



IXL Math in the Data-Driven Classroom

Mary Williams Elementary School, Dumfries, Virginia



“IXL Analytics frees me from paper and data collection. It makes it easy to see where students are [on the objectives] so I know what I need to do in the classroom each day.”

Lisa Ivy, 5th grade teacher

Lisa Ivy has been an IXL believer for seven years, since she first started using the program in her previous school. She now uses IXL Math extensively with her fifth grade class at Mary Williams Elementary School in Dumfries, Virginia. She’s also a big fan of the program’s real-time analytics feature. IXL Analytics gives her the data she needs to monitor student progress, keep her administrators informed, and make better instructional decisions in the classroom.

A Commitment to Standards-Based Learning

Lisa holds her class—nicknamed the “Ivy League”—to high standards. All students are expected to master grade level objectives in math. Without IXL, Lisa says, it used to be hard to monitor progress towards goals and identify areas where students were struggling. IXL gives her students the opportunity to practice skills while at the same time providing the data Lisa needs for instructional planning.

Students in Lisa’s class work on IXL Math 3–5 hours a week. She assigns daily homework on IXL directly tied to the objectives students are learning in class. Students are allowed to work one grade level ahead or behind and choose the specific sub-skills they want to practice within the objective, and they have opportunities to ask questions during class if they are struggling. In addition to working on skills at home, students can access IXL during small group rotations in class or when they have finished other classwork. Lisa does not assign specific mastery goals but says that time in the program naturally helps students achieve mastery objectives. “They are really self-motivated by the SmartScore,” Lisa says, referring to IXL’s proprietary scoring system that measures how well a student understands a skill.

Lisa also has a popular after-school IXL club for all 5th graders, which currently has a waiting list of almost 30 students! Students love the informal environment of the after-school club, where skills are practiced by disco-light and mastery is celebrated with horns and music.

All of this practice produces a wealth of student data, which Lisa puts to work in her classroom.



Putting Data to Work

Lisa uses the reports from IXL Analytics in a number of ways in her daily classroom practice:

- Students are expected to track their own mastery towards state standards by coloring in a chart. This helps them take ownership of their learning and see where they need to improve.
- The Skills Practiced report helps Lisa see how students are progressing overall. She can look at the report by objective and use the data to guide her instructional plans for the class—for example, she may decide to spend more time on an objective where the class is struggling or skim over an area that most students have already mastered.
- Lisa uses the Trouble Spots report to identify areas where individual students are struggling. She uses this data to plan individual or small group interventions for students who are falling behind.
- The Students Quickview report allows Lisa to see which skills students are working on and quickly verify whether or not they have completed their assigned objectives for the week.

IXL Analytics also helps Lisa communicate with parents, colleagues, and administrators:

- Lisa sends parents a biweekly update on student progress. She also reviews IXL data during parent-teacher meetings so parents can see how their child is progressing towards mastery of grade level standards.
- Lisa uses IXL data to identify students for Tier II or Tier III intervention within the school's Response to Intervention (RTI) program. IXL reports become part of each student's RTI folder, which informs the intervention specialist's plans.
- Three times per year, Lisa shares her IXL reports in a meeting with her principal. IXL Analytics allows her to quickly communicate class progress and identify students in need of additional intervention.

Lisa especially appreciates the way IXL Analytics makes data easy to understand. She explains, "It gives me nice, clean reports that are very easy to read and very easy for kids and parents to understand." Best of all, it saves time and lets Lisa focus on instruction rather than data collection. "It gives me the freedom to run different reports showing data that would normally take a lot of time to gather. It breaks everything down for me in a form I can actually use to make decisions, so I can focus on teaching instead of just trying to gather data," she says.

Watching Students Soar

Lisa has seen huge dividends in the classroom with IXL Math. Her students are highly motivated to master new skills in IXL; Lisa's "Ivy League" regularly comes out on top in monthly school-wide competitions for most skills mastered on IXL. And all this practice has a direct impact on student performance.



“My students always do well,” says Lisa. “Many of my students have done phenomenally well on end-of-year tests and are working at the advanced level.” Lisa reports that performance in IXL is highly correlated to performance on district benchmarks, allowing her to use IXL Analytics to predict student performance on the benchmark tests. “IXL works because it pushes them,” she says. “It’s not just repetition at a baseline level—it actually gets harder as they get better. So if they get to a [SmartScore of] 90 or higher on IXL, I know they’re going to be in a good place on the test.” As for her students, they just seem to enjoy the process—charts, horns, disco balls, and all.



A Model for Success at Mary Williams Elementary School

Here’s how 5th grade teacher Lisa Ivy is using IXL in her classroom:

- Students practice IXL Math for homework for 15–30 minutes each day, selecting skills connected to the objectives Lisa is teaching in class.
- Lisa’s class has a 1:1 technology initiative, which allows students to access IXL during small group rotation time or when they have finished other in-class work.
- Classes at Mary Williams Elementary compete for prizes based on time spent on IXL.
- Students monitor their own progress towards state standards on a chart.
- Lisa uses the reports in IXL Analytics to make decisions for whole-class instruction, small group intervention, and placement in formal tiered intervention programs.