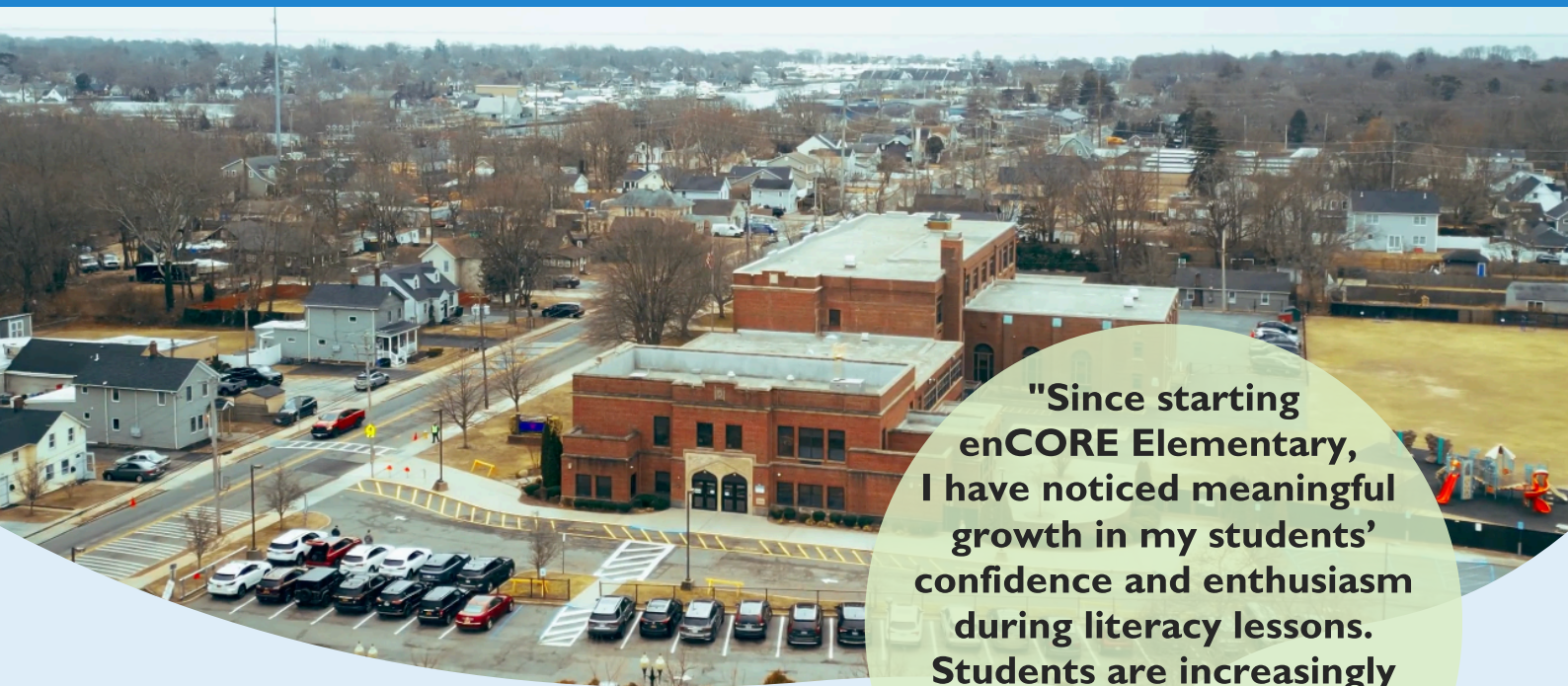


TeachTown x Patchogue-Medford School District

A Literacy Success Story



"Since starting enCORE Elementary, I have noticed meaningful growth in my students' confidence and enthusiasm during literacy lessons. Students are increasingly willing to participate and engage in ELA lessons."

*- PMSD Educator
Kathleen Powers*

Discover how implementation of enCORE, a K-12 standards-first, adapted core curriculum, in Patchogue-Medford School District (PMSD) led to significant literacy growth outcomes for students with moderate to severe disabilities.





Background

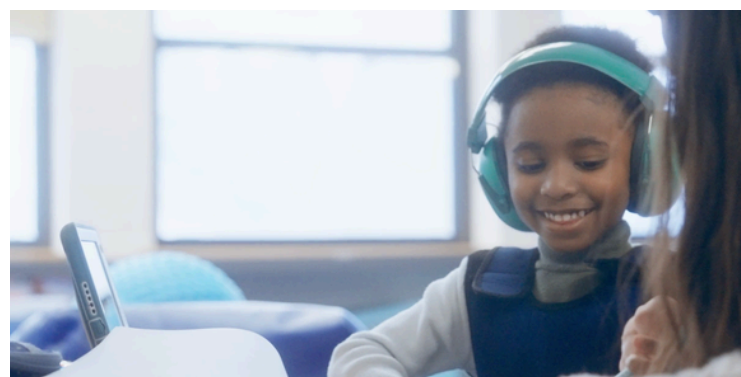
Patchogue-Medford School District (PMSD) is located on Long Island, New York and serves more than 7,000 students across 11 schools. In the summer of 2023, PMSD began a pilot program with TeachTown's K-12 standards-first, adapted core curriculum, enCORE, in which 93% of students who had used enCORE during the pilot scored proficient on the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) for Math and ELA.

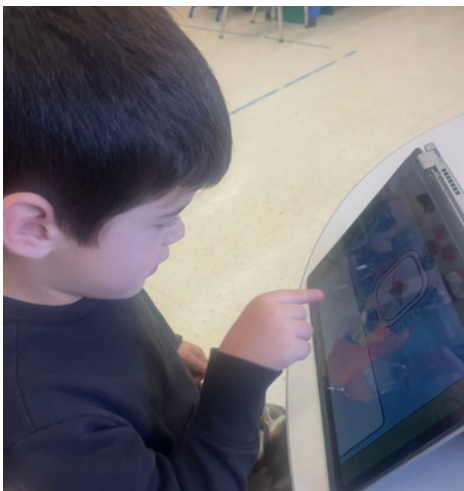
After experiencing results like this, implementing enCORE on a larger scale for PMSD was a no-brainer.

“Ultimately, the decision was made to move forward with TeachTown because of the high level of professional development and technical support that was made available to PMSD faculty, the high quality of the instructional materials, the alignment with New York State standards, and the scope and sequence of lessons.” - Dr. Lori Goldstein, Director of Special Education at Patchogue-Medford.

PMSD began using TeachTown, now part of Everway, the following school year with 5 schools across grades K-6, which entails a total of 10 classrooms within PMSD's Academic and Career Explorers (ACES) program. PMSD's students who are using TeachTown have significant cognitive disabilities and many use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices.

During their first year of implementation, PMSD experienced an **average student growth rate of 68% between pre- and post-test scores** across the TeachTown suite of solutions being implemented.





Literacy Success with enCORE

Like many school districts, literacy gains have been a priority for PMSD. “With New York moving to following a Science of Reading approach, it was important for us to use a program aligned with the Science of Reading,” shared Dr. Goldstein. “Additionally, several of our students are AAC users, and we wanted a program that is accessible for students who communicate using different modalities.”

During the 2025-2026 school year, PMSD partnered with TeachTown to evaluate the effectiveness of the enCORE Elementary ELA domain among 37 students with moderate to severe disabilities across 8 classrooms. The results?

A cumulative growth of

15.4%

across combined
ELA sub-domains

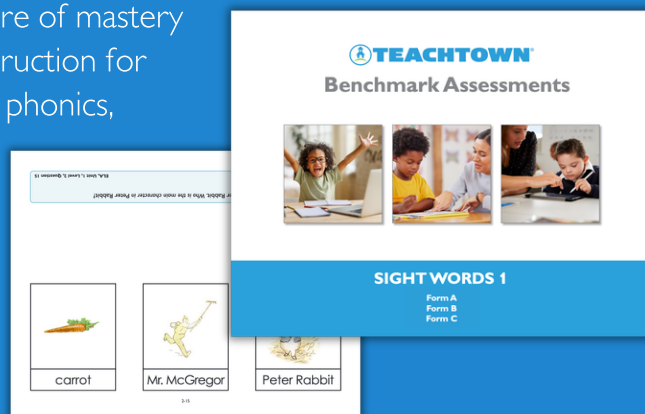
The numbers don't lie: in 22 out of 25 literacy areas assessed*, the progress was too significant to be a coincidence. **In other words, the curriculum—implemented with fidelity by teachers—directly drove these gains, confirming the effectiveness of the ELA domain within enCORE Elementary in improving reading outcomes for students with complex learning needs.**

A Deeper Dive

ELA growth for PMSD was assessed via enCORE unit assessments and benchmark assessments, data tools that are embedded into the TeachTown platform to help teachers monitor student progress.

Unit assessments are given as a pre- and post- measure of mastery of the individual concepts covered within a unit of instruction for vocabulary, phonemic and/or phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension.

Benchmark Assessments are assigned to students based on their grade and are aligned to one of the following subdomains: vocabulary, fluency, phonics, phonological and phonemic awareness, and listening comprehension, and reading comprehension.



*A p-value of less than 0.05 indicates statistical significance and demonstrates real effect.



For the educators at PMSD, these data tools have been invaluable:

“Data has helped tremendously. It has shown me where individual students are struggling as well as where the whole class is struggling. The unit benchmarks have been especially insightful because it shows **real-time growth**... I especially like that the data is online because I can easily refer back to it. I have even used this data to help **determine IEP goals** for some students.”

- Erica Townsend, PMSD Special Education Teacher

“I especially enjoyed being able to compare the fall, winter, and spring benchmark assessments and clearly see the progress my students made throughout the school year. **It was rewarding to see their growth reflected in the data and to see how many skills they had accomplished.** I also found the assessments to be clearly outlined and easy to read, which made it helpful when planning instruction and determining what skills needed to be reinforced.”

- Erin Rotanz, PMSD Special Education Teacher

“The assessments help **identify students' strengths and areas of need**, allowing for timely instructional adjustments and targeted interventions. They also make it easier to track growth over time, measure mastery of standards, and determine whether students are responding to instruction. Additionally, the data supports **informed decision-making** during team discussions, progress monitoring meetings, and parent conferences by providing clear evidence of student achievement and growth.”

- Kathleen Powers, PMSD Special Education Teacher



While student growth was demonstrated across all subdomains, key areas of improvement included:

**ELA Unit
assessments:**

COMPREHENSION



**23.3%
avg growth**

LETTER ID



**20.9%
avg growth**

**ELA Benchmark
assessments:**

PHONICS



**23.2%
avg growth**

COMPREHENSION



**21.8%
avg growth**

Beyond the Numbers

The data demonstrates that students using the enCORE curriculum made significant academic progress, and teachers have also observed the difference:

Improved Reading Fluency & Accuracy

"Students in my class have shown improvement in their reading fluency, reading words more accurately and at a faster pace. I have also seen an increase in the ability to read sight words and vocabulary, which is shown in their ability to match words to pictures and words to words. Students have also been able to spell words more accurately both with and without a visual of the word." - Erica Townsend

Increased Independence, Confidence, & Participation

"My students have become more confident with identifying letters and letter sounds, recognizing familiar words, and engaging with texts. I have also seen an increase in their participation during read-alouds... Students are becoming more independent and requiring fewer prompts and supports to participate. Overall, these foundational skills have helped build their confidence and provided them with more opportunities to actively engage in reading and demonstrate their comprehension." - Erin Rotanz

Multiple Pathways To Literacy Success

"For students with significant communication needs, progress can look different like identifying letters or words using AAC device/PECS or visuals, or showing understanding through pointing and matching. Seeing these small steps has really helped build participation and independence during literacy instruction."
- Lauren Briggs, PMSD Special Education Teacher

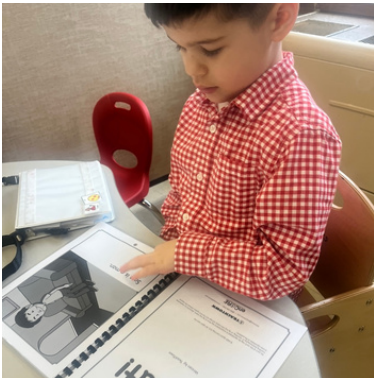
"For students who require visual support and AAC to communicate, learning letter recognition and letter-sound recognition has provided an important foundation for increasing their participation and independence during ELA lessons. For me, this has reinforced the importance of providing multiple ways for students to access instruction, communicate their thinking, and show their literacy growth." - Kathleen Powers





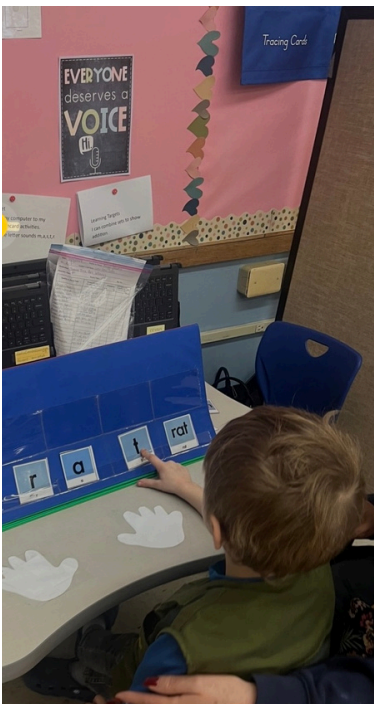
Real Students, Real Progress

While teachers have noticed increased engagement across the board, some students have shown especially notable breakthroughs in their literacy skills since using enCORE:



"I had a student enter my class with some pre-reading skills (ie, letter sounds, letter ID, and some vocabulary recognition) ... By following TeachTown's guide and lessons, this student began to grow in his ability to sound out more complex words and read sentences more fluently. **In one full year, this student was able to read a simple story with some help and visuals.**"

- Erica Townsend



"One student in particular really stands out to me. At the beginning of the 2025 school year, he was not yet identifying letters and was not consistently using his AAC device to participate or engage in ELA activities. **Throughout the year, with the consistent use of enCORE ELA, I saw tremendous growth.** By June, he was identifying letters and letter sounds, recognizing familiar sight words from the texts, and using his AAC device to identify vocabulary and answer WH questions during lessons and read-alouds. **It was amazing to see how much his confidence, communication, and literacy skills grew from September to June. The progress I observed in the classroom was also clearly reflected in his data, which made his success even more meaningful.**"

- Erin Rotanz



"One student who initially needed significant adult support to participate in ELA activities has made **noticeable progress through consistent routines and repetition of enCORE.** Over time, the student began recognizing familiar letters and sounds and participating more independently during lessons."

- Lauren Briggs

Beyond the Numbers (cont'd)

The adapted reading library is one of the most celebrated components of the TeachTown curriculum. With hundreds of titles across K-12, the comprehensive library provides students with disabilities with equitable, inclusive access to general education curriculum with stories that are both socially and developmentally appropriate. And when students are engaging with content that's interesting and relevant, it shows! →

For teachers at PMSD, enCORE has helped add more structure, intentionality, and consistency to their ELA instruction—without requiring additional prep and supplemental resources.

"The books from enCORE are a big hit with my students."

- Kathleen Powers

"Students will even log back into their student-led lessons after TeachTown says good night because they want to continue doing [the lessons]!"

- Erica Townsend

"They get excited when a new enCORE story is introduced and are eager to see what we will be learning about next."

- Erin Rotanz

"My students love the fiction and non-fiction books!"

- Lauren Briggs

"By providing leveled instruction, visuals, focused lessons, and scaffolding, [enCORE] has provided not only me but all of the staff in my classroom the tools needed to teach ELA," shares Erica Townsend. "It has shown me a clear progression of skills that students need to read while aligning with the DLM (Dynamic Learning Maps) standards... **It has made me a better and more confident educator.**"

PMSD Special Education Teacher Jennifer Rivera appreciates how enCORE allows her to differentiate the same content to meet the needs of every student in her class. "I like that I can **modify and scaffold the lessons based on individual abilities** while keeping everyone involved in the same learning. For students with significant needs, that flexibility is very important."

Lauren Briggs agrees that enCORE ELA's structure offers multiple entry points for learning. "I am able to use repetition, visual supports, modeling and hands-on activities to make literacy skills more accessible. **It has helped me to provide a level of support to meet each student's needs to participate and make progress.**"



Why It Matters

There has been a growing spotlight on literacy in U.S. schools as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, where virtual learning and absenteeism led to a sharp decline. In 2022, the average reading score for 4th grade was lower than all prior assessment years going back to 2005. Thirty-four percent of students were reported to be below basic reading level in the fourth grade, with another 31% below the proficient reading level.

The pandemic also had a notable impact on students with disabilities who weren't able to receive the same level of support during distance learning. In 2024, 72% of 4th graders with disabilities, including those with a 504 plan, scored below basic on reading scores.



enCORE & the Science of Reading

One of the strongest responses to the literacy crisis has been implementing instruction built on the Science of Reading. **The Science of Reading** embodies the literacy research that has been conducted during the past 5 decades. Practically speaking, it entails taking an evidence-based approach to reading and writing. The **Simple View of Reading** acts as the conceptual backbone of the Science of Reading. It states that reading comprehension (or skilled reading) is the product of decoding skills (or word recognition skills) and language comprehension.



enCORE & the Science of Reading (cont'd)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that students with disabilities receive scientifically-based, evidence-driven reading instruction. The ELA domain of enCORE is systematically designed to align with the **Science of Reading**. By integrating the five pillars of literacy—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension—into every grade band of its ELA domain, enCORE provides a clear roadmap from recognizing letters to building meaning. enCORE brings the Science of Reading to life in the moderate to severe classroom with:

- ✓ **Phonemic Awareness:** Instruction follows an age-appropriate developmental progression, moving from rhyming and word-level skills to identifying and manipulating individual sounds in words.
- ✓ **Systematic Phonics:** Explicit instruction systematically builds from single sound-letter correspondences up through complex vowel teams, word patterns, prefixes, suffixes, and morphological awareness.
- ✓ **High-Utility Vocabulary:** Keywords are embedded multiple times within unit literature and across domains (Math, Science, Social Studies) to ensure students have repeated exposures in functional, real-world contexts.
- ✓ **Building Fluency:** Students build reading fluency through repeated readings across multiple accessible formats, as well as decodable readers in every unit across enCORE Elementary.
- ✓ **Comprehension Through Access:** Every lesson begins with Anchor Instruction to build background knowledge, followed by leveled comprehension activities that allow every student to demonstrate what they know.

Looking Forward

While the definition of reading success will look different for every student, all students deserve access to rich stories and informative texts to learn about the world. The results seen in Patchogue-Medford School District demonstrate that **students with moderate to severe disabilities can make meaningful gains in literacy** when provided with systematic, explicit instruction based on evidence-based practices.

To any school district considering enCORE to support literacy for their students with moderate to severe disabilities, PMSD teacher Eric Rotanz advises that you don't have to implement everything at once, "Take baby steps, build your routines, and make it work for the individual needs of your students. **Once you see your students participating, communicating, and making progress, you really see the value of the program.**"



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 and supporting interventions deliver a whole child approach. We help you measurably improve the academic, adaptive, social, and language/ communication skills of your students—from PreK through the transition years. Our entire curriculum has been founded upon what works for students with moderate to severe disabilities.

Learn more about how enCORE can help you deliver the high-quality, research-backed literacy instruction your students deserve at TeachTown.com