



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: John Crooks
(865) 223-4513

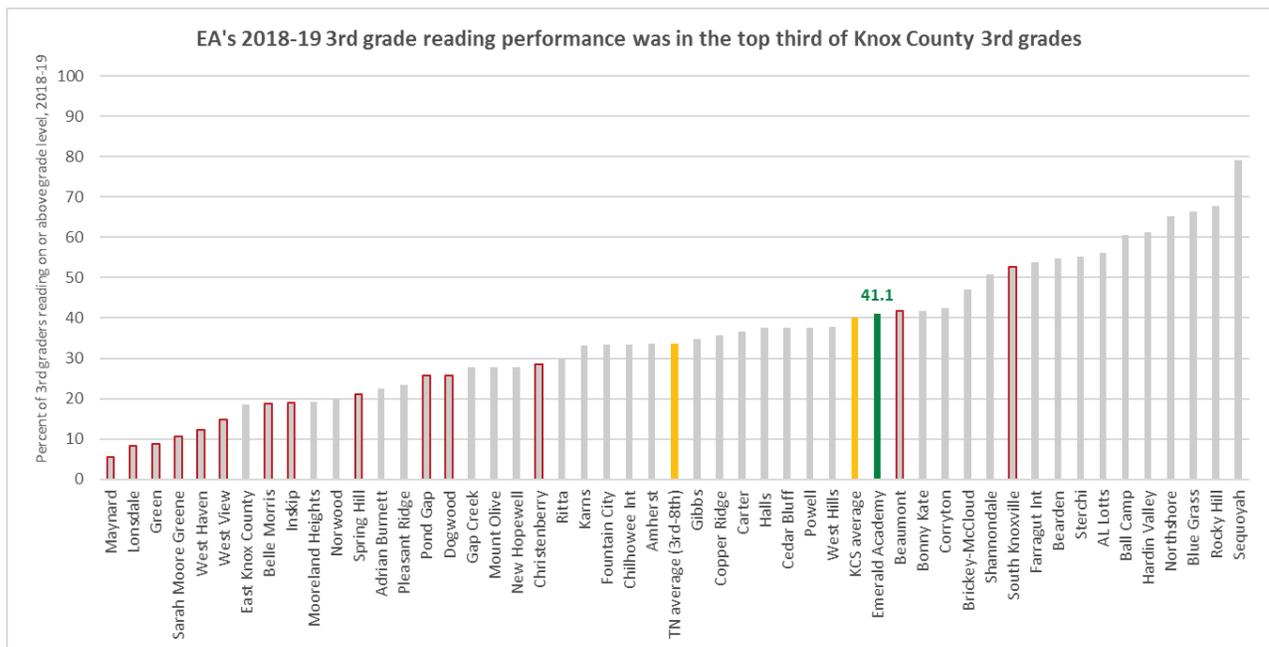
EMERALD ACADEMY DEMONSTRATES IMPROVED ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT FOR URBAN SCHOLARS

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. – New state academic achievement data confirms Knoxville’s first and only public charter school, Emerald Academy, is making significant progress in improving student learning outcomes.

“I am tremendously encouraged by our progress to date,” said Steve Diggs, president of Emerald Charter Schools. “We knew when we started this process that it would be a marathon and not a sprint. I’m pleased with the gains we’ve made, and I believe that we will see even more growth during the 2019-2020 school year.”

The school, which now enrolls approximately 500 scholars in kindergarten through eighth grade, reached the highest achievement level in the school's four-year history. Key academic results for Emerald Academy over the past year include:

- The school’s TNReady achievement score improved by an entire letter grade.
- Emerald Academy's average scores on the Algebra I and Geometry end-of-course assessments – taken by seventh and eighth grade scholars – exceeded the district average for all test takers in Knox County Schools (KCS) as well as the the state of Tennessee.
- Third grade scholars who attended Emerald Academy since kindergarten had higher TNReady outcomes than newer scholars who had previously attended traditional public schools. This also holds true for eighth grade scholars who entered Emerald Academy as sixth graders. In short, the longer scholars are at the school, the more significant improvement in the academic outcomes.
- Emerald Academy third graders outperformed the KCS district average as well as the average for the state of Tennessee for elementary schools in English Language Arts (ELA). More than 41 percent of Emerald Academy third graders are reading at or above grade level, compared to 38.9 percent of KCS third through fifth graders.
- Additionally, Emerald Academy third graders performed in the top third of all KCS elementary schools in reading, outperforming 32 of the district’s 49 elementary schools.
- Emerald Academy had a lower rate of chronic absenteeism than the district in 2018-19. 12.7 percent of Emerald Academy scholars were chronically absent, compared to 15.8 percent of KCS students.



Note: the bar for each urban KCS school is outlined in red.

Despite these gains, the school was given a Focus designation by the state due to the fact that Emerald Academy’s white scholars had lower outcomes than other white students in Tennessee. This reflects the fact that EA scholars in 7th and 8th grades who were enrolled in advanced math classes had relatively low growth, despite their strong performance on the end-of-course tests. This designation is used to identify and improve schools struggling with academic outcomes among one or more student subgroups. It is markedly different from a Priority designation, which is given to schools that are low-performing overall.

In response to the Focus designation, Emerald Academy has implemented several key initiatives designed to promote improvement among all scholars. These initiatives include prioritizing the recruitment and retention of high-quality staff and providing additional instructional coaching opportunities for students, among others.

Emerald Academy’s interim school director, Lauren Moore, added, “I want our scholars and their families to know that their hard work is paying off. This is an important first milestone, but it is only the beginning of the future success of urban scholars at Emerald Academy.”

It’s not too late for interested families to sign up for the current school year and be added to the waitlist. Additionally, applications are already being accepted for the 2020-2021 school year. To enroll, visit www.emeraldacademy.org/enroll.

Emerald Academy is also seeking high quality teacher leaders who can help support continued academic progress and achievement. Qualified applicants should visit www.emeraldacademy.org/careers for more information.

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About Emerald Academy & Emerald Charter Schools

Emerald Academy is a free, independently operated, K-8 college preparatory school launched by Emerald Charter Schools. Located in the historic Moses School Building at 220 Carrick Street in Old Mechanicsville, Emerald Academy’s mission is to grow scholars into leaders by creating the best learning culture for city students to develop the skills, habits and values for success in high school, college and life. Supporting opportunities are available. For more information about the school and how to become involved, visit www.emeraldacademy.org. Founded in 2014, Emerald Charter Schools is a non-sectarian, 501(c)(3) organization that operates Emerald Academy. Learn more at www.emeraldcharterschools.org.