

TEACHTOWN & THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PICKENS COUNTY

An enCORE K-12 Success Story

BACKGROUND

LOCATION:

Pickens County, SC

NUMBER OF STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES:

16,000 students and 2,000 total staff, the School District of Pickens County is SC's 15th largest school district.

OBJECTIVES

Discover how a comprehensive adapted core curriculum increased academic rigor for students with moderate to severe disabilities, reduced teacher planning burden, and sparked teacher creativity across elementary schools in SDPC.



INTRODUCTION

THE STORY OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PICKENS COUNTY

The [School District of Pickens County](#) (SDPC) is a county-wide system in northwestern South Carolina located at the foothills of the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains. With a student population of just over 16,000 and about 2,000 total staff, the School District of Pickens County is South Carolina's 15th largest school district. SDPC partners with the community to provide a quality educational environment that guides all students to learn the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the challenges of an ever-changing world. The School District of Pickens County takes great pride in the quality of education that is provided to its students. Based on SDPC's core values of Respect, Innovation, Service, and Excellence, the mission is to engage each student today to RISE to tomorrow's potential. District leadership has cast an inspiring vision—to empower every student for college, career, and life success. So, when the School District of Pickens County began searching for an adapted core curriculum for the elementary students with disabilities served in Multicategorical Self-Contained Special Education classrooms, TeachTown was the obvious choice. Learn why—

THE CHALLENGE OF NOT HAVING A STREAMLINED, ADAPTED CORE CURRICULUM BEFORE TEACHTOWN

Special education teachers across the country are known for their keen ability to differentiate curriculum and instruction to meet the individual learning and behavioral needs of their students. While some may see this resourcefulness as admirable, most special education teachers would identify “having a comprehensive, differentiated curriculum” as essential to their long-term success and sustainability in the profession.

This is true for the School District of Pickens County, too. Prior to developing a partnership with TeachTown, elementary special education teachers at SDPC were often pulling together lessons, materials,

The district was looking for something that reduced teacher planning burden and increased academic rigor for students...[and] access to more actionable student data.

enrichment activities, and more from multiple sources to meet the diverse needs of their learners. Teams were dedicated to appropriately challenging their most complex learners with the ‘just right’ level of differentiated support, but teachers still needed a comprehensive solution. The district was looking for something that reduced

teacher planning burden and increased academic rigor for students. And, everyone needed access to more actionable student data.

To streamline curriculum and instruction, increase academic rigor, and reduce teacher burden, SDPC onboarded with **TeachTown** in 2020. Currently, SDPC is in its third year of implementing [enCORE](#), a K-12 standards-aligned and evidence-based adapted core curriculum, and in its first year of implementing [TeachTown Social Skills](#), an evidence-based social skills curriculum appropriate for students in Pre-K through the Transition years.

BACKSTORY

WHY THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PICKENS COUNTY CHOSE TEACHTOWN

Initially, the School District of Pickens County started with a pilot of TeachTown's enCORE Elementary in 2020 for Extended School Year (ESY) with a few teachers who had access to demo accounts. The teachers gave great feedback about enCORE—it was user-friendly and relevant. *Relevant* curriculum is engaging to students' lives and supports continued learning. Pickens was “**all in**” by the fall.

Ultimately, SDPC needed an evidence-based core curriculum that would increase the academic rigor through differentiated support and provide clear, compelling data to show student progress. SDPC found these 6 features to be the most relevant to their special education teams:



1. EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

Embedded throughout all academic domains of enCORE *and* key supporting interventions are multiple evidence-based practices (EBPs) that are supported by research for students with moderate to severe disabilities. These instructional practices include systematic and explicit instruction, use of visual supports, prompting, reinforcement, offering specific corrective feedback, providing opportunities for generalization, video modeling, and more. Additionally, the entire ELA domain of enCORE is firmly rooted in the “Big 5” of the **Science of Reading**.



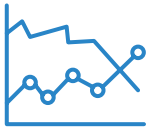
2. ONE-STOP SHOP

SDPC was looking for a special education solution that lived in one platform. No need to keep track of multiple websites, logins, passwords, etc. TeachTown supports multiple integrations, including single-sign on and rostering via Clever, OneRoster, and ClassLink. Streamlining everything into one place brought ease and efficiency to the special education teams at Pickens.

LEARN MORE
ABOUT TEACHTOWN'S
EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES.



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3. DATA AND REPORTING

The State of South Carolina requires Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to submit formative assessment data

three times per year. SDPC saw the comprehensive data and reporting options in enCORE and knew this feature would allow them to easily meet this State reporting requirement. Beyond reporting to the State, the School District of Pickens County uses the student usage and growth data to drive professional development and instruction to ensure teachers and students are continuously improving their effectiveness.



4. ACADEMIC RIGOR & EQUITABLE, INCLUSIVE ACCESS TO GENERAL EDUCATION

enCORE is aligned to state and national standards, ensuring students have access to the same content as their typically developing peers in general education classrooms. With literature titles like *Peter Rabbit* (K-2), *Three Little Pigs* (K-2), *Frog's Bright Idea* (3-5), and *Bounce* (3-5) students are receiving equitable, inclusive access

to grade-level content.

The curriculum is differentiated to three levels of support, with Level 1 being appropriate for students with the most significant support needs and Level 3 serving students ready for greater independence. The platform is designed to ensure students work on skills to *mastery*, so students are moving beyond exposure of learning objectives as the technology tailors instruction to individual students' needs. The School District of Pickens County chose enCORE to ensure its students with moderate to severe disabilities have every opportunity to reach their full academic potential.



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5. HIGH-QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

When SDPC first onboarded with TeachTown during the height of the pandemic, virtual training was the only option. And indeed, virtual training was successful—teachers learned how to use enCORE and were able to hit the ground running. Now, a couple of years later, TeachTown is able to deliver onsite professional development and real-time coaching in classrooms. Teachers love the professional development and continue to offer strong, positive feedback from training days and as they continue to learn the curriculum.

“When we received TeachTown, I was a bit skeptical because it was yet another curriculum. However, I have quickly fallen in love with it. The three different levels of fiction and nonfiction stories are helpful for my students to be able to read the same book, but closer to their reading level. They also like being able to do experiments talking about the same things in the story in Science and Social Studies. Level 1 stories are my favorite because with the help from the pictures above the words, I am able to have my non-verbal students and students who struggle with reading, read the Level 1 story. This is due to being able to put the picture and the word in their communication devices and they use this to be able to read the story. This has been a huge impact for my students because those who have never had a reading fluency score now have one thanks to TeachTown.”

- Hannah Behnke, Teacher at East End Elementary School

Special education leadership uses the district-wide classroom visits to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Along with classroom observations, usage and growth data help inform future professional learning.



6. EFFECTIVE SOCIAL SKILLS

SDPC chose *TeachTown Social Skills* because they were looking to implement a high-quality, effective social skills curriculum across its elementary schools. TeachTown Social Skills aligns with the core principles of Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), and the program has been instrumental in helping teachers develop social and emotional wellness in elementary school students. *TeachTown Social Skills* is assessment-driven, so teachers can target the highest-priority skills for their students. It uses animated video modeling to teach age-appropriate prosocial behaviors, like asking before interrupting play, sharing, taking turns with toys, and listening when the teacher talks. Special education teachers in the School District of Pickens County needed a social skills curriculum that helped students generalize these skills across settings, which is exactly what *TeachTown Social Skills* was designed to do.



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IMPLEMENTATION

HOW THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PICKENS COUNTY USES TEACHTOWN

Pickens currently implements enCORE Elementary and *TeachTown Social Skills* in all Multicategorical Self-Contained Special Education Classrooms of its elementary schools. The results have been overwhelmingly positive:

- There are 137 students actively enrolled in the program
- Students have passed or mastered 11,322 lessons
- Over 3,000 hours of instruction completed to date

The numbers alone don't tell the whole story, though. Now that teachers are in their third year of implementation, they have time to collaborate during professional development days and brainstorm how to be creative with the curriculum to extend and enrich for the students who are ready for it.

Meet Ms. Kirstyn Hedden, a second year teacher at the Central Academy of the Arts. Ms. Hedden has been implementing enCORE with fidelity. This spring, she worked with her team to extend learning for her K-5th grade students and involve the whole school. She expanded the learning in the "Let's Make Lime Juice" and "Kitchen Tools for Measurement" to reinforce concepts of data and measurement

"Throughout the month of January and the beginning of February, my class worked through the unit, Let's Make Lime Juice and Kitchen Tools for Measurement, which each focused heavily on connecting concepts of measurement with recipes and ingredients in addition to an emphasis on bar graphs and tally charts for data collection. To review the concepts my students learned and mastered throughout the unit, we constructed our own limeade stand out of boxes collected by our custodians (and copious amounts of duct-tape!) and followed the limeade recipe included in the text to run our own limeade stand. To also incorporate data collection using bar graphs and tally charts, we invited other classes to sign up for a time to taste-test our limeade and tell us whether or not they liked it. In the end, our school overwhelmingly enjoyed the limeade, and my students gained an engaging generalization opportunity to allow them to exercise mastered concepts from enCORE Unit 24. In addition, this was an amazing, structured activity to encourage peer relationships between my students and their same-aged peers!"

- Kristyn Hedden, Teacher at Central Academy of the Art

The *entire* school community was involved! Ms. Hedden used enCORE to facilitate a *whole school for the whole child* approach to learning.



THE RESULTS

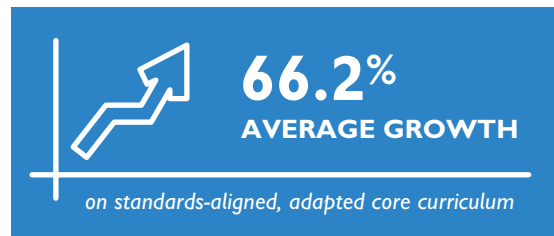
The special education teams in SDPC needed a stronger core curriculum and access to better data. This year's data from enCORE show incredible student growth:

- The average pretest score was 26.1%
- The average posttest score was 92.2%

That's an average of **66.2% growth** on standards-aligned, adapted core curriculum. Students are making significant and measurable academic progress and teachers (and administrators) have the data to prove it.

When asked about the big picture impact that TeachTown has had on Pickens special education teachers and students, Ms. Heather Boyd, Coordinator for Elementary Special Services, reflected on how her team now has a clear roadmap for their students with moderate to severe disabilities. Everything is provided for teachers, but enCORE also allows for teacher flexibility and creativity so they don't feel boxed in. Hence, the limeade extension activity that brought together the whole school community.

enCORE gives teachers everything they need to do just that—*teach*. And they're loving it.



LEARN MORE

As special educators, we all have the same goal in mind: providing our students with comprehensive learning opportunities that pave the way for educational and personal success.

Our award-winning adapted core curriculum solutions and supporting interventions deliver a whole child approach. We help you *measurably* improve the academic, behavioral and adaptive skills of your students—from Pre-K through the transition years.

Our entire curriculum has been founded upon *what works* for students with moderate to severe disabilities.

Our award-winning adapted core curriculum solutions and supporting interventions deliver a whole child approach.



Scan the QR code to learn more about how TeachTown can work in *your* district.



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Leading provider of K-12 standards-based, adapted core curriculum

Our suite of special education solutions offers students with moderate to severe disabilities equitable and inclusive access to the general education curriculum and the individualized interventions that support their success.

www.TeachTown.com