



Using Technology to Adapt Learning for Every Student

BayTech Charter School, Oakland, California



“With IXL, online lessons are given at each student’s instructional level, not a frustration level. That keeps students engaged and motivated.”

*Dr. Seth Feldman, Superintendent,
BayTech Charter School*

At BayTech Charter School, middle and high school students get a personalized education enhanced through technology. Their individualized, technology-supported approach is helping their students not only succeed but excel. They implemented IXL Math, IXL English language arts, IXL Social Studies, and IXL Spanish to provide high school students and above-level middle school students with opportunities to “advance from where they are” and accelerate mastery of the skills they will need for higher education.

The Challenge: Meeting Needs Across the Academic Spectrum

BayTech is among Oakland’s oldest and most established independent charter schools, serving 350 students in grades 6-12. Their population is largely minority and low-income, with five languages spoken on campus and 20% of students qualifying for special education (SPED) services. Their mission is to provide a high-quality education utilizing adaptive technologies to prepare students for college and career.

Dr. Seth Feldman, the superintendent, explains, “We use assistive technology to make learning personalized for every student. When you have a classroom where some students are working four grade levels below, and others are working four grade levels ahead, you need adaptive tools that will meet the needs of students across both ends of the spectrum, as well as in the middle.” They use a library of digital resources to meet individual needs. Dr. Feldman says, “We don’t like to say that any of our students are behind. What’s important is that each student is advancing from where they are. We look for technology tools that allow them to do that.”



The school already had a program in place for math and English language arts at the middle school, but it aged out at the 8th-grade level. That meant that advanced middle school students had no place left to go once they demonstrated mastery of the 8th-grade standards. The school also needed something for the high school that would meet the needs of all students and present material in an age-appropriate manner. IXL gave their students the individualized skill instruction and practice they needed to accelerate learning, prepare for the ACT or SAT, and get ready for higher education.

Empowering Students—On Campus and At Home

The school now uses IXL Math and English language arts for all high school students and for middle school students who have completed all of the available coursework in their middle school program. They also use IXL Social Studies and Spanish at the high school level at the request of teachers. Ryan Hughes, the principal for the high school, especially appreciates the higher level of IXL Math. “IXL provides appropriate instruction for every single student at their instructional level. It was the only program we found that allowed them to go all the way up to higher-level calculus in math,” he says.

Parents have embraced IXL as a core part of the technology-enhanced learning experience at BayTech. Ryan says, “Parents know what their kids are learning. They are very happy with the individualized learning their kids receive here.” Parent satisfaction with their technology-enabled approach to learning has led to an 85% student retention rate (enviable in their highly mobile community) and a waiting list at every grade. But their most important metric is this: a 100% graduation rate!

Students use IXL and other adaptive technologies every day during an individualized period after lunch known as their “Eagle Period.” Students work at their own pace through online lessons targeted to their individual needs. They are rewarded for time spent in the program, problems answered, and skills mastered. Caitlin Emig, the chief of staff for the school, says, “Competition within IXL has been a very positive experience for our students. It empowers students and gets them engaged with what they are doing. And they are all able to participate at their own level.”

As the school moved to virtual learning in the spring and fall semesters of 2020, IXL helped keep students engaged with learning and on track with growth targets. The school is using a synchronous model for distance learning with live classes each day. Students continue to work on IXL and other technology programs during the virtual Eagle Period and on their own after class.

“IXL’s ability to identify each student’s level and meet them where they are is very helpful for us as a 6-12 school. We don’t always know where students are academically when they come to us, but this reaches them at their skill level.”

Caitlin Emig, Chief of Staff, BayTech Charter School



Accelerating Learning and Mastery for All

Dr. Feldman says, “IXL allows us to implement our vision of advancement and personalization for every single student.” While BayTech has not yet received results from official benchmark assessments, they see strong signs of growth within the IXL mastery reports. They also report high levels of student engagement, especially during virtual learning.

Dr. Feldman says, “We are seeing student engagement above 90% during virtual learning, with more than 90% average daily attendance. And even students who haven’t been in attendance with the live classes tend to log onto IXL. In fact, many students have been very successful while learning at home, with some logging into IXL for hours at a time. They have told us that they are willing to participate in their education this way because it is not frustrating to them and not embarrassing. They can just concentrate on learning from where they are.” Students in the SPED program have shown particular enthusiasm for learning with IXL.

IXL has also enhanced the student-teacher relationship. The program gives teachers a clear window into student abilities and growth, so they know exactly where each student may need extra help or extra challenge. With IXL, teachers are able to act more as coaches and guides in the learning experience rather than lecturers.

Dr. Feldman highly recommends IXL to other school and district leaders. He says, “It’s not very expensive. You can afford it. The real issue is, are you ready to try something new?”

“IXL has changed the way students and teachers interact. Teachers can have individualized conversations with students based on their performance and needs. It’s been a great bonding tool, especially while we are virtual.”

Ryan Hughes, High School Principal, BayTech Charter School

A Model for Success at BayTech Charter School

Here’s how teachers are using IXL at BayTech Charter School:

- IXL is used for all high school students and for high-achieving middle school students to accelerate their learning.
- Students work on IXL daily during their “Eagle Period” for individualized, technology-enabled instruction. Many also continue working on their own after class.
- Each student is able to work at his or her own level of mastery. Students compete and are rewarded for their efforts based on time-on-task, number of problems completed, and number of skills mastered.
- Teachers use the IXL reports to target instruction to student needs and drive discussions with students about their progress.