

Nashville Tennessean

Nashville schools rank among top in nation for academic recovery after pandemic

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Metro Nashville Public Schools has far outpaced most of its peers nationwide when it comes to post-pandemic academic recovery, according to a newly released scorecard from Harvard and Stanford universities.

Out of the top 100 districts nationwide, the district ranked third for math growth from 2022 to 2023 and sixth in reading growth in that same time period, MNPS Director Adrienne Battle said in a news conference Tuesday. It was also one of two large urban districts that earned a place in the top 10 list for math and reading growth.

"This did not happen by accident," Battle said as she praised the ongoing recovery effort.

"Many, many people were involved at all levels across the district."

Around 40 people gathered for the event in the library at Ida B. Wells Elementary, including several MNPS school board members along with school and city officials.

The Education Recovery Scorecard showed historic gains in math and reading for many states, but the nation has only accounted for about one-third of the pandemic learning loss in math and a quarter in reading. At the current pace of recovery, the upcoming expiration of pandemic relief funds may hamper efforts by states and districts to regain ground, a news release from the scorecard said.

Nashville Mayor Freddie O'Connell was also on hand for the news conference. He said he sees the academic growth and recovery at MNPS as a return on investment for all the time, effort and funding put into schools in recent years.

"This is why I stand here today optimistic about public education in Nashville," O'Connell said.

He also said he's worked closely with MNPS leaders and Metro Council members to assure the expiration of federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief, or

ESSER, funds will not leave them facing a "financial cliff" and gaps in critical programs needed to continue recovery. Schools are also the top investment in the city's latest proposed capital spending plan.

"This is where schools should be in our investment," O'Connell said.

Dr. Ray Hart, executive director of the Council of Great City Schools, and Ida B. Wells Elementary Principal Dexter Adams also spoke at the event.

"These rankings are a powerful statement about the connections happening between students and teachers every day in classrooms across Nashville and Davidson County," MNPS board chair Rachael Anne Elrod said in a news release from the district.

She said while she's not surprised by the progress, she's "thrilled" to see their hard work and strategic efforts validated by the scorecard.

Learn more

The Education Recovery Scorecard is a joint effort by the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard, the Educational Opportunity Project at Stanford and the Stanford Education for Policy Analysis.

To view the scorecard, read the full report on it and learn more about what it means for MNPS and schools across the United States, visit EducationRecoveryScorecard.org.