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CONGRATULATIONS TO MISSISSIPPI, 2023 RECIPIENT OF THE FRANK NEWMAN AWARD FOR STATE INNOVATION

Education Commission of the States is pleased to honor the state of Mississippi with the 2023 Frank Newman Award for State Innovation, in recognition of its laudable improvements in academic achievement among K-12 students across the state.



In 2013, Mississippi was ranked 50th in K-12 achievement, according to Quality Counts, a national ranking. Since then, it has climbed to 35th, and state leaders credit two pieces of legislation for fueling the improvements: The Early Learning Collaborative Act, which established the first state-funded pre-K program, and the Literacy-Based Promotion Act, which made reading instruction a major focus in K-3.

The Early Learning Collaborative Act allocated funding for communities (including school districts, Head Start sites, child care centers and nonprofits) to establish or expand high-quality early childhood education programs. The law provides a 1:1 state tax credit, up to \$1 million, for participating individuals or corporations. The students who participate in programming at these collaboratives now have the highest kindergarten readiness scores in the state, and they have risen from 59% readiness in 2015 to 65.1% readiness in 2022.

The Literacy-Based Promotion Act provides \$15 million annually to build the capacity of K-3 teachers and school leaders to effectively teach reading and monitor student progress. The department of education hires and assigns literacy coaches to schools where data shows students struggle the most with reading. The department also provides training on the science of reading to administrators, educator preparation program faculty, teachers in pre-K through third grade, and K-8 special education teachers. When the passing score was raised in 2019 to bring it closer to proficiency, 86% of students met the higher standard. On the National Assessment of Educational Progress, Mississippi's ranking for fourth grade reading scores rose from 50th in 2013 to 21st in 2022.

Education Commission of the States will present Mississippi leaders with the Newman Award at the 2023 National Forum on Education Policy, taking place July 12-14 in Minneapolis, MN.



The Frank Newman Award for State Innovation is one of three awards that Education Commission of the States gives each year to celebrate outstanding commitment to public education. The others are the James Bryant Conant Award, which recognizes individual achievement, and the Education Commission of the States Corporate Award, which recognizes a for-profit corporation, nonprofit organization or foundation.

For more information on Mississippi's academic progress and achievements, contact Jean Gordon Cook, chief of communications at the Mississippi Department of Education, at JCook@mdek12.org.

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