



Linking School and Home Learning with IXL

River Homelink School, Battle Ground, Washington



"IXL really fits my education philosophy—so much so that I've dumped my textbooks entirely."

Quincy Vander Molen, high school math teacher & department head

Quincy Vander Molen, a high school math teacher and department head at River Homelink School, needed a solution that would help her highly independent students build mastery and fluency at home—and help her monitor their progress. She turned to IXL to supplement her teaching.

Supporting Independent Learners

Battle Ground Public Schools is a mid-size district just north of Portland, Oregon, in a community with a high percentage of homeschooling families. River Homelink was set up to give these families an appealing public school alternative. Students come to school two days a week and complete the rest of their work from home with support from parents.

Since Quincy sees her algebra and geometry students only twice a week, she needed an at-home option that would enable her students to continue moving towards mastery on their own. "My parents are very involved, but math is one area where most parents don't feel comfortable providing instruction. IXL complements my instruction in class and allows students to build fluency independently from home."

An Enthusiastic Response from Parents and Students

Quincy replaced all of her textbook-based home assignments with practice on IXL. Eventually, she ditched the textbooks entirely and wrote her own curriculum. "I write out detailed notes and examples for every lesson I do in class. My own lessons and IXL are the only things I am using now. I wrote my curriculum with IXL in mind."

Students have responded to the change with enthusiasm. Students enjoy working on the computer, and they love the immediate feedback provided by IXL. They also appreciate that they can do as many problems as they need to get the SmartScore (IXL's proprietary scoring system that measures how well a student understands a skill) they want—and they don't have to waste time completing problems for skills they have already mastered. "Worksheets are stagnant. If you get to a problem that's too hard, you just stop. With IXL, they keep trying," Quincy says.



She credits IXL's format for that motivation boost. Students are presented with only one problem at a time, so it's not overwhelming. Because the skills are defined at a very granular level, students can work on mastery in easy chunks. And if they have trouble, IXL presents the correct solution in a very straightforward way so they can learn from their mistakes. Quincy says her students are also motivated by the awards and medals they earn as they go through the program. "They are very competitive about it. Even the ones that are quiet and shy in class get really into doing it," she says.

Parents have responded positively to IXL as well. "My parents are really my co-teachers," Quincy explains, "but not all of them are comfortable helping with math homework. With IXL, they are working alongside their children and building their understanding too. Some of them have even purchased their own accounts so they can learn together with their kids."

"With IXL, students are taking responsibility for their own learning. They want to do well. Even those kids who come to class who haven't liked math before, or haven't been successful, are really trying and making progress. IXL is a huge part of that."

Quincy Vander Molen

A Dramatic Improvement on End-of-Course Assessments

Since implementing her home-grown curriculum and IXL, passing rates on the Washington state End-of-Course (EOC) exams have gone from 55 percent to an impressive 82 percent. "Our EOC results in the past weren't as good. IXL is a huge part of that improvement. Without the fluency practice, they wouldn't have done nearly as well."

A lot of that success comes from the differentiation that IXL provides. "IXL really does the differentiation for us. Kids don't have to do a whole lot of something they already know. But kids who need more practice can get it, and they see their SmartScore improving with every problem."

A Model for Success at River Homelink School

Here's how high school math teacher Quincy Vander Molen is using IXL in her classroom:

- Students come to class two times per week. Quincy provides in-class instruction using a curriculum she developed herself. She covers two new lessons during each 70-minute block class.
- Quincy selects IXL skills to support her in-class instruction. Students have two weeks to complete each set of skills, allowing them to develop mastery of each skill at their own pace over time.
- Students must achieve a SmartScore of at least 80 to get credit on each homework assignment.
- Quincy monitors student progress using IXL Analytics. She uses the Students Quickview report to get a snapshot of the class and adjust her instruction. She also gets parents involved in monitoring their children's individual reports.