

Redefining Success from Achievement to Growth



Joe Herrington
Assistant Principal



Fulbright Junior High School

Location:

Bentonville,
Arkansas



Grades: 7-8



Number of Students: 660



School Characteristics: Suburban



Subjects: IXL English Language Arts

Fueling Growth for Every Learner in English Language Arts

Fulbright Junior High has long been one of Arkansas's top-performing schools. But with the state's new growth-based accountability model, the school faced a new kind of challenge: how to keep high-achieving students moving forward while lifting up those who need extra support. Assistant Principal Joe Herrington and his team turned to IXL to help teachers personalize learning in English language arts (ELA) for every student—ensuring that growth, not just grade-level proficiency, defines success.

The Challenges

Fulbright Junior High serves a broad range of learners in one of Arkansas's highest-performing districts. Strong family engagement and a culture of excellence have kept academic achievement consistently high since the school's founding. But when the Arkansas LEARNS Act shifted accountability metrics from achievement to growth, the Fulbright team had to rethink how they measured success. The question was no longer whether students were meeting grade-level expectations—it was how much progress every student, from the highest achievers to those in need of additional support, could make each year.

The school needed a data-driven, high-quality program for English language arts to differentiate learning, track growth, and support every student's progress—without adding to teacher workload.

For Assistant Principal Joe Herrington and his team, that meant finding new ways to differentiate instruction and track progress at scale. Teachers needed a learning platform that could help them identify individual strengths and gaps, support both enrichment and intervention, and align seamlessly with the school's high expectations for teaching and learning. The challenge was to keep every student growing without overwhelming teachers or disrupting established instructional routines.

The Solution

To meet this new challenge, Fulbright Junior High began using IXL English Language Arts schoolwide in 2023 as part of the district's commitment to personalized, data-informed instruction. The platform aligns naturally with the school's Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, which emphasizes multiple ways for students to access, engage with, and demonstrate understanding of content. IXL supports this approach by offering flexible and adaptive skill pathways, immediate feedback, and real-time data that teachers can use to tailor instruction, helping all learners grow from their current level.

IXL quickly became a central part of Fulbright's broader strategy for differentiation and student growth. It complements the school's daily 45-minute seminar block for intervention and enrichment, where students rotate through five flexible "zones": Tier III intervention, Tier II intervention, RTI, extension, and study hall/work completion. Students who show regression on summative assessments are assigned to Zone 2 Pathway sessions, where they receive focused IXL instruction aligned to their individual goals.

In the classroom, teachers integrate IXL into their regular ELA instruction through bell ringers, formative assessments, and targeted skill practice. The platform's alignment with Arkansas state standards ensures that practice directly supports essential grade-level content, while also allowing teachers to address learning gaps and revisit foundational literacy skills—such as grammar and conventions—that remain vital for student success.

Here's how ELA teachers are using IXL at Fulbright Junior High:

- IXL is used across settings—during intervention blocks, in classroom station rotations, and as part of whole-group instruction—to reinforce and extend learning.
- Teachers integrate IXL into core instruction as bell ringers, exit tickets, and formative assessments to reinforce essential skills.
- 7th-grade ELA teachers use IXL's flexible platform to strengthen grammar and conventions without taking away from core literacy instruction.
- IXL is used daily during the school's 45-minute seminar block for targeted intervention, enrichment, and study support.
- Students who need additional support attend weekly "Zone 2 Pathway" sessions focused on personalized IXL instruction and goal setting.
- Arkansas-aligned skill plans allow teachers to target standards directly and prepare students for benchmark and state assessments.



Case Study: Fulbright Junior High School

The Results

Since integrating IXL English Language Arts into daily instruction, Fulbright Junior High has demonstrated measurable growth across all student groups. 8th-grade students demonstrated the largest gains, outpacing every other junior high in the district. As a result, the school has maintained its “A” rating with the state while driving performance improvements across the board. Herrington attributes that success to the combination of strong teaching, structured intervention, and IXL’s ability to personalize learning for every student.

Teachers report that IXL makes it easier to act on data and focus instruction where it matters most. Real-time insights from the platform help them identify students for targeted support or extension, plan small-group lessons, and monitor progress toward goals. For students, the impact is equally visible: they understand what they’re working on, can see their own progress, and feel a sense of ownership over their learning. That clarity and motivation have helped shift the school’s culture from achievement alone to continuous growth.

“IXL complements our core instruction by helping teachers pinpoint exactly what students need—whether that’s filling gaps or extending learning. It’s high-quality, standards-aligned, and flexible enough to fit into every model we use.”

—Joe Harrington, Assistant Principal, Fulbright Junior High School