CASE STUDY

Intensive Math Students Exceed Growth Targets with IXL

Pacetti Bay Middle School, St. Johns County School District, Florida

"As a teacher, it's hard to truly individualize instruction for every student. IXL lets them work independently at their own pace to fill in skill gaps."

Risa Byrd, middle school Intensive Math teacher

Risa Byrd teaches Intensive Math at Pacetti Bay Middle School, part of a rapidly growing district in northeastern Florida. Her students come to her needing extra support to fill in skill gaps and achieve grade-level mastery on the Florida State Assessment (FSA). With daily use of IXL Math, her students have achieved growth rates of 300% or more on benchmark assessments in a single year, far exceeding their projected growth trajectories.

Filling in Skill Gaps for Struggling Students

Middle school students in Florida who score Level 1 or Level 2 in math on the FSA can take an Intensive Math course in addition to their regular math class. Intensive Math provides additional time for practice and targeted support to help students master grade-level standards.

Risa has 68 students in six class periods, with class sizes ranging from 10 to 15. Many of her students struggle with grade-level math standards because they are missing foundational skills from prior grades.

"When they struggle with a particular standard in class, often it's not the math they are working on right now that is the problem. It may be a more fundamental skill that they don't know how to do, like multiplying fractions. I knew that filling in these underlying math skills would lead to the fastest growth and help them succeed in their regular math classes."

Risa had used IXL successfully in previous teaching positions, in both elementary grades and a high school dropout prevention program. She recognized that her middle school remedial math students would also benefit from the targeted, personalized practice and support provided by IXL Math. After seeing impressive gains during a trial period, her principal agreed to purchase IXL Math for all students the following school year.

Targeted Instruction and Practice for Every Student

Risa's students use IXL daily in their Intensive Math class and at home. Students start the year by assessing their knowledge with the IXL Real-Time Diagnostic, which uses adaptive assessment technology to determine each student's grade level proficiency in key math strands. The diagnostic provides each learner with personalized skill recommendations that will help them grow from where they are. Students complete new diagnostic questions each week, so Risa and the regular math teachers have a continuously evolving picture of student knowledge levels.

Students spend about 30 minutes a day on IXL using iPads. Sometimes they work on standards that are assigned by their regular math teachers to support what they are working on in class. After completing those assignments, they start working on areas of need identified by the Real-Time Diagnostic. Risa says many of her students need extra help with the Numbers and Operations and Algebra and Algebraic Thinking strands. Students may work independently or in small groups with peers working on the same skills. Risa also uses IXL Analytics to plan small-group direct instruction for students who are struggling.

Risa says her students benefit from the targeted skill practice and instant feedback in IXL Math. If they get a question wrong, they know immediately and receive on-the-spot remedial instruction so they can correct their mistakes. Students are expected to achieve a SmartScore of 80 or above on skills they are working on for their regular math class (the SmartScore is IXL's proprietary scoring system that measures how well a student understands a skill). They aim for a SmartScore of 100 on all of the remedial skills they are working on by the end of the grading period.

Two Years of Growth—or More!—in a Single Year

IXL Math is now used across the entire school. As of the end of February, students at Pacetti Middle School had completed nearly two million problems on IXL and mastered more than 13,000 skills!

All of that hard work is paying off. Risa's Intensive Math students have far exceeded projected gains based on school-wide benchmark assessments. Many of her students have more than doubled the "stretch goals" set by the benchmark, making **more than two years' projected gains in less than a single school year**. She says, "Some of my students have seen 300% or even 400% growth! IXL is the only difference we have made in my classroom this year." Risa expects to see the benchmark results mirrored in FSA performance. "The skills they are working on in IXL line up with what they need to do on the FSA," she says.

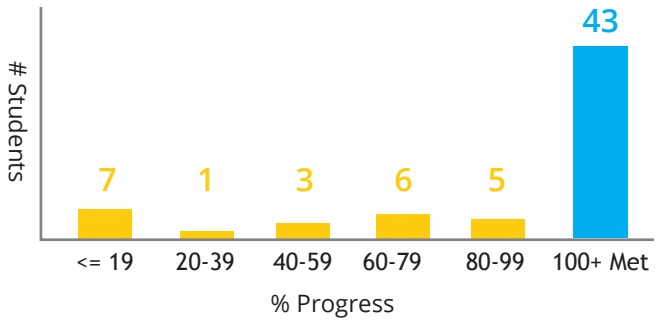
Next year, the school hopes to replace its current benchmark assessment with the Real-Time Diagnostic. "The IXL diagnostic gives us longitudinal data across all grades and gives us better information about their skill gaps," Risa says.

Risa highly recommends IXL Math for all students. She says, "It's a fabulous, inclusive tool. I've used it with higher-performing and gifted kids as well as with at-risk kids. If you're thinking about implementing it, I say just find a way to make it happen!"

"Kids think they hate math, or they can't do math. But once you fill in the knowledge gaps, math gets a lot easier. IXL builds confidence because they can see the payoff for their hard work immediately."

Risa Byrd

PROGRESS TOWARD EXPECTED GROWTH



A Model for Success at Pacetti Bay Middle School

Here's how Risa Byrd is using IXL in her middle school math intervention classroom:

- Students use IXL in class for about 30 minutes per day on classroom iPads. Students first work on skills aligned with the standards they are working on in their regular math classes.
- When they have completed those assignments, they answer questions for the IXL Real-Time Diagnostic or work on skill gaps identified by the diagnostic tool.
- Risa and the regular math teachers use IXL reports to plan small group and whole-class instruction.
- Students must achieve a SmartScore of 80 or above on skills they are working on for their regular math class. They aim for a SmartScore of 100 by the end of the grading period for skills identified for remediation.
- Students can use IXL Math at home for extra practice.