

## Case Study

# At-Risk and Struggling Math Students at City School District of New Rochelle Attain New Levels of Confidence and Success

Middle school special education students in New Rochelle, New York have demonstrated difficulty in closing the achievement gap given the rigorous demands of the new Math Standards. To address this issue, administrators at City School District of New Rochelle were determined to find a solution for their most vulnerable students.

After much research, Voyager Sopris Learning's *TransMath* was selected and implemented in the 2011–2012 school year. Almost immediately, math skills and confidence improved, and the school's special education students rediscovered their love of learning. The story of New Rochelle is inspiring.

## THE CHALLENGE

The seventh- and eighth-grade mathematics students entering the City School District of New Rochelle's special education classes were dealing with multiple issues, including a lack of foundational math and literacy skills that made it difficult for them to read directions, demonstrate math fluency, and solve word problems. Most entered class lacking mastery of multiplication tables, division, or even place value.

"This was a serious problem," says Patrice Kentner, Special Education Instructor at New Rochelle. "Without these foundational skills, these kids can't succeed in algebra."

Jeffrey Cole, Assistant Director of Special Education for the district, agreed and explained that the district's student profile required they receive specially designed instruction to ensure an increased rate of learning in order to master essential skills identified by the Common Core State Standards. "Additionally, the students we identified had not demonstrated measurable gains in previous math intervention programs within the district continuum of interventions, so they were coming in performing below grade level," Cole said. "Many had all but given up."

All at New Rochelle agreed it was time to change the status quo and implement a new approach to help their students succeed in math.

Kentner had faith in her students and was certain that with the right intervention program, she would see them transform into confident, empowered learners with strong math skills they could take into the future. She knew the district just had to find a program that would meet their needs.

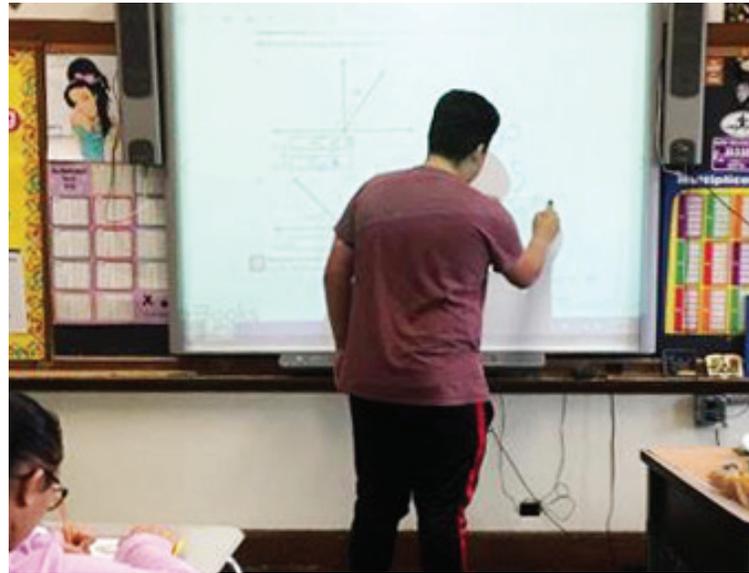


# THE SOLUTION

After extensive research, school administrators selected Voyager Sopris Learning's *TransMath* to serve the district's struggling middle school special education population. The district began implementing *TransMath* at the beginning of the 2011–2012 school year.

Designed to deepen conceptual understanding and build problem-solving proficiency in math, *TransMath* creates a successful path to algebra for struggling students through explicit instruction and multi-sensory strategies. *TransMath* efficacy studies show that students using the program achieved more than three years' growth in one year.

Once implemented in New Rochelle, students there experienced the same impressive growth and success. In the past five years, the district has witnessed significant improvement in mathematics achievement and confidence. For Kentner, *TransMath* was "like a Christmas present."



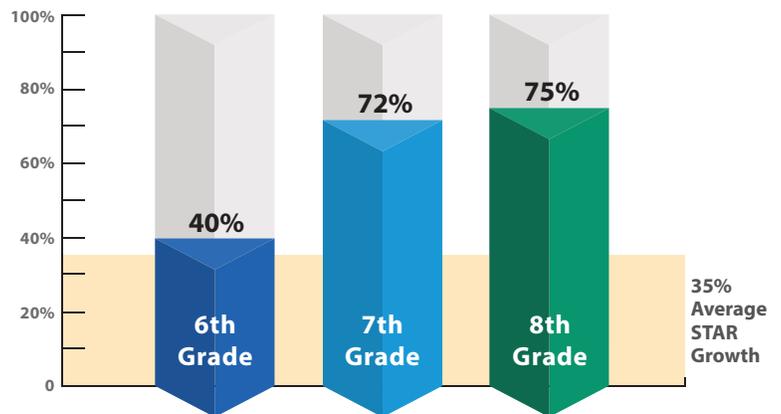
*Patrice Kentner*  
Special Education Instructor  
City School District of  
New Rochelle

"The program is great for multi-sensory learners," Kentner said. "It provides pacing to allow students to close the achievement gap in a timely manner as it provides additional practice without the issue of cognitive overload for struggling students."

Kentner also is pleased with the way *TransMath* allows her to work on foundational computation skills and problem solving in each lesson. The program's ongoing assessments allow her to see who is "getting it" and who will require re-teaching of the material.

## 2016 STAR GAINS WITH TRANSMATH

Isaac E. Young Middle School in New Rochelle, NY surpassed the average SPG on the STAR assessment when using *TransMath*. This chart shows the impressive gains made in 2016 by special education students in grades 6, 7, and 8.



Students using *TransMath* achieved above the average STAR gains of 35%

## THE RESULTS

Since the City School District of New Rochelle began using *TransMath*, student confidence and class participation has improved significantly. "As my students develop math skills, they grow in other areas," Kentner explained. "Since they now have strategies they can use consistently in the classroom and for their homework assignments, they are confident enough to come up to the Smartboard and 'teach' the skills to the other students."

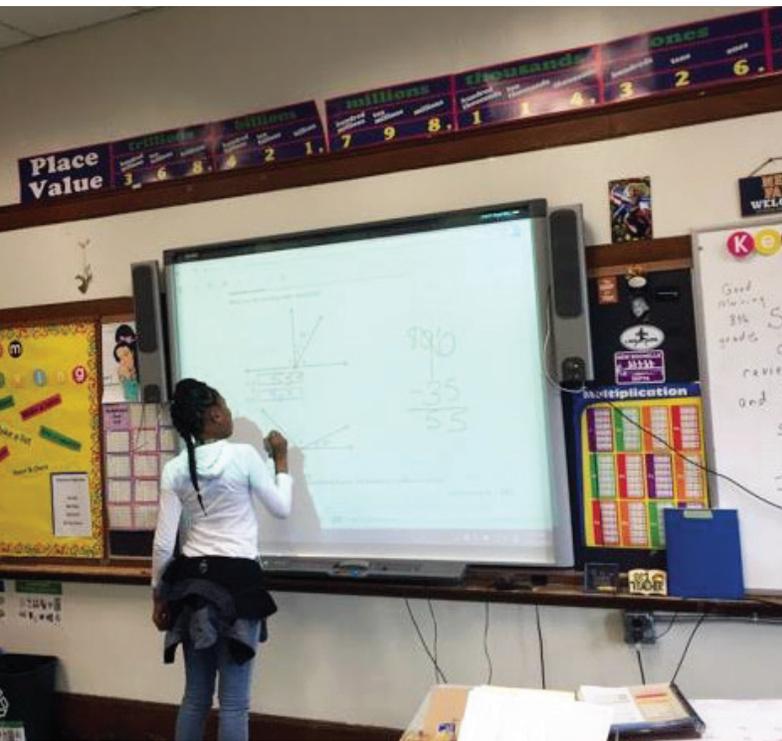
Personally, Kentner finds using *TransMath* very rewarding—an added benefit. "As an educator, I get very excited when I see that my students are approaching mastery. My students may be struggling learners but each day I see an improvement, I am thrilled. They know it, too, because they see how excited I get!"

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*"I love when I overhear one student offering help to another student who may have made an error or is confused. It empowers them and also tells me that if you can teach the skill, then you have mastered the skill."*

**—Patrice Kentner,  
Special Education Instructor**

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The way *TransMath* has spurred student growth in key areas has not gone unnoticed by administration at the district, Cole said. "We've seen an increase in self-efficacy, particularly when it comes to completing mathematics skills that are commensurate with Common Core Learning Standards." Equally important, Cole said the district is pleased with the way the program has addressed the opportunity gap (because students do not feel overwhelmed) the attitude gap (as the students developed a love of learning math), and the empowerment gap (through small instructional segments that allow students to develop ownership of their work).

Today, New Rochelle's special education students are thriving in math, and for many, this is the first time that they're succeeding in a math course. "When I hear a student tell another student that they are 'good in math' or that they find something 'easy,' it makes my day," Kentner reports. "With *TransMath*, my students are becoming truly prepared for success in their future coursework."