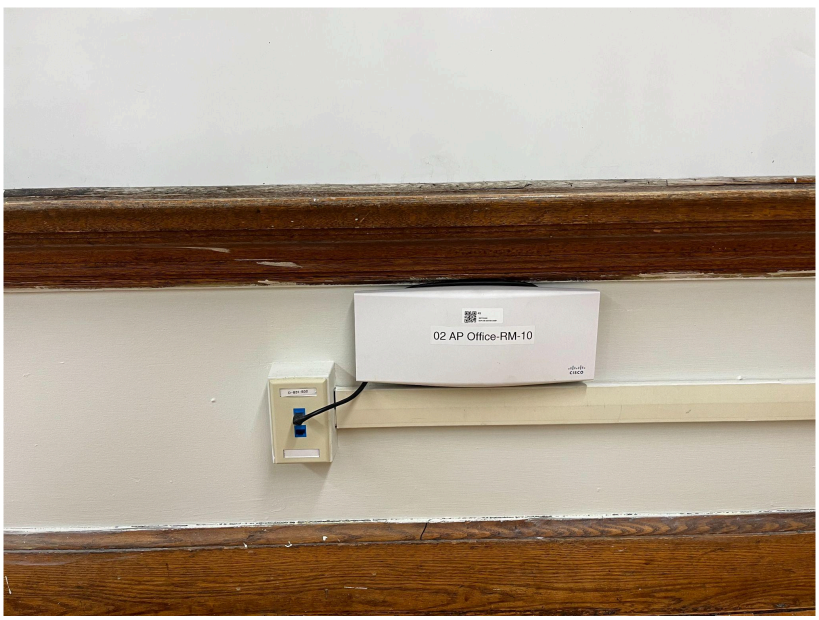
Overall Compliance Status: Partially Compliant

Inventory and asset monitoring

Compliance Status: Compliant

GSCT monitors conducted a physical inventory of items purchased with CSP funds. ECPA staff presented a full inventory of tagged items, which provided necessary details on the assets including asset tagging number, description of item purchased and identifying information like serial number, purchase price, and location. The full inventory is electronically saved and accessible only to authorized personnel.

A physical inspection of selected assets confirmed that they met asset tagging requirements, including proper tagging numbers, identification of CSP funding, and the applicable operating year's grade levels. During the physical inspection, the selected items seemed to all be in good, working condition and well-maintained and secured when in classrooms. The school quickly remedied any issues regarding the storage or placement of assets in precarious positions. One item, a Meraki wireless access point (asset tag item 45), was placed on the ledge of a whiteboard in the main office, but following the visit made efforts to securely attach the wireless access point to the wall to prevent breakage (see photo below).



Financial controls and management
Compliance Status: Compliant

ECPA has established a set of foundational financial management practices that demonstrate an overall commitment to maintaining internal controls, documentation, and fiscal oversight. The school utilizes a primarily digital financial management system in which all financial records, supporting documentation, and transactional back-up are securely stored and shared via a password-protected Dropbox filing system. This system facilitates coordination between school leadership and its back-office accounting provider and ensures that financial documentation is accessible for review when needed.

Accounts payable processes are managed through Bill.com, where invoices are received (via email or hard copy), uploaded, coded, and routed through an established approval workflow. The approval structure includes multiple levels of oversight: routine expenditures are reviewed internally, while disbursements exceeding $5,000 require additional approval from the Board Treasurer. This layered approval process reflects an effort to maintain segregation of duties and appropriate authorization controls. All transactions are digitally recorded, and documentation can be cross-referenced between Bill.com and QuickBooks, allowing for traceability and audit readiness.

The school also demonstrates consistent practices related to recordkeeping and reconciliation. Financial transactions are supported by digital documentation, and monthly bank reconciliations are being completed. Leadership reports that discrepancies are reviewed and resolved with appropriate supporting documentation. Credit card usage is limited, reducing exposure to risk in that area.

Budget development and financial planning are active areas of focus. School leadership, in collaboration with its back-office provider, is currently preparing the upcoming fiscal year budget using multiple enrollment scenarios to account for uncertainty. The school has also engaged in mid-year financial adjustments in response to enrollment-driven revenue impacts, including re-forecasting and expenditure reductions. Leadership is closely involved in these processes, with the Principal maintaining regular engagement in financial decision-making.

Governance structures supporting financial oversight are in place but continue to evolve. The Board of Trustees approves major financial decisions, including the annual budget, and receives regular informal updates on the school's financial position from contracted providers. The Board Treasurer is actively involved in financial approvals and communications. Additionally, the school has worked toward establishing a more formal Finance Committee and enhancing the cadence of financial reporting, with a stated goal of implementing regular reporting packages and more structured financial review processes toward the end of FY26, with continuation and refinement in FY27. Board minutes from the April meeting indicate a more formal process of reporting from CSBM and the school's leadership on the financial health and position of the school. Board agendas from the May meeting indicate a review and teeing up of a vote for approval of the FY27 budget. The school has created a public documents section on their website to which the school's financial policies and procedures manual has been posted.

Despite these strengths, several components of a fully developed financial oversight system are still in progress. While financial data is being maintained and reconciled regularly, formalized financial reporting to the Board—such as routine presentation of financial statements in accordance with the school's financial policies and procedures manual and documented review in meeting minutes—has been limited. The school and its back-office provider have indicated that they are in the process of developing a standardized reporting package to improve transparency and governance oversight. Additionally, while roles related to CSP purchasing and external partners (e.g., Elevate) are functioning operationally, clearer delineation of responsibilities would further strengthen internal controls.

Adherence to federal and state regulations for audits and financial reporting

Compliance Status: Non-Compliant

ECPA has furnished a board-approved financial policies and procedures manual that articulates its responsibilities to adhere to all federal, state, and local regulations for audits and financial reporting. It lays out clear responsibilities among its financial management team to ensure internal controls are enforced and keep relevant stakeholders apprised of the financial health and sustainability of the school. The manual has been posted to a public documents folder on the school's website alongside other board policies.

The school produced their first finalized audit for FY24 in May 2026. The audit as presented was delivered with an unmodified opinion and no findings were included in the management letter. The school board reviewed the audit report as evidenced in their May board meeting minutes, which is a required component of their fiscal oversight.

The school produced their first finalized audit for FY24 in May 2026. The audit as presented was delivered with an unmodified opinion and no findings were included in the management letter. The school board reviewed the audit report as evidenced in their May board meeting minutes, which is a required component of their fiscal oversight.

Finding: The school was unable to produce and complete a board review of their FY25 audit as part of their monitoring. While the school has made significant progress in producing audited financial statements for FY24, this element of Indicator 1.2 remains non-compliant and the GSCT monitoring team will be unable to close out the grant until the FY25 audit is produced and reviewed. The lack of a timely audit raises concern about the level of financial oversight that the board can have into the financial position of the school and also makes it hard to assess whether there are any significant deficiencies or material weaknesses that emerged during the school's final planning year.

Next Steps to Remediate Finding: As the school completes FY25 and eventually the FY26 audits, they should ensure the following:

- The Board reviews the draft of the FY25 audit and that any discussion of the financial statements and any findings reached in the audit are documented as part of board minutes.
- Both the finalized audit reports for FY24 and FY25 and the minutes of the board review of the FY25 audit should be published on the school's website.
- The school should work with their auditors to submit final audit reports to the Connecticut State Department of Education in compliance with annual reporting requirements.

Follow-Up From Desktop Monitoring

Overall Compliance Status: Partially Compliant

In addition to verifying compliance with the three indicators identified above, the monitoring team used the site visit as an opportunity to follow up with ECPA leadership about items from the GSCT Monitoring Rubric Google Sheet that remained open (i.e., Partially Met or Unmet).

The school has made notable progress in both parent engagement and instructional oversight. Recently, the school confirmed its participation in the GSCT Parent Steering Committee Program, providing a formal platform for parents and community members to offer direct feedback and recommendations to leadership. To ensure high-quality teaching and learning, the principal has implemented a goal-setting and observation system modeled after the state's framework; notably, educator and leader support plans were formally approved during the November 2025 Board meeting. Additionally, the school demonstrated its commitment to serving underserved populations through its PSIS report, which confirmed that 93% of the student body qualifies for Free and Reduced Price Lunch.

The school has demonstrated a clear understanding of its discipline and retention frameworks, though this measure remains *Partially Met* pending the availability of first-year operational data. During the April site visit, school leadership and staff effectively described the disciplinary processes outlined in the school handbook, including the use of a digital tracking system for behavioral data and established communication protocols for staff support. In terms of retention, the principal articulated the school's approach and a formal written policy has been provided to the monitoring team and posted on the school's website. The monitoring team will review a comprehensive report on discipline and retention data following the conclusion of its first year of operations.

The school has also made strides in ensuring its educational model is responsive to the needs of its student population. During the April site visit, it was observed that the school has appropriate staffing and specialized measures in place to effectively support students with IEPs and 504 plans. Additionally, the Board of Directors demonstrated oversight of instructional quality by approving comprehensive staff and leader evaluation plans in late 2025.

The school's plan for identification and support of Multilingual Learners (MLLs) has been moved to "Met" as the school has provided a comprehensive written plan in their *Student Services Manual.*

The monitoring team confirmed that the school has also fully complied with the authorizer's request for data bringing this measure to *Met* status.

As of the April 20th visit, the school has made significant progress in submitting reimbursement packets and required back-up in a timely fashion. Requests for additional information are responded to in a timely manner. There is evidence of federal procurement requirements being used for CSP purchases in excess of $10,000. The school purchased specific tagging software and engaged with a consultant to complete a full asset inventory of items purchased with CSP funds. Tagging of materials in accordance with the inventory was completed prior to the site monitoring visit on April 20.

Subsequent to the school monitoring visit, ECPA has submitted to GSCT their FY24 audit, which was completed with an unmodified opinion and now findings. The school evidenced board review of the audit and has taken steps to document through their agendas and board meeting minutes more financial oversight of the school. The board is currently receiving financial presentations from their back-office accounting and FP&A consultant on the fiscal health and position of the school. The board met in May 2026 to review the FY27 budget in advance of voting on its approval. The school has also posted their financial policies and procedures manual to the school website in compliance with Open Records Laws.

Finding:
Several items on Tabs 4 (Programmatic Compliance), 5 (Fiscal Compliance) and 6 (Grant Governance) must be addressed prior to the conclusion of ECPA's subgrant project period. Specifically, ECPA must take the following measures in order to exit the grant in good standing:

Required Next Steps to Remediate Finding:

Board meeting minutes and postings to the website are showing greater detail to firmly establish adherence to the Open Meetings Law and Open Records Law, but there remains a few past records of financial oversight that should be provided. Specifically, the school should furnish and then make sure they have posted to their website the following:

- Board minutes should be provided that clearly indicate review and approval of the annual budget for FY24, FY25, and FY26.
- When completed, provide meeting minutes that show the board has completed a review of the FY25 audit.
- Share with the GSCT team final, audited financial statements for FY25.

Future Items Related to Grant Closeout.
The following items are part of the close-out of the grant period, which formally ends May 31st, 2026, but may require action or collection of evidence following the end of the term.

- Post all monitoring reports on the school's website.
- Complete the Annual Performance and Financial Reports within 90 days of the end of the subgrant budget period.
- The school will need to provide a final summative reporting of ECPA's established SMART project goals, which cannot be reported upon until:
    - the school's audited financial statements are available in December 2027
    - SBAC scores are released for the 26-27 school year (August/ September 2027) and
    - 26-27 enrollment numbers are reported in October 2026.