



NEWS RELEASE

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EMERALD ACADEMY RESULTS SHOW HIGHEST POSSIBLE ACADEMIC GROWTH

Latest testing data confirms the public charter school is changing the trajectory for young people

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. – New statewide testing data confirms Emerald Academy, Knoxville’s first and only public K-8 charter school, is changing the trajectory of learning outcomes for urban youth and supporting dramatic academic gains among students.

For the first time in the school’s history, Emerald Academy earned the highest possible level of growth in literacy, in numeracy and in the composite score of all tested areas. This resulted in scoring a Level 5 – the highest Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System score – across every single category during the 2020-2021 school year.

“When we started the school, the ultimate goal was that we would produce well-prepared eighth graders who are enrolling in traditional public high schools and ultimately becoming college-bound community leaders for our city. These scores show that we are delivering on that mission,” said Steve Diggs, president of Emerald Charter Schools. “We know that strong results in growth become critical steppingstones to accelerating achievement as we continue to scaffold and build toward reaching even higher academic results.”

Emerald Academy tied with 13 other elementary schools for the top growth scores in Knox County, out of 51 public elementary schools across the district. Only one other middle school in Knox County achieved the highest growth in each area – Farragut Middle School. Emerald Academy is unequivocally the top performing urban middle school in Knoxville, based on the percentage of scholars performing on or above grade level. EA scholars in kindergarten through fifth grades also consistently performed near the top of all urban elementary schools across Knox County.

This news of Emerald Academy’s high growth is especially encouraging given the challenges presented by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which has contributed to significant learning loss for students nationwide. The testing data confirms Emerald Academy scholars did not experience the extensive learning losses demonstrated by their peers across the district and the state, and instead realized learning gains across several grades in reading and math.

Other highlights of Emerald Academy's TNReady results include the following:

- All teachers who taught in tested subject areas achieved at least Level 3 growth, indicating that their scholars made a minimum of one year's academic progress in one year, with numerous teachers scoring at Level 4 and 5, indicating growth of more than one school year in one academic year.
- While 2020-21 letter grades will not be made public by the state, Emerald Academy received a letter grade of B on the state report card, the highest grade in school history.
- More Emerald scholars are entering high school prepared for advanced math classes than their peers in district middle schools, based on their proficiency in eighth grade math.

These data include all Emerald Academy scholars – those attending the school in person and those participating on the school's virtual learning platform offered last year during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I'm incredibly proud of our scholars and their families for embodying our school value of Commitment during a very difficult school year," said School Director Lauren Moore. "I'm grateful for the trust that parents have placed in us to partner with them in their child's education, and I especially want to celebrate the great work of our faculty and teachers, without whom these results simply would not have been possible."

Any Knox County resident with a rising kindergarten through eighth grade student is eligible to apply to Emerald Academy, a tuition-free, public, college preparatory school. There are no additional criteria for admittance, and if interest outnumbers available seats, a blind lottery is conducted to determine admission. Applications are being accepted immediately for the current school year.

For more information about the application process, visit the school's website at emeraldacademy.org or call Emerald Academy at 865-249-7223 weekdays between 7:45 a.m. and 4 p.m. Translation services are available.

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 prepare urban scholars for the college of their choice and community leadership. 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.

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