



Achieving Measurable Learning Results by Building a Love of Math

Walworth Jt. School District #1, Walworth, Wisconsin



"IXL has been a welcome addition to my classroom. My students have shown great progress in many skills since beginning IXL and have shown excitement at the opportunity to continue to learn using this outstanding program."

Tyler Heck, 6th Grade Math Teacher

The teachers at Walworth Jt. School District #1 want to see all of their students succeed in the classroom. So when students' math scores on district benchmarks didn't demonstrate the results they were hoping for, they introduced IXL to give students opportunities to learn—and play with—math. IXL Math is now a key component of an approach to math instruction that has produced notable gains across all grades in this preK-8 school.

Rigorous Math Instruction, With Plenty of Flexibility

Walworth Jt. School District #1 is a preK-8 school in rural Wisconsin. Their 500 students come from a diverse range of backgrounds, with 60% of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch and 33% classified as English language learners.

When Phill Klamm took on his role as principal in 2015, finding a new approach for math was a priority. He decided to implement IXL Math school-wide based on his experiences using the program with his own children. Before coming to Walworth, Phill and his family spent several months in Kenya. He and his wife homeschooled their children during this time, and IXL Math was one of their core programs. "We did a lot of research, and IXL kept coming up as one of the best programs out there," he says. IXL provided standards-based math instruction that met the abilities of all three of their children—then in preK, third grade and high school—in a single program.

His teachers appreciate IXL's simplicity, ease of use, and authentic learning experiences. Phill says, "IXL is a rigorous program, but it's also very flexible. It works for students at all different levels and for different classroom models. It gives teachers a lot of freedom in how they choose to implement it to meet the needs of their kids."



Building a Community of Math Lovers

IXL Math was first introduced at the pre-K level in 2015-2016. During the 2016-2017 school year, it was provided to teachers who volunteered to try it across all grade levels. In 2017-2018, it was rolled out school-wide.

Teachers have broad latitude in how they use IXL in their classrooms, but all students are expected to use it for 15 minutes each day during their block math period. Sixth grade math teacher Tyler Heck says, “Students have the opportunity to work on math skills at their own pace and level of learning all at the same time. It can be used for pre-teaching, re-teaching, or as an extension for all students.” Many teachers allow students to work individually in IXL, following the skills recommended by the IXL Continuous Diagnostic and working through them at their own pace. Some teachers assign specific skills to students based on what they are working on in class.

IXL is one part of the school’s approach to math instruction that includes a new math textbook program and an emphasis on data. The IXL Continuous Diagnostic gives Phill and his teachers insight into where students need to focus their time in IXL and in their textbook program. The Continuous Diagnostic also motivates students to continue practicing as they discover their mastery levels and areas of improvement. Following their own progress gives students pride in their growth and has helped them discover the joy that comes with learning new things.

The school has instituted a badge system to celebrate student mastery of grade level skills, and students count down the skills they need to master in IXL to earn their badges. They celebrate success and foster healthy competition through their “Mathematician of the Week” program. Students who complete the most IXL problems each week earn certificates and are recognized on the school’s Facebook page.

Phill says that the best part about IXL is seeing students develop confidence and learn to love math. The self-directed nature of IXL allows students to be independent in their learning and even “play” with math skills. “Most of the time, we hear students say ‘I hate math’ or ‘I’m not good at math.’ But since we started using IXL, I see more students self identify as ‘good at math.’ That is priceless to me,” he says.

Some students are working far above their grade level in some skills, just because they enjoy challenging themselves and seeing how far they can go. One first grade student worked all the way up from first grade to seventh grade in one of IXL’s math strands. Another student, who always thought she was bad at math, now loves working in IXL after earning “Mathematician of the Week” several weeks in a row. “She’s on fire—she wants to keep up her streak,” Phill says.

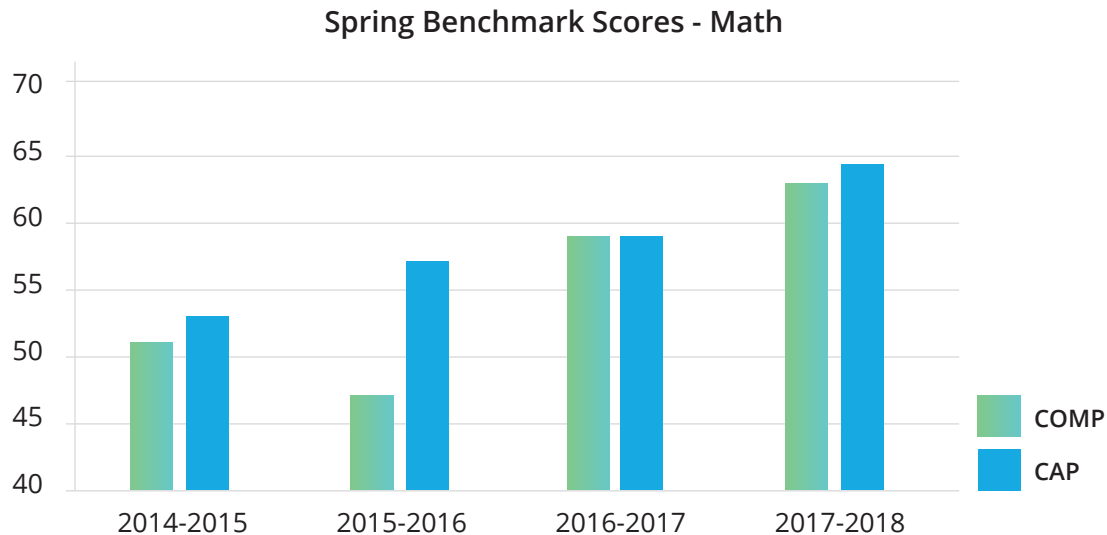
“IXL has helped to increase my students math confidence greatly! They enjoy the independence and I enjoy the fact it is tailored to each student. I am able to help students one-on-one to push their math learning while others are working independently to increase theirs. I especially love the Continuous Diagnostic!”

Caitlin Dowden, 4th Grade Math Teacher



The Proof is in the Data

Walworth's new approach to math is paying off. The district conducts fall and spring benchmarks each year to monitor growth in grade level skills, including math computation and math concepts and applications (CAP). They saw record-high growth in both computation and CAP for the 2017-2018 school year.



While other changes in math instruction and the school's intervention model make it difficult to tease out the exact effect of IXL, Phill believes that IXL Math is a key component in his school's success. "IXL enables a more personalized approach to math instruction and gives students control over their learning," he says. "The Continuous Diagnostic shows kids where their strengths are and where they need to go back and practice more. Targeting instruction this way really helps them grow." As teachers become more comfortable with IXL, more of them are using use IXL data to differentiate instruction and provide personalized intervention.

"We're really proud of what our kids have accomplished in math here," Phill says. "They are doing well because of the tools and instruction we provide for them. IXL is a big part of that."



A Model for Success at Walworth Jt. School District #1

Here's how teachers at Walworth Jt. School District #1 are using IXL in their classrooms:

- Students access IXL on classroom tablets. They aim for at least 15 minutes on IXL daily during their 90-minute math block.
- Teachers have flexibility in how they choose to implement IXL in their classrooms. Some assign specific skills based on what they are teaching, and some allow students to work freely in the program.
- Principal Phill Klamm checks the IXL Math reports every Monday morning to monitor student progress towards grade-level skills.
- Students earn badges for completing all of the skills in their grade level. They use IXL reports to count down the number of skills they have left to master.
- The school encourages friendly competition and a love of math through their "Mathematician of the Week" program, which recognizes students who complete the most IXL problems each week.
- Teachers use the IXL Continuous Diagnostic to determine where students need extra help. Students identified as needing intervention can use IXL Math in a dedicated intervention period to work on specific skills.