

From “Needs Improvement” to “Distinguished” in a Kentucky High School



Educators employed IXL in their RTI strategy, resulting in a dramatic climb from the bottom 5 percent of school rankings to the 97th percentile.

Stobaugh, Chandler, and White (2015) conducted a case study at a high school in a rural Kentucky community where IXL Math was implemented as one part of a comprehensive school turnaround program. The school had been designated as “Needs Improvement” based on low test scores in math, science, and writing compared to state averages; in 2011, the school was ranked in the bottom 5 percent of schools statewide and selected for intense, targeted intervention.

The two-year turnaround program included a number of systemic changes, including a complete overhaul of the school’s Response to Intervention (RTI) program. IXL Math was the only program provided for additional math support. All students in the school had access to IXL Math for individualized practice and instruction. Students identified for Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions used IXL during designated class periods four times per week. Tier 2 interventions included all students who scored 25 percent or below on a standardized math assessment, STAR K12 Enterprise. Students not making sufficient progress after nine weeks of Tier 2 intervention were considered for referral to more intensive Tier 3 intervention, which included additional practice on IXL as well as one-on-one monitoring time with their caseload teacher. Special Education students received additional time to work on the program in their SPED classrooms.

As a result of their changes, the school made a dramatic two-year turnaround, rocketing from the bottom 5 percent of state rankings to the 97th percentile. By the second transformation year (2012-2013), 30 percent of the high school Individualized Education Plan (IEP) students passed the state end-of-course assessment for Algebra I, compared to 15 percent statewide. In 2014, the school was designated a “School of Distinction” by the state commissioner of education, becoming a state hub school that serves as an example for school improvement for the rest of the state.

The study authors point to the use of a committed RTI approach and differentiated instructional support for students as key factors in the turnaround. In this model, IXL Math provided the differentiated support in math for RTI and Special Education students. The study concluded that the interventions, which included the use of IXL Math, helped the high school show “widespread improvement at the school level and in individual student gains.”

Reference

Stobaugh, R., Chandler, W. G., & White, C. (2015). High School Turnaround: A Case Study. In P. Epler (Ed.), *Examining Response to Intervention (RTI) Models in Secondary Education* (pp. 223-249). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.