Why we need IXL Learning

By Jonathan Sabo

What is IXL?

- IXL is an online learning experience for K-12 learners.
- Skills practice is aligned to Georgia standards for:
  - Math
  - Language Arts
  - Science
  - Social Studies

- Students are able to receive immediate feedback as they complete assignments.

What is possible with IXL?

- **Recommendations:** Students are given personalized skill recommendations that will encourage students to grow and explore. Students are empowered to choose skills they need to be working on.

- **Diagnostic:** Students are continuously diagnosed as they work through skills. They are given a unique action plan that allows them to review needed prerequisites and accelerate when needed.

- **Analytics:** Real-time analytics are available for teachers to immediately identify trouble spots. Giving teachers the opportunity to adjust their teaching where needed.

IXL Supports our Technology Vision

- Hall County School District Technology Department is focused on enabling asynchronous teaching and learning anytime, anywhere.

  - IXL can be accessed anytime and anywhere that a student has an internet connection. Any device that connects to the internet can be used to access IXL, including phones, tablets, and computers.

  - Students are able to work at their own pace as IXL makes personalized learning seamless. IXL provides access to the curriculum, continuous diagnostic, and live analytics.

IXL Supports K-12 Learning

- Hundreds of skills are aligned to all grades (K-12) providing unlimited practice for students to master these skills.

- Equitable Access at School:

  - All teachers have been issued a laptop and iPad that can be used to interpret the student analytics at any time.

  - There are plenty of Chromebooks, Laptops, Tablets, and computer labs throughout the school to ensure that teachers are able to implement the use of this technology. The district also encourages BYOD, which helps to ensure there are enough devices to allow teachers to have enough devices to use this in their own classroom.

IXL Supports K-12 Learning (Continued)

- Equitable Access at Home:
  - Many students have a device and internet access at home that could be used for practice from home. The following need to be considered in order to ensure equitable access for all students.
    - Allowing students to check out a device (Chromebook or Tablet) for home use.
    - Providing students with wireless internet hubs if needed.
    - Educate students about resources available throughout the community, such as the public library.

Equipment Needed for IXL

- The ideal equipment for using IXL is a computer and internet access. Other equipment and addition information that would further support the implantation include:
  - An up to date version of Chrome, Firefox, Safari, Edge, or Internet Explorer 11.
  - An Internet connection of atleast 128kbps is recommended.
  - Printer – for providing printable resources to students.
  - Headphones – for accessing audio resources.
  - Wireless Internet Hub – for students who do not have internet at home.

- All equipment mentioned above is already in place except for the wireless internet hubs.

Technical Support Available

- IXL provides a wealth of support at their Help Center.

- User Guides are available for Teachers, Parents, and Administrators and address how to set up an account. There are also orientations to common features.

- From the Help Center, users are able to send technical support a message which will be returned by e-mail.

- FAQs are provided for a wide range of questions. These are organized into 8 different categories. Users also have the option to search for a common question.

Limitations

- IXL should be a safe place for students to complete assignments, since they are not communicating with others through the site. Login IDs can be created that hide a students true identity.

- All skills practice requires an online connection to complete. It would be beneficial if problems could be downloaded and students were able to work on them offline.

Limitations

- Skills practice is personalized to the learner and does not require a set number of problems. Students could easily become overwhelmed or frustrated when they make mistakes and as a result have to complete a large number of problems. It is important for the teacher to monitor student progress and encourage students to seek help when they are struggling.

Cost

- IXL Membership
  - A classroom license for 1 class and 1 subject is approximately $300
  - Discounts are available for site licenses, where multiple classes and subjects can be combined.
    - IXL offers a 30 day free trial for up to 90 students in 1 subject. I would recommend that all interested teaches complete the free trial before perusing a site license. This would ensure that maximum impact is made with purchased licenses.

Cost

- Wireless Internet Hotspot

  - The Kajeet SmartSpot provides wireless access to students without access at home. These devices also have K-12 specific filters, data controls, reporting, and expert program management. The cost of these devices range from $79.97 to $159.97 each. The data plans for these devices start at $19.97 per line/month and have discounted rates as low as $9.97 per line/ month.

Potential Funding Sources

- IXL can be purchased using many federal funds that a school receives including: Title I, Title IIA, Title IID, Title IV, Title V Part A, Title VI Part B, Title, VII, IDEA Part B, School Improvement Grants, and Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Program.

- Private Funding could also be pursued such as Donors Choose, Go Fund Me, Fund for Teachers, Get EdFunding, and Inside Philanthropy.

- Funding for the Wifi Hotpots could come from the grant program The 1Million Project, by Sprint. EveryoneOn.org could also be used to help families get connected with low cost internet providers and affordable computers.

Meeting Content Standards

○ All skills practice within IXL is linked to the Georgia Standards for Math, Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, and Spanish.

○ Students are empowered to set their own personal learning goals, based on diagnostics and real time analytics. They are able to develop a plan to master these learning goals.

○ Students are given immediate feedback and are able to identify areas where they need more support.

○ IXL will support the students as they build the foundation of knowledge necessary to become a Digital Citizen, Knowledge Constructor, Innovative Designer, Computational Thinker, Creative Communicator, and a Global Collaborator.

Promotes Student Learning Goals

- Using IXL will provide students with opportunities to identify and fill learning gaps that exist. By filling these gaps students are empowered to reach many goals that they have.

Differentiation

○ IXL makes differentiation simple with continuous assessment, adaptive practice, personalized instruction and unlimited practice.

  ○ **Continuous Assessment**: IXL features an algorithm that will provide students with a smart score. This assessment considers number of problems completed, difficulty of the problems, and how consistently students are providing correct answers.

  ○ **Adaptive Practice:** The continuous assessment is used to determine the difficulty of problems that students are receiving. Difficulty increases as students demonstrate mastery. Struggling students receive easier problems that allow them to grasp the material. All students have a chance to reach 100 regardless of earlier performance.

Differentiation

- **Personalized Learning:** Students receive immediate feedback for all problems. Incorrect problems are accompanied with a step by step guide to finding the correct answer.

- **Unlimited Questions:** All questions are computer generated, which provides the potential for students to have an unlimited number of practice problems.

Communication

○ IXL promotes very little communication within the classroom while students are using it, which ensures that students are completely safe.

○ As a result of mastering the skills on IXL, students can become proficient in math, language arts, science, social studies, and Spanish. This can prepare them for communication locally and globally with students, peers, and the larger community.

○ Progress is communicated immediately to the teacher with real time analytics.

○ Parent communication is made easy if a parent e-mail address is added to the student account.

Available Research on IXL

- A 2018 study in Georgia found that schools with IXL showed better performance than schools without IXL in both Language Arts and Math. The study examined schools without IXL, schools that have used it for 1 year and schools that have used it for 2 years.

- Schools that used IXL for 2 years outpaced the others.

- Schools with IXL also showed higher ratings on CCRPI. IXL proved to be effective in increasing achievement, making more progress and lowering the achievement gap.

- Schools with students that consistently mastered skills on IXL showed even higher achievement than other IXL Schools.

Implementation Plan

- Teachers will be encouraged to use the free trial provided by IXL for 30 days.

- A small group of early implementers will be selected from the teachers who have completed the free trials. At least 1 teacher from each department (math, language arts, science, social studies, and Spanish).

- While implementing for a year, these teachers will compile a list of best practices that are effective for all IXL users and ideas specific for their content area.

- Teaches will share what they have learned about IXL with each of their departments.

Implementation Plan (Prof. Development)

- Teachers will begin with orientation videos provided by IXL.
- Collaboration will take place within each academic department in order to share best practices while incorporating the technology.
- IXL provides professional development in the form of On-site experiences, eLearning Library, Virtual sessions, and District Success Packages.
  - **On-site experiences:** These experiences are designed by IXL to empower teachers to get the most out of it. Schools can sign up for sessions with their teachers or have IXL train a trainer at the school.

Implementation Plan (Prof. Development)

- **eLearning Library:** Teachers can go through on demand training. There are 40 modules that cover every important feature of IXL.

- **Virtual Sessions:** Teachers can participate in a 90 minute virtual lessons on a variety of topics.

- **District Success Packages:** This package includes a district launch consultation, on-site professional learning sessions, a strategy session with site leaders, data review meetings, access the the IXL eLeanring Library, and much more.

- IXL can be contacted for the pricing of each of these packages.

Reflection

- IXL is a great tool that can be used to support all learners in a classroom. The value of the immediate feedback as students work through tasks is incredibly valuable. Students are able to immediately see when they are making mistakes and are given tips of how to correct them. This is far better than students completing assignments on paper and having to wait until the teacher can give them feedback.

- I feel that this technology could be incredibly helpful and will advocate for it to become available at my school.

Reflection

○ I have learned through this experience that there is a great deal to consider when selecting technologies that will be adopted by a district. Decision makers need to ensure that maximum impact is going to made with technologies that are purchased. There are often other requirements that come along with purchasing a technology. In this case additional equipment will be needed. This experience improved my professional practice as I now have an understanding of what needs to be considered when analyzing new technologies. I am now prepared to determine what is needed in order to determine the true cost and value of incorporating a new technology.

References

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