



# STORIES OF SUCCESS

**Every year, dozens of educators share stories of academic improvement due to the implementation of Orchard Software –** children successfully remediating academic weaknesses, students improving standardized test scores, and schools meeting AYP for the first time.

As you consider how to integrate technology into your students' education, we invite you to read these Stories of Success from Orchard.

 **Orchard**  
*Targeted Educational Software*

# STORIES OF SUCCESS

**O**rchard Software is research-based software using time-tested instructional practices that current research has proven to be effective across a large number of students. Orchard Software provides a combination of state-specific assessments with targeted instruction and data-driven management tools that can be customized to meet each school's needs. With more than 150 Skill Trees covering over 3,000 concepts, assessments are designed to ensure that students are working on the specific skills they need to master in order to meet each state's challenging academic standards as well as each school district's learning objectives.

Siboney Learning Group is continually conducting scientific research to validate the efficacy of Orchard Software; sometimes, the most important information about Orchard Software comes from the users themselves. This booklet contains some firsthand accounts of how Orchard Software has helped schools just like yours.

These vignettes were written by educators across the country who are using and benefiting from Orchard's instructional software every day. All of these stories are authentic. They reflect the growing appreciation for one of the most successful and popular instructional software programs available today.

The complete Orchard Research Book, which summarizes the pedagogical basis of Orchard's instructional methods and research studies, is also available. To obtain a copy of the Orchard Research Book, or for more information, contact your authorized Orchard representative, call 1-800-351-1404, or visit [www.orchardsoftware.com](http://www.orchardsoftware.com).

**S**iboney Learning Group is a dynamic publisher, integrator, and provider of comprehensive and motivational software. Its associates are passionate about the success of children and adult learners and are committed to playing a leading role in their education by providing high-quality software.

## The Benefits of Using Orchard Software

Parks Elementary School purchased the language arts K-6 curriculum from Joyce Bear, of Bear Software, in the spring of 2005. In December of 2005, we were able to complete the curriculum by purchasing the Math K-6, Reading Realities, and a subscription to the Reading A-Z. After using the curriculum for one school year in the computer lab and one computer in the classrooms, the principal and the entire staff at the school feel that it was one of the best investments we have ever made to help our students. We have definitely concluded that when our students use this software, there is improvement in their reading and math skills. It is a method to reinforce skills that are taught in the classroom for students who are on all levels.

The benefit that I would like to discuss is that it is research-based. This meets the criteria of the No Child Left Behind Act; therefore, we are able to use Title 1 funds to make the purchase. The Orchard for Your State materials correlate all of the lessons in the Skill Trees to the Oklahoma Pass Skills. The Teacher Guides are so comprehensive that it is easy for the teacher to plan software lessons on a yearly and daily basis to integrate skills taught in the lab and the classroom. The pre- and posttests in language arts and math not only provide data for planning instruction, but are good practice tests for the CRT itself as well. The teachers and students both were amazed at how similar the types of questions were on the two tests. Our students took the posttest within two weeks after taking the CRT. The main difference was that the students said that the Orchard test was the harder of the two tests. The reports that

*“Another benefit to using Orchard Software is that the students love to use it,” says Ms. Sparks.*

**“The lessons are interactive, fun, and use the latest media resources to keep the students’ attention on the task. The students have never complained about doing any of the Orchard lessons.”**

can be printed for teachers and parents also provide valuable assessment tools.

Another benefit of Orchard Software is that the students love to use it. The lessons are interactive, fun, and use the latest media resources to keep the students’ attention on the task. The students have never complained about doing any of the Orchard lessons. Because the system keeps track of the student’s progress, the student becomes accountable for completing and being successful on the lessons.

Finally, it is not that expensive compared to other software programs when you consider the amount of programs, tests, and assessment tools available. The toll-free telephone number or email address gets you any kind of help that you need immediately. The support system is great. If the school doesn’t have the money to purchase the entire program, they can buy a few Skill Trees at a time.

We are looking forward to using Orchard for the second year. We have made this program the supplemental program for the second and third tiers of our Campus Improvement Plan for reading and math. We feel that we have just begun to discover all of the many effective ways that we can use this software to increase learning for our students. We have only one problem: There are not enough hours during the school year or enough computers to make use of all of the resources that we have through this software.

**Paula Sparks**  
**Computer Lab Teacher**  
**Oklahoma City Public Schools**  
**Oklahoma City, OK**

## Software Helps Scores Skyrocket

Like dozens of urban schools throughout the nation, Hamilton Elementary has changed drastically over the past three decades. Today, many students can't afford basic school supplies, let alone lunch. Kindergartners come to school with fewer skills, and parents are less available to help. What was once a thriving middle-class neighborhood on the outskirts of downtown Memphis, TN, is now an impoverished area with an elementary school struggling to educate a needier group of students.

These needs became painfully obvious a few years ago when the school's academic performance dropped below the state's acceptable level, earning Hamilton the ominous distinction of a school "on notice" – the equivalent to probation.

"That was a wake-up call," says Michael Hawkins, the school's principal for the past 13 years. "We decided as a faculty that it was time to intensify our efforts.

"We initiated a new literacy program, placed renewed emphasis on mathematics, enhanced professional development efforts, and turned to technology for assistance. In particular, we wanted software that could assess students' knowledge prior to high-stakes testing and target weaknesses with individualized instructional plans.

"We wanted to approach data in a different way, a more analytical way," Mr. Hawkins says.

"Two years later, Hamilton is not only off the state's list, we are one of the city's highest-performing elementary schools, reaching AYP (Annual Yearly Progress) in mathematics, reading, and science.

"We had to shift our strategies in order to be more accommodating to children who came to us with less background knowledge," Mr. Hawkins says. "We intensified our professional development and implemented a school-wide software program that motivated kids to work harder."

The software chosen by Mr. Hawkins and his staff was Orchard, published by Siboney Learning Group of St. Louis, MO.

"Orchard was less expensive and easier to use," he says. "It had to be user-friendly, or our teachers wouldn't embrace it. Their acceptance has a lot to do with our academic success."

"Our students begin the year with a pretest, which

shows areas in need of improvement," explains Sheryl Hayes, Technology Coordinator for Hamilton Elementary. "The software identifies these weaknesses and assigns 'Skill Trees'— lessons that target specific academic deficiencies. As students progress, they are rewarded with 'games' that further test proficiency. These rewards provide the motivation that keeps even the most challenging students engrossed in their lessons.

"And as the Technology Coordinator, I can manually assign individualized lessons for each student. One girl may be struggling with decimals, while another needs help with multiplication. Whatever the need, I can easily add lessons that specifically address it."

The proof is in the posttests, which show students just how much they've learned.

"It works," says Mr. Hawkins, who was recently nominated for the district's principal-of-the-year award.

In the area of mathematics, students increased their TCAP (Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program) scores from 57.4% proficiency to 78%. In reading, language, and writing, scores rose from 69.6% proficiency to 88%.

Students in kindergarten through second grade spend a minimum of 30 minutes per week using the software, while third- through fifth-graders utilize it for 45 minutes per week. Some teachers, however, incorporate it into their daily lessons, rotating students among the three or four computers located in each classroom.

Students say the TCAP tests what the software prescribes. And it should, since the software is correlated to each state's standards.

"Last year, I did a needs-assessment with the teachers," Mr. Hawkins says. "And overwhelmingly they offered the software as the No. 1 reason for our students' academic improvements."

**Michael Hawkins**  
**Principal**

**Sheryl Hayes**  
**Technology Coordinator**  
**Hamilton Elementary School**  
**Memphis, TN**



## Students, Parents, and Teachers Love Orchard

E.L. Wright Middle School in Columbia, SC, wrote a grant and received \$6,000 to purchase Orchard Software. We have school-wide and school-to-home licensing. Our students, parents, and teachers love all of the trees we have purchased and eagerly want to purchase more.

The students do not think of Orchard as work but as an exciting program that challenges them intellectually. Parents love the fact that their children are using home computers for academic practice instead of just surfing the Internet or emailing friends. Teachers value Orchard because it is truly academic in nature but still presents itself in a very child-friendly way. The management system and various levels make Orchard a great tool to assist teachers with meeting the individual needs of all students.

*Kristin Seay*  
*Academic Dean*  
*E.L. Wright Middle School*  
*Columbia, SC*

## Orchard's Ease of Use is Impressive

As we move into the fourth quarter of the school year and approach the Standards of Learning tests, I continue to hear nothing but positive reactions from teachers using Orchard Software. For the first time, many teachers feel they have found a resource that allows them to tailor the skill practice in such a way to support remediation and review. The students are challenged and motivated by the program and enthusiastic about the learning games. The variety of activities allows the software to be valuable in both the classroom with one computer and in the computer lab.

The ease of use is probably the most repeated comment. Teachers have found the instructional management system supportive of student assessment. Most valued is the ability to customize the programs to meet classroom and student needs. With accountability and the impact of state standards testing looming over instruction, integration of instructional software is of heightened importance.

With Orchard, we have definitely found a software program that is affordable, reliable, and supportive of instruction. The teaching component that explains correct responses makes Orchard unique among a variety of software currently available for integration into the classroom.

*Rose Marie Dillon*  
*Language Arts Curriculum Specialist*  
*Fairfax County Public Schools*  
*Fairfax, VA*

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***"I have been involved with the Orchard program for about six years. We have had to purchase the program [Skill Trees] one-by-one, but I was not going to be happy until I had everything that was available. Since that time, I have moved to the middle school and have started making the efforts to purchase the 6-8 programs. Orchard is awesome!"***

*Sam Rhodes, Assistant Principal, Milan Middle School, Milan, TN*

## Florida Students Improve with Orchard

### Provides the Practice Students Need

In 2002, students at Archer Community School – a small, rural elementary school just outside of Gainesville – were struggling in reading, writing, and mathematics. In just three years, the school's third-graders improved their math scores by 26%, its fourth-graders shot past the state average in writing scores, and its fifth-graders improved their reading scores by 52%.

According to Kim Parsons, the school's Computer Lab Coordinator, educational technology played a significant role in her students' academic achievements.

"We needed many different strategies for working with our students, whether at-risk or not," Ms. Parson recalls. "I wanted something easy to administer that would help direct teachers in their choices of teaching strategies. I also wanted something that would provide concrete evidence for the paper trail that is required these days."

She chose Orchard Software, which features more than 150 Skill Trees (or programs) that cover over 3,000 skills and concepts in reading, language, math, and science.

"When I previewed the Orchard Skill Trees, I was delighted," says Ms. Parsons. "They provide the extra practice our children need – rote practice in game formats as well as application, analysis, and synthesis practice in several formats. The content in Orchard's reading trees is cross-curricular, interesting to the students, and age-appropriate."

**Kim Parsons**  
**Computer Lab Coordinator**  
**Archer Community School**  
**Gainesville, FL**

### Data-Informed Instruction

In particular, Orchard has helped us significantly with ESOL students. Every six weeks, I touch base with teachers to create targeted instruction. We look at each student's achievement with Orchard and with traditional instruction. We also use Orchard's correlation book to identify specific skills – it saves so much time on lesson plans.

**Cindy Forsyth**  
**Computer Teacher**  
**Summers Elementary School**  
**Gainesville, FL**

### Students Prefer Orchard Software

Just recently, I was in our computer lab watching the students use our new Orchard Software programs for mathematics. Although not surprised that they were working hard and on task, I was surprised that when given the choice to use the Internet for "playing" or the math programs, the students chose to continue with the Orchard Software.

There are a number of fun things to do on the Internet, and these students have had the opportunity to explore what was out there. Yet, they still chose to work on the Orchard math programs. Wow!

I look forward to reviewing their progress when "test time" comes around. Thank you for your time and effort in making sure our students have the very latest in technology and software as we strive together to improve the academics of our children.

**Charles F. McDaniel**  
**Principal**  
**Carver Middle School**  
**Leesburg, FL**

### Total Cost of Ownership

Orchard Software also saves schools money. Just ask Debbie Roberts, the Computer Coordinator at Westwood Middle School in Gainesville. Westwood owns the entire Orchard package, a vast array of instructional software that would have cost nearly twice as much from alternative sources.

"Rather than wait years to accumulate this much instructional content," says Ms. Roberts, "we were able to buy it all at once, allowing us to begin impacting kids right away. The best part is that our kids are learning – that Orchard is making a difference."

Orchard's flexible pricing structure allows schools to purchase just the Skill Trees they need. For schools with larger budgets, Orchard provides grade- and subject-specific bundles that include the Gold Star manager, a powerful yet remarkably intuitive management system.

**Debbie Roberts**  
**Computer Coordinator**  
**Westwood Middle School**  
**Gainesville, FL**

## Orchard Individualizes Education

Nine third-graders – each with specific needs and skills – quickly log in, lift headphones to their ears, and begin working on individualized fluency lessons. Some students struggle with context and comprehension, while others need help skimming and scanning. All are working on their own skills at their own pace.

My name is Nancy Grimaud, and I monitor their progress. For the past four years, I have used a combination of state-specific assessment with targeted instruction and data-driven management tools to create customized learning plans for each of my students, kindergarten through third grade.

The software, called Orchard, was purchased for the entire St. Louis Public School District – all 102 buildings – through a local philanthropic organization last year, after a few pilot programs proved successful. One of these pilot schools was Mullanphy Elementary, where I teach.

The software can pinpoint the exact skill a student needs help with. But to the other students, it's not apparent who is succeeding and who is not. "Johnny," for instance, is not. He's missed too many days due to sickle cell anemia and is a grade level behind his peers. However, in the computer lab, he's catching up thanks to engaging activities that target his specific weaknesses, such as making predictions and answering open-ended questions.

"Tiffany," on the other hand, is ahead of her peers and ready for more challenging assignments. She is assigned fourth-grade activities and is determined to master them by the end of the school year.

You can see the improvement with everyone. My principal, Ken Blanton, sees the improvement as he studies scores from the most recent online SRI (Scholastic Reading Inventory) test. This year, especially, he told me we're seeing an increase in reading scores. Students are so excited they'll stop him in the hall to tell him how much higher their scores are.

The school administers the online SRI quarterly then examines the results. When teachers see their students struggling in a certain area or with a particular concept, they notify me, and I adjust each student's individual activities. Students work on those weaknesses during regular visits to my computer lab.

I use the technology as a tool to encourage students to learn new skills. It reinforces what the teachers are doing back in the classroom.

**Nancy Grimaud**  
**Elementary Math Teacher / Lab Coordinator**  
**Mullanphy Elementary School**  
**St. Louis, MO**

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## So Easy to Use

St. Aloysius School has used Skill Trees from Orchard Software for two years now. I am very impressed with the software. It is so easy to set up and to use. The students love using it. It teaches and reinforces the skills that are necessary for success in reading and math. It is presented to students so clearly that even my kindergarteners are successful the first time they use it!

The software is affordable as well as interesting. Our philosophy of computer use at school is that the computer is a tool to do your work, improve your skills, and learn more about the world. This software does not turn the

computer into merely an expensive video game. It allows us to keep the computer as a learning tool. It encourages the students to progress. The activities are fun for the students while they meet the goals necessary for their education. The control and reports it offers the teachers are invaluable.

**Jean Kennedy**  
**Technology Coordinator**  
**St. Aloysius School**  
**Springfield, IL**

## Passing the Grade

Some good news! At semester time, we collected 14 students who had failed the first semester of pre-algebra and placed them in a new section of a class we have offered before: Mastery Math. Mastery Math has always been an individualized class. This time, we decided to try to use Orchard's programs to individualize the students' work instead of using the old, teacher-made materials.

Greg Brooks, a Teacher with South Haven Public Schools, spent time training on Orchard Software. He has two excellent teacher aides who also work directly with the students. Students in this class include kids with records of poor behavior in addition to failures.

Here is the amazing thing: Every one of those students received a passing grade in Mastery Math. A few students have attendance problems, which have prevented them from getting the grade, but the underlying grade is a passing grade for every student! I believe that this is a tribute to Greg's hard work and the effectiveness of the Orchard program. He and Orchard are to be commended.

*Kaye Apotheker  
Curriculum Director  
South Haven Public Schools  
South Haven, MI*

## Orchard Correlates Extremely Well

The curriculum on Orchard correlates extremely well with the material that the kids are exposed to on our daily entry activities (warm-up), with what I teach them at my instruction center, and with what is expected of them in the upper-level math courses. The best part is it teaches at the students' levels.

After the kids take a pretest, the computer makes an individualized assignment for each student based on the weaknesses of the student's math ability. How can you get more individualized than this?

I hope this letter gives you warm fuzzies inside because you are a part of their success.

*Lori Honig  
Math Teacher  
Bethel Junior High School  
Spanaway, WA*

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*"I was extremely impressed with how hard the students worked while on the computers. **Orchard kept their interest, and one of the most amazing benefits was that students who tended to have behavior problems were no longer a problem.**"*

*Greg Brooks, Teacher, South Haven Public Schools, South Haven, MI*



## Financing Makes Technology Purchase Possible

Throughout 30 years of education, I've dreamed of providing an individualized education plan for every student – a plan that identifies each student's academic strengths and weaknesses, and then prescribes instruction to either enrich or remediate. Today's instructional software programs make those IEPs possible.

Such ground-breaking technology isn't cheap, however. The reality is that many school districts can't afford the investment.

We were one of them.

We're a conservative school district, and have been since 1973 when the Indiana legislature froze tax rates. The \$5,306.22 we spend per student ranks 259th out of 310 statewide school corporations. The money's just not there for us and hasn't been for decades.

Meanwhile, we're growing like crazy – the fifth fastest-growing school district in Indiana. More than 70 subdivisions contribute to the enrollment of West Clark Community Schools, located across the Ohio River from Louisville, KY. Unfortunately, funding doesn't follow growth, and we're stuck educating more and more students within the same budget.

Although our test scores are admirable, above the state average in nearly everything, our classes are too large, our PCs are too few, and our teachers are underpaid. Add in the cost of renovating school facilities, and there's just nothing left.

We applied for a Common School Loan through the State Department of Education, but we were denied because our assessed wealth was too high. We were out of options. That's when we decided to look at financing our purchase.

I've always believed that if there's something out there

*“And this school year – not in five years, not next year – West Clark will provide the assessment, targeted instruction, and data management necessary to enhance learning and improve test scores.”*

we need, the kids should not have to wait. We knew we wanted Orchard Software, so when they offered a financing plan through Government Capital, we jumped at the opportunity.

Government Capital, a fully licensed and NASD registered broker-dealer, specializes in public sector technology funding.

“Each year, public school districts are more comfortable financing their curricular needs,” says Kevin Lerner, Vice President of Public Finance with Government Capital. “It's become more widely accepted. Schools realize the benefits of acquiring what they need in a more timely manner than their annual budget allows.”

With interest rates low – ours was 5.68 percent – we believed that financing our entire purchase (as opposed to buying software piecemeal over several years) was the best approach. Now we can immediately integrate Orchard into all grades and begin reaping the benefits of individualized instruction district-wide.

Starting this month, media specialists, teachers, and administrators are learning how to incorporate Orchard Software into their daily instruction. And this school year – not in five years, not next year – West Clark will provide the assessment, targeted instruction, and data management necessary to enhance learning and improve test scores. This year, my dream for district-wide IEPs starts coming true.

**Tim Weaver**  
**Assistant Superintendent**  
**West Clark Community Schools**  
**Sellersberg, IN**

## Tech Directors Love Orchard's Service

You've carefully studied the multitude of educational technology solutions – the pedagogy behind its design, the scientific research on its effectiveness, the requirements for installation and maintenance, and the total cost of ownership. But what happens after the check has been cashed?

The ultimate value of educational software means nothing without quality technical support. No one understands this more than Bill Edwards, President of Siboney Learning Group, publisher of Orchard Software.

"As opposed to the hit-and-run sales approach of many companies," says Mr. Edwards, "Siboney Learning Group maintains an intense focus on customer needs long after the sale. In fact, our relationships with customers actually deepen when our technicians become involved."

*"From day one, the technical service Siboney has provided for Orchard has been outstanding."*

Patty McQueen, Technology Coordinator at Ortega Elementary School in Jacksonville, FL, realized this shortly after purchasing Orchard Software in 2002.

"We had a unique server situation in our school," recalls Ms. McQueen. "Siboney flew in a software expert from Texas to spend two days with us, ensuring that Orchard worked perfectly for our students. From day one, the technical service Siboney has provided for Orchard has been outstanding."

Unfortunately, it's difficult to quantify technical service when attempting to calculate total cost of ownership. To find out just how important this is, ask a district technology coordinator who's been burnt by poor – or nonexistent – technical support. All of a sudden, the pedagogy, research, and cost become less relevant.

This is why Mr. Edwards insists on providing the highest quality technical support available among educational software publishers.

"Not only do Siboney technicians possess exceptional expertise, they listen," says Mr. Edwards

**Patty McQueen**  
**Technology Coordinator**  
**Ortega Elementary School**  
**Jacksonville, FL**

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## Best Software Investment Ever

We purchased 13 Orchard Skill Trees last fall, and I am a firm believer that it was the best investment of time and money that my school has spent on software!

The kids love it! We had only used Orchard for approximately four months last year, and I truly believe that these programs helped to raise our test scores at all three grade levels. The programs are interactive, engaging, and educational all at the same time.

I was explaining Orchard to a new teacher yesterday, and a student who was sitting by my desk listening had no fear of chiming in and telling her how much fun the programs were. I love Orchard, and we plan to add as many Skill Trees as possible within the next year.

**Janet Butler**  
**Technology Specialist**  
**Bryan County Elementary School**  
**Pembroke, GA**

# STORIES OF SUCCESS

*“Orchard has made it possible for my students to work at their individual levels. **Each student can be challenged, yet not overwhelmed.** Test scores the last two years show my students reaching their yearly goals.”*

*Clarice Miller, Teacher, Ammon Elementary School, Idaho Falls, ID*

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**“I believe in Orchard and use it several times a week. I use it for remediation, with lesson plans, for warm-up practice, and as a reward for early finishers.”**

*Linda Turner  
Computer Lab Manager  
Riser Elementary School  
West Monroe, LA*

*“We used Orchard to drive instruction, resulting in the **fourth-highest math and reading gains of 117 schools in New York’s Region 3.**”*

*Andrew Newman  
Principal  
Jackie Robinson PS 15  
West Monroe, NY*

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*“Our students have continued to increase in both comprehension and fluency levels. The greatest satisfaction is that these **struggling students are now enjoying reading** and are comfortable talking about what they’ve read.”*

*Sharla Young, Technology Teacher, Huntsville Elementary School, Huntsville, TX*



*"Since the addition of Orchard Software to our computer lab, I have seen a new level of excitement and participation by students at all levels of the school. I am confident that this will translate into improved scores in the areas of reading and math."*

**– Cathy Elrod, teacher (GA)**

- ★ A leading school publisher for over 40 years
- ★ Orchard Software is used in tens of thousands of schools across the country
- ★ Orchard's #1 priority is to help teachers and parents help students master key skills and concepts stressed in textbooks and on standardized tests
- ★ Orchard uses the perfect blend of instruction with motivating activities and challenging games, so children at all ability levels benefit
- ★ Orchard is a school-only publisher, which means you will not find these products in any retail stores