CASE STUDY

Closing Learning Gaps with Data-Driven Instruction

Isiah Perry

6th Grade Math and English Teacher

Location:
Selma, Alabama

Grades: 6-8

Number of Students: 185

School Characteristics: Rural

Subjects: IXL Math IXL, English Language Arts

Targeted Instruction Leads to Gains in Math and English Language Arts

Differentiated instruction and targeted skills practice in IXL have led to big gains in math and English language arts (ELA) at Tipton-Durant Middle School, with the majority of students progressing across levels on benchmark assessments. Sixth-grade teacher Isiah Perry has embraced IXL as a powerful tool to personalize instruction, engage students, and accelerate learning.

The Challenges

Isiah teaches both math and ELA at Tipton-Durant, a small rural middle school in Selma, Alabama. Tipton-Durant is a whole-school Title I school, with more than 90% of students classified as economically disadvantaged. Historically, the district has struggled with low achievement rates in both math and ELA. Only a small minority of students have demonstrated proficiency in either subject on state testing.

Isiah began his classroom teaching experience during the pandemic, and as the years passed he saw the impact of that period on his students. Many of his students struggled with foundational skills they missed in prior grade levels, especially in math. In particular, he noted deficiencies in basic computational skills (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division) as well as

Teachers needed strategies to address skill gaps for students while meeting grade-level standards and preparing students for state testing.

mathematical reasoning and geometry. Because math skills build on one another sequentially from year to year, learning gaps from prior years have an outsized impact on grade-level learning. In ELA, some students were struggling with basic skills in phonics and phonological awareness.

Students also struggled with confidence and stamina, which showed up in testing results. Even when students demonstrated basic proficiency in classroom assignments, gains often failed to translate to standardized testing.

The Solution

Isiah began using IXL in Fall 2022 as part of a district-wide initiative to improve student outcomes and address learning gaps in both math and ELA. Since then, it has become a core part of Isiah's instruction, particularly in math. In his math classes, students use IXL for 15-20 minutes most days as part of his small group rotation. During this time, they practice skills they are learning in class and spend time catching up on foundational skills. Isiah also assigns IXL skills for homework, which saves hours of time in grading and copying worksheets. With IXL, students get immediate feedback and just-in-time instruction as they practice, which keeps them on track.

Progress data in IXL supports data-driven instruction, allowing teachers to make small group assignments and plan reteaching based on student needs. Isiah appreciates that IXL breaks down each standard into very granular skills, so he can see precisely where students are struggling and where he needs to adjust instruction to clear up the misconceptions that are holding them back. He uses the data to drive daily instructional planning for his small groups. He also uses the reports for data discussions and curriculum planning with colleagues and parent-teacher conferences. The reports provide detailed information, so parents can understand where students are struggling and need extra support at home.

Here's how teachers at **Tipton-Durant Middle School** are using IXL:

- The IXL Diagnostic Arena provides real-time data on student progress and identifies skill gaps. Based on this data, IXL creates a personalized action plan for each student to support maximum learning.
- Students use IXL in class during small group rotations to practice the skills they have just learned. Isiah also assigns IXL skills for homework, which he can link to directly in his Google Classroom. Students are expected to achieve a SmartScore of 80 or above to demonstrate proficiency of assigned skills.
- Teachers utilize quizzes to assess student progress and gather additional data for instructional planning.
- Students work on their personalized action plans to address skill gaps from prior grades or to challenge themselves with advanced skills.
- Group Jams and Leaderboards keep students motivated through friendly competition.

Case study: Lincoln Elementary

The Results

Students love using IXL because skills are targeted to their learning levels, and they can see their own progress. They also love the awards and incentives they earn in the program, such as virtual backgrounds and avatars and printable certificates. Isiah's students are making steady progress toward mastery of grade-level skills while filling in skill gaps from prior grades.

Nearly all of Isiah's students progressed across levels on their benchmark assessments, with a majority of students who performed at level 1 moving to a high level 2 or level 3 by the end of the year. On average, his students gained 50 to 60 points in math and 70 points in ELA, demonstrating accelerated growth compared to prior years. The more consistently students use IXL, the greater the benefits over time. IXL helps teachers like Isiah bridge learning gaps and give every student the targeted instruction they need to grow.

"IXL has transformed my teaching by enabling a more personalized and data-driven approach. It helps me identify and address individual student needs, incorporate targeted interventions, and provide immediate feedback, making learning more efficient and impactful."

— Isiah Perry, 6th-Grade Math and English Teacher, Tipton-Durant Middle School