



IXL Math Spurs Success on End-of-Course Exams



Laura Loftus

Middle School Honors Algebra I and Geometry Teacher



Howard W. Bishop
Middle School

Alachua County Public
Schools

Location:
Gainesville, Florida



Grades:
6-8



Number of students:
837



School characteristics:
Large urban



Subjects:
Math

Unlocking Opportunities in Middle School Honors Math

Students in Laura Loftus's middle school honors Algebra I and Geometry classes have the opportunity to challenge themselves with high school-level curricula. With help from IXL's dynamic and adaptive learning platform, her students achieved a pass rate of 86% on the Algebra I End-of-Course (EOC) Exam and a 100% pass rate in Geometry—with many students receiving the highest score of 5.

The Challenges

Howard W. Bishop Middle School prides itself on offering high-quality education and challenging course opportunities to every student. Laura's honors Algebra I and Geometry students represent a diverse range of backgrounds and skill levels; some are enrolled through the school's magnet program (The Academy of Technology and Gifted Students), while others are from the local community. All students who show interest and basic aptitude are welcome to tackle the advanced honors classes.

Laura needed a better way to monitor progress toward mastery of state standards and predict performance on the EOC exam. She also needed to provide individualized practice opportunities to help students achieve mastery.

Laura teaches four sections of Honors Algebra I and one section of Honors Geometry, following the Florida State Standards for high school mathematics. Students who pass the rigorous Florida EOC exam receive a high school math credit. All Florida students must pass the Algebra I EOC exam to graduate.

Laura's goal is to achieve a 100% pass rate for the Florida EOC for all students, regardless of their prior math experience and skill levels. But with an average of 25 or more students per class, addressing individual needs and monitoring the progress of every student is challenging. The classes move fast, too, so there isn't much time to go back and reteach if some students are struggling with a concept. Since math skills build on each other sequentially, students can't afford to fall behind.

The Solution

IXL Math gives Laura the data she needs to tailor instruction. It also provides students with unlimited practice opportunities targeted to their individual skill levels.

Laura's students use IXL in class daily to practice the skills they have just been taught. Students who need more time can also use the program at home. The difficulty level of the problems is automatically tailored to each student, so they are always working at the right challenge level for optimal learning. Students who are struggling can even go back and practice skills from prior grade levels to fill in holes in their understanding.

Laura can easily find skills in IXL correlated to their math textbook. She also has the real-time data she needs to monitor student progress and adjust her instruction to student needs. As they get closer to the EOC exam, students can use IXL Math to practice for the test, brush up on skills from earlier in the year, and identify areas where they need to improve.

Here's how Bishop Middle School is using IXL Math:

Students work on IXL Math for about 20 minutes each day during class time, using a class set of Chromebooks. Laura provides direct instruction first, then assigns an IXL skill correlated with her instruction.

On average, students work on four skills each week. Students sometimes work together through IXL Group Jams before practicing individually.



Students are expected to receive a SmartScore (IXL's proprietary scoring system that measures how well a student understands a skill) of at least 80 to demonstrate proficiency.

Students who need extra practice time or who need to catch up on foundational skills from prior grades can check out a Chromebook and continue working at home.

IXL Checkpoints provide a window into student mastery of state standards and readiness for the EOC exam. Laura uses the Skill Analysis report to adjust whole-class instruction and identify students in need of extra support.

The Results

Since implementing IXL Math, both Laura and her students have been positively impacted. She says, "IXL has been a tremendous resource for students who have had interruptions in their academic career or who have struggled in the past. It lets them pinpoint the areas where they are struggling and catch up on those skills. Now, they're set up for success in high school and beyond."



Laura has seen a sharp increase in not only pass rates but also full scores on the EOC exams. For the 2022-23 school year, 100% of her Geometry students and 86% of her Algebra I students passed the EOC, and 70% of her Geometry students achieved the highest score. This puts her students far over the state average for middle school students taking these EOC exams.



IXL has given students more confidence in their math abilities and, in some cases, has changed their academic trajectories. One student went from a score of 1 on the 7th Grade Florida State Assessment to a 5 on the Algebra I EOC exam the following year.



Students love IXL! In an end-of-course survey, many of Laura's students identified IXL as the single most helpful resource they had to master course content and prepare for the EOC exam.

"With IXL, I know there is a pathway to success for every student. Using IXL in conjunction with appropriate instruction is how we get to 100%."

– Middle School Honors Algebra I and Geometry Teacher

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