Powering RTI with IXL English Language Arts

Christine Hartzman
7th- and 8th-Grade English Language Arts Teacher

Boyertown Area School District
Home of the Bears
#BASDIMPACT

Location:
Boyertown,
Pennsylvania

Grades: 6-8

Number of Students: 720

School Characteristics: Suburban

Subjects: IXL English Language Arts

Targeted Practice Leads to Measurable Growth

At Boyertown Middle School West, targeted instruction and consistent use of IXL have made it easier for students to build foundational skills, prepare for state assessments, and take ownership of their learning. For veteran ELA teacher Christine Hartzman, IXL supports her long-standing workshop teaching model and provides the data she needs to plan with purpose and track meaningful growth.

The Challenges

Boyertown first implemented IXL during the COVID shutdowns in 2020 to provide teachers with a resource for remote learning. Christine, then a Title I Reading Specialist, was charged with helping teachers apply IXL English Language Arts to keep students engaged and progressing from home. IXL allowed teachers to assign skills practice mapped to their curriculum and monitor student progress toward grade-level standards.

Since then, Boyertown has transitioned to a more traditional Response to Intervention (RTI) model, with tiered intervention services provided for students who need additional support outside of regular classroom instruction. To support this model, teachers at Boyertown needed a platform that would provide actionable data, support differentiated instruction within

ELA teachers needed both targeted instructional tools and real-time progress monitoring to plan effective instruction, guide interventions, and ensure every student could make measurable growth.

the RTI model, and help close persistent skill gaps, while also motivating students and encouraging ownership of their learning journey.

The Solution

Over the last few years, Christine has returned to her role as a classroom teacher and joined the IXL Ambassador program, giving her access to additional training, tools, and tips. As Boyertown adopted a more structured RTI model, Christine found that IXL offered the ideal combination of flexibility, precision, and student engagement to meet the diverse needs of her learners. IXL has become an essential part of her classroom workflow—from planning and whole-group instruction to small-group intervention and individual goal setting. "IXL plays a direct role in how I plan and organize my week," she says.

Christine uses IXL to deliver targeted instruction that aligns with both her workshop model and the school's tiered support system. The IXL Real-Time Diagnostic provides Christine with the data she needs to plan whole-class and small-group instruction. She also works with the Title I reading teacher to identify student needs for Tier 2 and Tier 3 support. For students, IXL provides targeted practice and instruction, allowing each student to work at their own level and pace to optimize skill acquisition.

Here's how Christine is using IXL English Language Arts at Boyertown West Middle School:

- Christine uses a workshop model with 15-minute mini-lessons followed by daily independent practice in IXL.
- The 8th-grade ELA team selects a "Teacher Skill of the Week" tied to the curriculum and state standards. Students are expected to reach a SmartScore of 80 and are required to reach out for extra help after three missed questions.
- Students take the IXL Diagnostic regularly and track their scores weekly, identifying strengths and growth areas. This helps Christine group students according to need and plan timely interventions.
- Group Jams and Lightning Jams are used as fun, low-stakes practice tools. Spark Studio, IXL's AI-powered teacher work-space, allows Christine to create lesson plans, worksheets, and review activities aligned to state standards, saving hours of time.
- Students set goals for growth based on diagnostic snapshots taken three times a year. End-of-year celebrations honor the highest growth with certificates and "Be Awesome" awards from the admin team.e competition, giving all students equal opportunity to win. Classroom milestones are displayed in an IXL Corner.

Case study: Boyertown West Middle School

The Results

Since integrating IXL into her daily instruction, Christine has seen measurable growth in student performance, confidence, and engagement. Students who once struggled to stay motivated are now tracking their own diagnostic growth, setting personal goals, and celebrating milestones. Many have made significant progress, with some students gaining more than 200 points on the IXL Diagnostic over the course of the year. On average, Christine's 7th-grade students grew by 130 points, and her 8th-grade students gained 121 points. Some of her 8th-graders who started at a 5th- or 6th-grade level in the fall had grown to the 9th-grade level by spring.

Beyond the numbers, Christine has noticed a shift in mindset. Students are taking ownership of their learning and seeing direct connections between their IXL work and in-class assignments. End-of-year celebrations recognize both top performers and the most improved, reinforcing a culture of growth, effort, and success.

"When we set clear expectations for students for their work in IXL, we see consistent growth. When students can see their growth, they take more ownership of their learning."

- Christine Hartzman, 7th and 8th Grade English Language Arts Teacher, Boyertown Middle School West.

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