

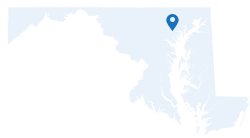
# How a 5-Star Baltimore City School Uses IXL to Drive Math Growth



**Ellie O'Connor**  
5<sup>th</sup>-Grade Math Teacher



**Location:**  
Baltimore,  
Maryland



**Grades:** PreK-8



**Number of Students:** 940



**School Characteristics:** Urban, Public Charter



**Subjects:** IXL Math

## Reaching Every Student in a Large, Diverse Classroom of Learners

Ellie O'Connor, a 5th-grade math teacher, is a model for how educators at Hampstead Hill Academy use IXL daily to support large classes with wide-ranging instructional needs. She targets instruction, closes foundational gaps, and keeps all students progressing with IXL's real-time insights and MAP-aligned skill plans. The result is stronger engagement, greater independence, and consistent growth in math achievement.

### The Challenges

Hampstead Hill Academy is the only 5-star school in Baltimore City and serves a diverse student population. Even with the school's high rating, classrooms still reflect a wide range of student needs—particularly in math, where gaps in foundational skills can persist across grade levels.

Ellie O'Connor's 5th-grade classroom is a prime example. Some of her students are working at or above grade level, while others are still building core skills from earlier grades. In her limited class time, Ellie has to balance delivering grade-level instruction aligned to the Eureka Math curriculum with providing targeted reteaching and enrichment for learners who need it.

*Teachers needed a way to differentiate instruction in real time to support a wide range of skill levels without slowing down grade-level learning.*

Large class sizes add another layer of complexity. With as many as 37 students in a class, it can be difficult to monitor who is keeping up, who is struggling, and where misunderstandings are occurring. Traditional tools like worksheets are time-consuming to manage, making it challenging to identify issues in the moment or provide targeted support to each student.

## The Solution

Ellie O'Connor first began using IXL during COVID closures when she needed a way to assign practice, monitor progress, and keep students engaged in virtual learning. What started as a short-term solution quickly became a core part of her instruction.

Today, IXL is a vital part of Hampstead Hill Academy's academic plan, and it's embedded into the instructional flow of Ellie's classroom. First, Ellie easily finds practice that aligns directly to her Eureka Math curriculum using IXL. After delivering core instruction she uses IXL's Group Jam to guide whole-class problem solving, then transitions students to independent practice on the same skill. She also has students work out select IXL questions on paper, helping them slow down, show their thinking, and reinforce understanding.

As students work, Ellie monitors progress in real time and pulls small groups or individual students for targeted intervention. She has immediate visibility into student thinking and performance, rather than needing to pore over worksheets or end-of-lesson checks. That allows her to respond in the moment, addressing misconceptions before they become larger gaps and focusing her time where it is needed most.

IXL also helps address one of the biggest instructional challenges: differentiation. MAP-aligned skill plans guide students who need support to foundational skills from prior grades, while those ready for more challenges can move ahead into advanced content. This ensures that every student continues to make progress at their own pace while also keeping up with grade-level skills.

## Here's how teachers are using IXL at Hampstead Hill Academy:

- IXL is used daily after core Eureka Math instruction to reinforce key concepts and provide targeted practice.
- Teachers use Group Jam to guide whole-class problem solving, allowing students to work on the same skill together.
- Students then transition to independent practice, while teachers pull small groups or individual students for targeted support.
- Teachers use Live Classroom to monitor progress in real time, identifying who is struggling and where support is needed.
- Students also engage in MAP-aligned skill plans during designate practice periods throughout the year, working over several weeks to build foundational skills and close learning gaps.



## The Results

Ellie's class and the rest of the students at Hampstead Hill Academy have seen strong, consistent growth in math achievement, particularly on MAP assessments. While the school's goal is for 50% of students to meet or exceed their growth targets, Hampstead Hill students perform well above that benchmark. In Ellie's class specifically, approximately 80% of students reach or surpass their goals. For students who begin the year significantly below grade level, that growth can represent substantial progress. Some students advance multiple grade levels within a single year.

Beyond assessment data, teachers are seeing meaningful shifts in student engagement, confidence, and independence. Students actively participate in Group Jam activities, encourage or coach one another, and approach practice with a sense of energy and purpose. They also take greater ownership of their learning thanks to IXL's immediate feedback and clear visibility into their progress. Many track their scores closely, set personal goals, and celebrate milestones along the way. What was once a source of frustration—particularly for struggling learners—has become an opportunity for progress and achievement. This shift has made a measurable difference in both student outcomes and the overall learning environment, helping Hampstead Hill Academy maintain its strong performance record.

*"As class sizes increase, IXL has made a real difference in what I can accomplish with my students."*

— Ellie O'Connor, 5th-Grade Math Teacher,  
Hampstead Hill Academy

