



IXL: A Time-Saver “Worth Its Weight in Gold”

Rosenort School, Red River Valley School Division, Rosenort, Manitoba



“Differentiating from the textbook is a gong show. It requires far too much teacher time and effort. IXL has really reduced the prep time overload. It’s worth its weight in gold to me for that reason.”

Weldon Rinn, 7th and 8th grade teacher

Weldon Rinn teaches 7th and 8th grade math, science, and information and computer technology for Rosenort School in Manitoba. Rosenort, a K–12 school serving a rural community south of Winnipeg, maintains high standards for its students. In 2012, Weldon was looking for a way to integrate more technology into his classroom and make it easier to differentiate instruction, so he turned to IXL Math.

Bringing Technology into the Classroom

Rosenort has a 1:1 laptop program and a strong commitment to building technology skills along with academic proficiency for its students. In addition to teaching a computer skills class, Weldon likes to incorporate technology into his math and science classrooms. He initially used Khan Academy, but the video-based approach did not keep his students focused and engaged. He wanted to give his students a more interactive and differentiated program that would better meet their individual needs.

Differentiation had always presented obstacles, particularly in math. “Overall, our students do quite well, but there can be quite a range of ability levels in a given class,” Weldon explains. “There are always those one or two who really struggle and others who aren’t being challenged enough.” Prior to using IXL, Weldon pulled worksheets from different grade level textbooks or purchased workbooks targeting specific concepts for students who needed extra support. However, this approach was time consuming and expensive. “I had to figure out exactly where a kid was struggling and find materials that matched their ability level. If we didn’t have something appropriate already, I would have to go out and buy it. And I didn’t have much of anything for students who were accelerated,” he says.

An Easier Way to Differentiate

With IXL, differentiation is now easy and automatic. Weldon says, “My high achievers can move ahead and accelerate their learning, and kids who aren’t up to speed can go down a few grades to build skills that are lacking.”



Weldon uses a textbook program for his primary math instruction and follows the Alberta/Western Canada curriculum. Students use IXL on their laptops or in the computer lab during dedicated technology time at school each day. Some students also log in from home for extra practice. On average, they use the program for 15–30 minutes per day.

Weldon can easily assign IXL skills aligned to his daily instruction for additional practice. Students who are struggling are given related skills from lower grade levels to fix any gaps in their understanding. Those who have mastered the grade level curriculum can work ahead at their own pace. Students receive a grade for their IXL work, which counts as 10 percent of their overall math grade. They must get a SmartScore (IXL's proprietary scoring system that measures how well a student understands a skill) of 70 or higher to get credit for an assignment, but many of his students are motivated to work towards mastery, a SmartScore of 100.

IXL has proven to be an effective resource for whole-class instruction as well. Weldon projects problems related to the daily lesson on a Smart Board to demonstrate problem-solving strategies. "It's easier than coming up with my own example problems and writing them on the board manually," he says. "With IXL, we can do as many as we need to until everyone gets it. I don't run out of problems."

Motivated by Mastery

IXL saves Weldon considerable time as a teacher. It has cut down significantly on prep time for lessons and eliminated the work required to locate and assign appropriately differentiated materials. Weldon also relies on IXL Analytics to quickly identify students' weak spots and adjust his instruction to meet their needs. "I have a group of students this year who are struggling with basic math facts and concepts like commutative property, distributive property, and associative property. I put them back in 4th and 5th grade skills to brush up on those topics and prepare them for their algebra work," he says.

Most importantly, the program is working for his students. Students enjoy seeing their growth over time. The progress reports let students take ownership of their learning and quickly see how far they have come and where they need to buckle down for a little more practice. "They push themselves higher on IXL than they do with pencil and paper," notes Weldon. "IXL is really motivating my students to stretch their learning."

In fact, a few of his students are a little obsessed. "My high achievers drive me crazy sometimes because they don't want to stop until they get that 100." Weldon says. Getting there isn't easy; the IXL SmartScore makes students work harder and complete more complex problems as they approach mastery. But when they get that score, they know they've really learned something.



A Model for Success at Rosenort School

Here's how 7th and 8th grade teacher Weldon Rinn is using IXL in his classroom:

- Weldon follows a standardized grade level curriculum for his math classes, using a well-known textbook program. Students complete the worksheets that come with the textbook program as daily assignments.
- IXL is used for additional practice and differentiation. IXL skills are mapped to Weldon's curriculum, so he can assign specific IXL skills aligned to his daily instruction. Students who have mastered these lessons are free to work ahead at their own pace. Students who are struggling are assigned related skills from lower grade levels to fill any gaps in their understanding.
- The school is participating in a 1:1 technology program that provides laptops for all middle school students. Students use the laptops or the school computer lab to work on IXL for 15–30 minutes a day during technology time.
- Weldon projects IXL on his electronic whiteboard for whole-class instruction.
- IXL work counts for 10 percent of the students' overall math grade. Students are required to get a SmartScore of at least 70 on each skill to get credit towards their grade. Weldon gives bonus points to students who achieve a SmartScore of 100 on a skill.
- Many students use IXL at home or before school for additional practice and to work towards mastery on their skills.