



# Giving Students Ownership of Learning— In Class and At Home

St. Norbert Catholic School, Orange Diocese, Orange, California



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"IXL really narrows the knowledge gap. It allows me to differentiate learning for my students and have them work at their own pace and level."

*Megan Ouellette, 6th Grade Teacher*

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The mission of St. Norbert Catholic School is to help all students achieve their personal best—in academics and beyond. IXL has helped the school shift to a student-driven learning model that targets instruction and practice to each student's individual needs. St. Norbert's administrators and teachers say IXL builds confidence for students and allows them to take ownership of their learning. And the numbers show this approach is working: IXL has helped accelerate achievement, with students averaging 1.4 years of learning gains in math in a single school year.

## Filling in Knowledge Gaps to Help Students Succeed

St. Norbert, located in Orange, California, serves 300 students in grades PreK-8. The school began using IXL Math in 2014 for middle school students and expanded its usage to grades 2 and up in the following years. Since 2014, they have added IXL English Language Arts and IXL Social Studies for grades 4 and up.

The school initially implemented IXL to help students fill knowledge gaps from previous grades and to provide supplemental practice to support their textbook curricula. Over time, teachers have integrated the program more fully into their classrooms and started using the IXL Real-Time Diagnostic and IXL Analytics to drive instruction. Assistant Principal Marian Quiroz says, "We use IXL to reinforce the standards. Not only is it a tool for teachers to use to bolster the lessons being taught, but with the Diagnostic, teachers can see exactly where students' strengths are and where they have gaps in their understanding."

Marian, along with a number of St. Norbert teachers, had the opportunity to attend an IXL Live event, where they got an in-depth look at the power of the IXL tools and reports. Marian says, "I went into the conference thinking that we already utilize IXL as much as possible, but I was blown away by all of the features and reports that are available. Teachers came back raving about the tools and were excited to put them into practice in the classroom. Since then, we've been using the program in a much deeper way."



## Targeted, Student-Driven Instruction

Sixth-grade teacher Megan Ouellette uses IXL Math and IXL English Language Arts in her classroom. For math, she introduces a lesson each day through direct teaching and then gives her students 20 or 30 minutes to practice the skill on their own in IXL. She uses IXL's Live Classroom feature to monitor what students are working on and how they are doing in real-time. For language arts, she assigns skill practice in IXL two or three times each week to reinforce the concepts she is teaching.

Megan appreciates how easy it is to match skills in IXL to the lessons she is teaching by using IXL's skill plans, which provide alignments to state standards and textbooks. She also loves the insights she gains from the IXL Analytics reports. She says, "For teachers, it really deepens our knowledge of our students. I know exactly what each student needs and can narrow in on the exact zone where they need improvement."

Marian says, "What I really like about the program is that it is student-driven and very personalized. It provides highly targeted skills practice that teachers have never been able to provide before. It's made pencil-and-paper worksheets obsolete, because students are getting exactly what they need right here in the program."

Megan's students work on the Diagnostic every Friday. She uses the diagnostic reports to plan instruction, determine where reteaching is needed, and group students for targeted intervention or an extra challenge.

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"As an administrator, if there is one technology tool we are going to use, I support IXL all the way. It supports our teachers so much, not just for daily instruction and practice but in helping them understand their students in a whole new way."

*Marian Quiroz, Assistant Principal*

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## Accelerating Achievement Through Student Ownership of Learning

This targeted approach to instruction has helped them accelerate achievement for their students, especially in math. They now often see 1.4 years of growth in a single year for students using IXL. Megan says, "As we've used IXL more and really started to understand its capabilities, scores are increasing, especially in math but also now in English language arts. The more we use it, the higher our scores go."

Marian attributes much of this success to the way IXL encourages students to take ownership of their own learning. Students know how to access their own diagnostic reports and are highly motivated to fill in skill gaps and increase their overall knowledge levels. Megan says, "My kids love it. When they master a skill and get a SmartScore of 100, they come back and ask for harder skills. They enjoy being challenged and when they master a skill, they want to do more."



IXL has also helped St. Norbert fulfill its goal of supporting higher-achieving students with accelerated math classes for grades 4 and up. IXL allows students to move forward at their own pace and gives teachers the information they need to support accelerated instruction.

### Successful Distance Learning with IXL

In the spring of 2020, St. Norbert shifted to a distance learning model during the COVID-19 pandemic. IXL has helped them make the transition as smooth as possible. Megan says, "Since we were already using IXL in the classroom, students were familiar with it. We just continued with live lessons on Google Meet and independent practice on IXL. They just jumped right in with it."

Marian says IXL has been a great resource for additional practice and activities that are educationally meaningful, and not just busywork. She also appreciates that IXL allows even younger students to be successful with minimal help from adults. Parents appreciate IXL's instant feedback, which provides an explanation if a child gets a problem wrong. She explains, "IXL is very student-driven. It's been a reprieve for parents, especially parents of our younger students. Since IXL has support built in, they don't have to be involved." IXL has enabled students to continue to make progress towards grade-level standards even while working independently at home.

### A Model for Success at St. Norbert Catholic School

Here's how 6th grade teacher Megan Ouellette is using IXL in her classroom:

- Students use IXL Math daily in class to practice the skills she introduces through direct teaching. They use IXL English Language Arts 2-3 times per week. She also sometimes assigns additional IXL practice for homework.
- Students are expected to achieve a SmartScore (IXL's proprietary scoring system that measures how well a student understands a skill) of 90 for assigned skills, or work on the skill for at least 20 minutes.
- Megan uses IXL's Live Classroom to monitor student activity in real-time and provide targeted intervention for students who are struggling.
- Students answer questions in the IXL Real-Time Diagnostic each Friday to keep their stats up to date. Megan uses the reports to plan whole-class and small-group instruction and identify students in need of intervention.
- Students work independently on skills recommended by the Diagnostic. This allows students to fill in knowledge gaps from previous grades or work on higher-level skills for additional challenges.
- Students are recognized with a certificate and candy for every ten skills mastered in IXL.