

# EMERALD ACADEMY

A LAUNCH OF EMERALD CHARTER SCHOOLS

## What is Emerald Charter Schools?

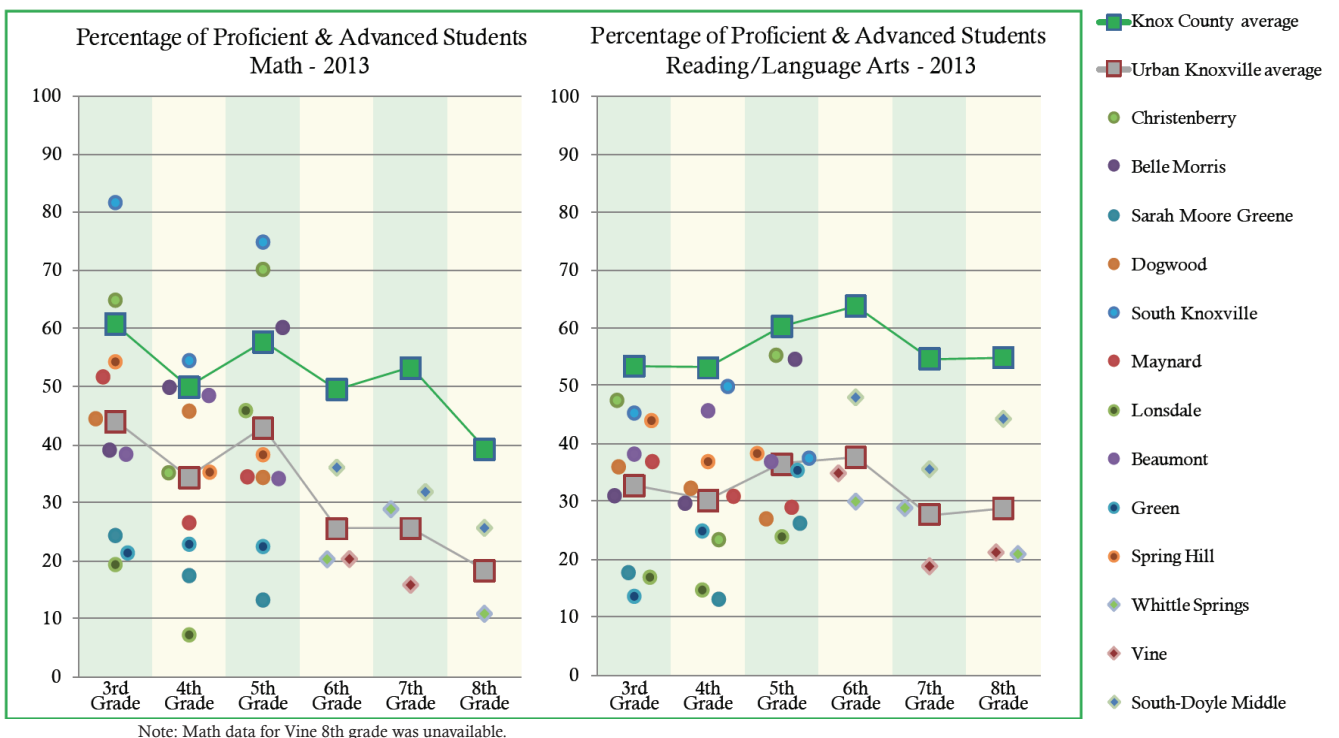
Emerald Charter Schools is a new non-profit organization that will manage the proposed public charter school, Emerald Academy. Accountable to state and federal academic standards, public charter schools are independently operated public schools that are tuition-free and open to every student who wishes to enroll.

Emerald Charter Schools is a separate, non-sectarian organization started by Emerald Youth Foundation, which has a longstanding track record working with Knoxville’s inner-city children, teens and young adults.

## What is the need for establishing Emerald Academy?

Public schools are important to the well-being of the local community. Urban high schools, in particular, serve as neighborhood-based anchor institutions that help shape a community’s identity. Current high school performance indicators, such as the small percentage of urban students who score advanced in Algebra I and English I or achieve ACT benchmarks, clearly communicate the need to take corrective measures. We must strengthen Knoxville’s urban schools so they produce graduates who are truly prepared for college and career. The future of our young people and our urban neighborhoods themselves depends upon it.

Emerald Charter Schools believes that establishing a K-8 inner-city public charter school is another good option for Knox County to accelerate the pace of student readiness for secondary education. The feeder schools’ data in the below charts supports this logic (data obtained from 2013 Report Card, State of Tennessee).



## What are the key components of the Emerald Academy Educational Model?

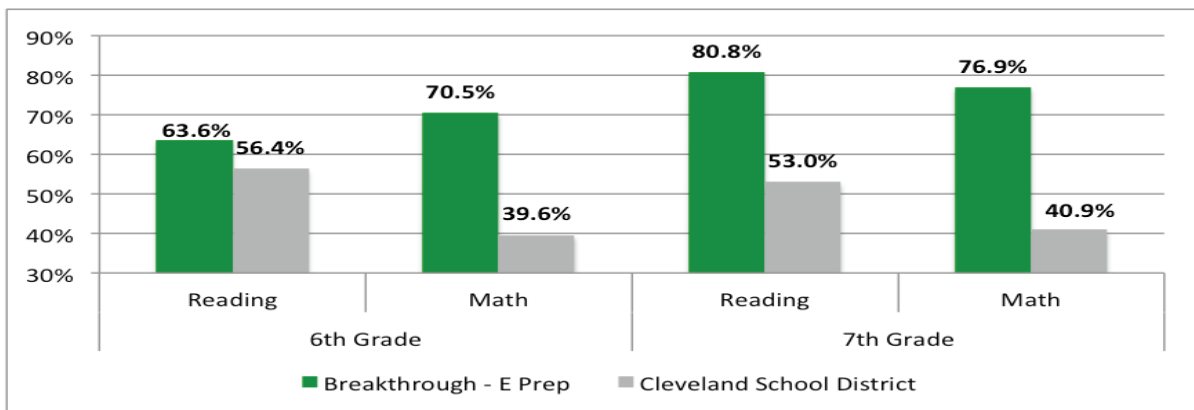
**Mission:** Emerald Academy will provide Knoxville’s urban students with the academic foundation, skills, habits, and character traits that they need to succeed in high school, college, and in life. Through our rigorous educational program and our relational culture, we will create a transformative experience for our scholars that prepares them to become self-sufficient, reflective, and resilient leaders in their communities.

**Vision:** Our vision is to dramatically increase the number of Knoxville students who graduate eighth grade well prepared for high school and the college of their choice. To achieve this goal, we will create a replicable, model K-8 school that closes the achievement gap and alters the trajectory for our urban youth. Emerald Academy will prepare our scholars for success through our four pillars: academic excellence, effective teaching, a highly relational culture grounded in high expectations, and robust parent and community engagement.

Emerald Academy anticipates opening in 2015 with around 100 students in kindergarten and first grade in the north city area of Knoxville and will graduate the first class of eighth graders in the spring of 2019.

### Proposed Academic Focus and Plan

After conducting extensive research nationally into various models, Emerald Charter Schools has chosen to model our school after the Breakthrough Schools’ E Prep middle school and Village Prep elementary school located in Cleveland, Ohio. Breakthrough Schools has a track record of excellent student outcomes: in 2012, its students—who are more than 97% minority and approximately 85% low-income—significantly outperformed Ohio public school students (urban and suburban) on average on every single test at every single grade level. Breakthrough has agreed to work with Emerald Charter Schools to export its Prep model to Knoxville. Following is data presenting E Prep middle school’s 2012-13 percent proficiency compared to the Cleveland School District. As evidenced by the charts below, E Prep middle school outperformed the district average in both grades and subjects.



Emerald Academy has adopted the Breakthrough - Prep Schools' **four guiding principles** as the foundation for our school's educational program and school culture:

- 1.** We put children's needs first, in every single decision we make;
- 2.** We hold everyone to the highest expectations, from our kindergartners to our board members;
- 3.** We share a never give up attitude, no matter what it takes; and
- 4.** We believe in our scholars, and know that every child can learn and excel.

Using these principles and the Breakthrough model, we will create a school that focuses on the following four pillars: **Academic Excellence, Effective Teaching, A Highly Relational Culture Grounded in High Expectations, and Robust Parent and Community Engagement.**

## **Academic Excellence**

At Emerald Academy, we will seek to provide every scholar with a personalized educational program that ensures each scholar is prepared for rigorous high school and college programs. In order to do this, we will:

- **Implement a Standards-based Academic Curriculum:** A rigorous curriculum aligned with state and Common Core State Standards will ensure all teachers provide the necessary instruction in all core classes. Teachers will be evaluated on their ability to successfully move scholars toward mastery of the standards-based curriculum as evidenced by internal and external assessments.
- **Differentiated Instruction:** In order to ensure that each scholar's academic needs are being met, Emerald Academy will provide differentiated instruction to all scholars, including scholars with special needs, English language learners, scholars performing below grade level, and intellectually gifted scholars. Teachers will be expected to utilize flexible ability groupings to provide targeted instruction to scholars. To further individualize instruction, we will utilize additional staff and volunteers to provide targeted and small group instruction, as well as staff to push-in and pull-out scholars as necessary. We will also utilize computer-based programs such as Odyssey to provide targeted instruction on specific skills.
- **Utilize Data to Drive all Decisions:** At Emerald Academy, we will utilize data to drive all decisions at the school, ranging from personnel, to programming, to interventions, to instruction. Emerald Academy will administer a range of assessments in order to accurately determine what scholars know and what gaps exist. All scholars in grades 3-8 will participate in the state required Partnership for Assessment of Readiness of College and Career (PARCC) assessment, Northwest

Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) assessment, as well as other school-developed assessments. The data will be consistently analyzed and utilized to drive improvements within the school. Emerald Academy will have the expectation that all adults within the building understand and know how to analyze data to best meet the needs of every scholar.

- **Provide Extended Time on Learning:** All scholars will participate in an extended school day and an extended school year. Additionally, we will create efficiencies within the school day through our systems and structures that will provide more time on task for scholars.

## Effective Teaching

Research indicates that the most important factor for scholar learning is the quality of classroom instruction.<sup>1</sup> To this end, we will ensure that teachers are prepared and equipped to provide all scholars with high quality instruction by:

- **Hiring Committed and Driven Teachers:** Emerald Academy will implement an extensive recruitment and hiring process to ensure only those who are willing to be 100% committed to the success of our scholars and our mission will be hired. We will ensure that our teachers never give up on scholars and will do all that is needed to help scholars be successful, be it providing after-school tutoring or answering homework questions after hours.

- **Providing Extensive and Embedded Professional Development:** Emerald Academy will provide teachers and staff members with significant professional development in order to continuously provide high quality instruction. We will be a school that continuously grows and seeks excellence from all staff members regardless of tenure and experience. As a result, teachers will receive embedded and sustained professional development on a regular basis throughout the school year.

- **Establishing Professional Learning Communities:** We will create a school schedule that allows teachers time to plan collaboratively with their peers, analyze data, and discuss scholar needs, in addition to other topics. Teachers will rely upon their colleagues to build their own knowledge and continue to develop professionally.

- **Conducting Frequent Informal Observations and Providing Immediate Feedback:** At Emerald Academy, we will expect our teachers to be continuous learners. Essential to this is receiving coaching from an instructional expert. As such, at Emerald Academy, teachers will receive frequent informal observations and coaching from school leaders.

<sup>1</sup>Hattie, John. (2009). Visible Learning: A Synthesis of over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement. New York: Routledge.

## A Highly Relational Culture Grounded in High Expectations

At Emerald Academy, we will establish a culture that is grounded in high expectations—one that demands and expects the best from all stakeholders. We will do this by:

- **Holding High Expectations for All:** All of our scholars will be college bound. To achieve this ambitious goal, all scholars, families, and staff must be accountable to each other for maintaining high expectations. All members of the school community will be expected to sign a contract of commitment—a pledge to do all in their power and whatever is necessary to achieve academic success. Our staff will believe in the potential of EVERY child and will work tirelessly to ensure all scholars are prepared for college. We will have clear, high expectations for both staff and scholar conduct.
- **Creating a Highly Structured School Environment:** A highly structured school environment will allow our scholars to learn and teachers to teach. It will be our responsibility to implement a culture of discipline, respect, and hard work every minute of every day. School staff will explicitly teach our values: respect, responsibility, self-discipline, courage, and perseverance. Through clear rules and constant positive reinforcement, our scholars will learn to take responsibility for themselves, their school, and their community. Older scholars will be expected to provide leadership to their younger peers by modeling hard work and respectful behavior.
- **Creating a Highly Relational Environment:** Scholars at Emerald Academy will be cared for and nurtured in a K-8 school environment that includes a low student-teacher ratio, small grade levels, additional staff members in classrooms, life coaches throughout their entire academic career (kindergarten through college), and retired educators who are committed to the futures of our children. Emerald Academy will be a place where every child is known by name and where every child has deep and personal relationships with adults in the building. The relationships formed at Emerald Academy will last for years after scholars leave our school.

## Robust Parent and Community Engagement

Extensive research has demonstrated the positive impact of parent and community engagement on academic success. Emerald Academy will actively involve and empower families and build broad-based community partnership for our school by:

- **Partnering with Families:** At Emerald Academy, we believe that parents are critical partners in the work that we do and that their involvement in scholars' education leads to higher levels of academic and personal achievement.

To this end, we will adopt the PTA's National Standards for Family School Partnerships and actively:

- Welcome all families into the school community;
- Communicate regularly and effectively with families about scholar learning;
- Collaborate with families to support scholar success;
- Empower families to be advocates for their and other's children; and
- Share power with families through a parent representative on the board of directors as well as an active and meaningful PTO.

• **Developing Strong Community Partnerships:** Emerald Academy will establish the school as a pillar in the community and will work within the community to tackle education in a collaborative and holistic manner. Our vision is to create meaningful partnerships that expand learning opportunities for scholars and provide critical after school programs. In addition, we will work with local non-profit, health care, and social service agencies to provide scholars and their families with services as needed. In partnership with the community, we will address many of the barriers to learning faced by Knoxville's urban students. We will help our scholars to develop a strong sense of civic engagement and will prepare them to become future leaders in the community.

*By implementing these four pillars, we are confident that we will be able to provide Knoxville students with a unique and much needed K-8 school option.*



PHOTO COURTESY BREAKTHROUGH SCHOOLS, CLEVELAND, OHIO

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