

# GOLD STANDARDS OF IMPLEMENTATION

How Fulton County Schools is Changing the Game

## BACKGROUND

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### LOCATION:

Fulton County, GA

### NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES AND BUILDINGS:

10,900 full- and part-time employees distributed among 108 schools and administrative and support buildings

## OBJECTIVES

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In this implementation guide, we will define how Fulton County Schools is implementing TeachTown's K-12 standards-based, adapted core curriculum, **enCORE**, along with its supporting learning interventions to deliver a whole child approach.



# INTRODUCTION

*Think back to the feeling you had the night before your first day of high school...Did you have butterflies? Nerves? Were you scared? What about when you started a new job...how did you feel? Anxious? Unsure?*

*I think we can all agree that change of any kind can be scary, and as an educator, implementing a new curriculum is no exception.*



**WHEN IT COMES TO INTRODUCING STAFF TO A NEW CURRICULUM,** Fulton County Schools, the fourth largest school system in Georgia located in the heart of metro Atlanta, holds the key to success:



## WHAT IS THE CHANGE GAME?

Often times, change can be a perceived loss.

*For example: “We are LOSING our current curriculum and switching to another that we aren’t familiar with.”*

But what’s important to recognize is that with change, you are not losing, you are gaining.

*For example: “Yes, we are transitioning to a new curriculum partner. With this change, you are gaining access to a one-stop shop where you can access a standards-based, adapted core curriculum, along with supporting interventions, all in one platform!”*

Positive change management coupled with the motto “Slow and steady wins the race!” is exactly how Fulton County Schools is approaching sustained implementation of TeachTown’s K-12 standards-based, adapted core curriculum, along with the supporting interventions that support student success.

*Slow and steady  
wins the race!*



# BACKSTORY

**“Our ultimate goal with TeachTown is not only to enhance student outcomes, but also to boost staff morale and retention. Our students in our intellectual disabilities and autism classrooms are the furthest from opportunity, which is more evident after the last several years of the COVID-19 pandemic.”**

*- Sherry Peterson, Director of Instruction, Services for Exceptional Children, Fulton County Schools*

## UNDERSTANDING FULTON COUNTY SCHOOLS' BACKSTORY

Let's back up for a second.

Fulton County Schools employs more than **10,900** full- and part-time employees, and more than **6,900** teachers and other certified personnel who work in 108 schools and administrative and support buildings.

During the **2022-23 school year**, a projected enrollment of **89,450 students** will attend classes in **59 elementary schools, 19 middle schools, 19 high schools, 10 start-up charter organizations** (some charters have multiple campuses but are considered one school), and **1 full-time virtual school**.

Breaking it down a step further, the Services for Exceptional Children's Department is made up of **2,190 staff members**, including **1,062 special education classroom teachers, 227 therapists, 559 special education paraprofessionals**, and **342 support staff** who serve approximately **9,600 students with different abilities (11%)**.

Given the size of the district, it comes as no surprise that Fulton County Schools needed high-quality, data-driven special education solutions for students that offered an adapted core curriculum with robust instruction in all academic content areas:

- ELA
- Math
- Science
- Social Studies

While Fulton County Schools worked to outline specific items that would be necessary with a new curriculum provider, wish list items voiced by their staff included:

- A curriculum that grants equitable and inclusive access to the general education curriculum.  
*Their students enjoy and deserve to learn about real life figures like George Washington Carver and Malala Yousafza, just as their typically developing peers do.*
- A platform that offers a “one-stop-shop” that includes a social skills program.  
*Imagine the convenience of having an adapted core curriculum and all interventions available to access in one place?*

After researching several curriculum vendors, Fulton County Schools solidified a **3 year partnership with TeachTown**.

Now, through TeachTown's K-12 standards-based, adapted core curriculum, **enCORE**, along with its supporting interventions including **Meta-Play, TeachTown Basics, Social Skills, and Transition to Adulthood**, students are meaningfully engaging with core academics and addressing adaptive, behavioral, and social needs. Fulton County Schools' students with disabilities have access to a true whole child education, plus the data to show their growth over time.

So...what comes next?

# IMPLEMENTATION

## IMPLEMENTATION IN FULTON COUNTY SCHOOLS: WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE?

PROOF OF  
CONCEPT

ROLL-OUT

89,450  
STUDENTS



6,900  
TEACHERS

FULTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT = 72 MILES

The success of a new curriculum hinges on the ability of educators to effectively implement it in the classroom. *This is exactly why proper implementation is critical to its success.*

Because Fulton County Schools is such a large district—72 miles long with 89,450 students and more than 6,900 teachers, they recognized implementation was not a race to the finish line. TeachTown implementation must be done slowly, intentionally and right.

Before rolling out TeachTown solutions to the entire district, in January 2023 Fulton County Schools opted to conduct a “**proof of concept**” with 8 of their select schools initially, implementing enCORE and Meta-Play to conduct targeted training, implementation and coaching.

These 8 schools include elementary, middle and high schools in areas across their district. Through this **proof of concept**, the district was able to monitor teachers as well as receive feedback from them before creating concrete implementation plans for the rest of the very large district.

During this **proof of concept**, Fulton County Schools’ teachers received monthly “*office hours*” with TeachTown staff. This gave Fulton County Schools’ staff dedicated time with TeachTown program experts to learn solution-specific tasks, like how to assign student licenses and navigate the technology. In addition, TeachTown’s BCBA’s worked with Fulton County Schools’ staff on best practices in the classroom, like when it is appropriate to use small group vs. whole group instruction.

“Behaviors are more prevalent across the nation, and that is no different here in Fulton. Through a curriculum that truly engages students, our students will be more focused on instruction—especially when the content hits areas they are interested in. Through this continuous engagement, we are fully confident our students will make progress on making gains!”

- Leah Carroll, Coordinator of Early Childhood Special Education, Fulton County Schools



Fulton County Schools is projected to have **43 PSE classrooms, 74 autism classrooms and 120 intellectual disabilities classrooms** across the district in the fall of 2023. **170** of these classrooms will be utilizing the TeachTown suite of solutions.

## COACHING

## WRAP-UP

Fulton County Schools' **specialty designed instruction (SDI)** coaches also receive monthly sessions with TeachTown employees so they can not only increase their own capacity and become TeachTown experts themselves, but also so that they can learn how to directly support teachers in the classroom, as well as how to analyze TeachTown's data reports.

Additionally, TeachTown has partnered with Fulton County Schools on **virtual coaching**. What does that entail?

- A Fulton County School will conduct a lesson with a coach from TeachTown observing either in-person or virtually.
- Following the lesson, the TeachTown coach will provide feedback to the instructing teacher to help them improve their implementation of the curriculum.
- During these sessions, Fulton County Schools' SDI coaches are also present so that they can support the teacher with the feedback received.

As the initial **Proof of Concept** stage wraps up, TeachTown Basics, Social Skills and Transition to Adulthood will be rolled out, alongside enCORE and Meta-Play, on a larger scale in August 2023.

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# OUTCOMES

## OUTCOMES ASSOCIATED DURING IMPLEMENTATION

So what is it about Fulton County's Schools' process that makes it the **Gold Standard of Implementation**?

For one, effective change management with curriculum in larger schools typically involves a structured approach that focuses on collaboration (check!), communication (check!), and support (check!).

Outside of first establishing a clear and shared vision for the curriculum change, leadership teams at Fulton County Schools have been transparent with all relevant stakeholders, including administrators, coaches, teachers, students, and parents/families, to ensure that everyone understands the rationale and goals that come along with implementing TeachTown's full product suite.

### GOLD STANDARD OF IMPLEMENTATION



#### EFFECTIVE CHANGE MANAGEMENT

focusing on collaboration, communication, and support.



#### TRANSPARENCY

with all relevant stakeholders, including administrators, coaches, teachers, students, and parents/families.



#### PROOF OF CONCEPT

including a solid timeline, along with resource allocation, and professional development for coaches and teachers.



#### MONITORING AND EVALUATION

to assess the effectiveness of the new curriculum, while also identifying areas for improvement.

With the **“Proof of Concept”** came a solid timeline, along with resource allocation, and professional development for coaches and teachers.

- Regular check-ins, feedback loops, and opportunities for input are encouraged to ensure that by the time full implementation rolls around, the process runs smoothly and efficiently.

Finally, monitoring and evaluation have been key in assessing the effectiveness of the new curriculum, while also identifying areas for improvement.

Why does all of this matter? Without proper implementation, a new curriculum risks:

- Becoming irrelevant
- Not meeting the needs of students and educators
- Becoming an unused line item on an annual budget

Fulton County Schools hit the mark when it comes to providing opportunities to their staff for the necessary training and support to ensure successful implementation.



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# CONCLUSION

## WHAT HAS FULTON COUNTY SCHOOLS SEEN SO FAR?

With any change, Fulton County Schools' educators are wrapping their arms around the premise of using a new curriculum. But, through collaboration with specially designed instruction coaches on organizing material and implementing SDI into classrooms, the outcomes have not gone unnoticed.

“Through walkthroughs of classrooms, **students are definitely more engaged in the academic content.** The older students especially love **reading stories that are similar to content their peers in general education are exposed to.** All students are making real-life connections from the units, such as linking prominent African Americans to Black History Month or attempting to identify the stage of the moon on their “Star Wars” lunch boxes.”

“Because of the robust content provided with TeachTown, our teachers will spend less time on finding supplemental materials for their students. Having a full planning time is more difficult for our teachers of students with intellectual disabilities and autism, especially because they may be charting data, fleshing out anecdotal notes, working on any additional duty that may occur during a school day...along with finding time to take a few bites of lunch! Providing our teachers with the foundation for their entire day takes some of the leg work out of pulling ALL of the content.” - **Dr. Rachel Greene, Coordinator of Autism/Intellectual Disabilities, Fulton County Schools**



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When it comes to implementation of TeachTown's full suite of solutions, Fulton County Schools has hit the ground running! Interested in learning more? Click the QR Code!



SCAN ME

**“Fulton County Schools is extremely grateful for our partnership with TeachTown. They have been outstanding thought partners along the way as we take on this huge charge!”**

*- Sherry Peterson, Director of Instruction, Services for Exceptional Children,  
Fulton County Schools*



*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](http://www.TeachTown.com)