

Meet Shelby Harris



About Shelby Harris

- **Name:** Shelby Harris
- **Age:** 36
- **Years teaching:** 13
- **Lives:** Kuna, Idaho
- **Born in:** Boise Area
- **School:** Meridian High School, University of Idaho
- **Teaches:** Math 7TH and 8th grade math Kuna Middle School

How many kids are in your class?

Class sizes vary. My pre-algebra class has 30 students, while my intensive math class has 12. Altogether I have nearly 100 students.

How did you come to be featured in this movie?

The director of *Teach* found out about the Khan Academy in Idaho pilot and was looking for a teacher in Idaho who was willing to pioneer the pilot. We began our implementation in February and they began to follow our story, but I didn't know until very recently whether or not it would end up in the final movie, but it did!

Did you have any concerns about starting Khan Academy?

Mostly, I was worried about the technology aspect. I was worried I'd be completely replaced, which is what a lot of teachers worry about with one-to-one devices.

How was the process of introducing Khan Academy into your classroom?

It felt seamless. My tech team did so much background research and prep work that one day I was using direct instruction and the next it was blended learning. The kids were excited and looked at this as an opportunity to try something new.

How did students first react to using Khan Academy?

The kids were thrilled. This is their world. We adults are trying to figure it out as new stuff is released, but kids grow up with it. Some students struggled with the transition, but that is because I was learning how to blend the material. We had to navigate through that, but now everyone is adjusted. Now, my kids get so much quality time with me. I feel like my connection with students is better now than ever.

What does a blended classroom look like?

Kids are doing a million different things—they are teaching each other, working one-on-one, working independently. I'm working with large groups, or individually with students and there is a buzz all day long. It is absolutely structured and deliberately planned. Each day we set goals and kids have directions of what they need to work on and I know who I'll be teaching and working with on any given day.



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What were some challenges implementing Khan Academy?

The biggest challenge was figuring out my role and blending this new tool into what I'm already doing.

What are the changes you've noticed in your students?

I've noticed a huge change in their self-confidence. They feel like they can do things. Because they know they have as much time as they need to work on their content, they're relaxed and then they're happy when they experience successes.

I saw holes of knowledge in kids before. They grow up with gaps and think they'll never be able to understand a given concept because the class has to move on and no one has time to work with them.

I had one student who couldn't divide. Normally, in a seventh grade classroom I wouldn't have been available to sit down with a student for a substantial amount of time and go over something they were supposed to have learned before. With Khan Academy, I finally had time to work with him independently. Within a week he was getting it.

How did parents react?

They really didn't—everyone seemed to go with the flow.

What advice would you give another school or teacher considering Khan Academy?

You will need support—from the tech department and administration. But for teachers looking to use it, you need to be willing to try, fail and re-work to improve. It takes time to see what a successful program can look like and there is a learning curve to get there.

I also think the project would be trickier without one-to-one devices for every student.

Could Khan Academy replace teachers?

No. There is so much that students still need from me. While the videos are helpful for customized learning, the kids still want to sit and talk through the concepts with a teacher.

Do you have to use your own equipment for Khan Academy (computer, iPad, etc)?

No. The district lent me a laptop for this process. The students worked on one-to-one ChromeBooks.

How do kids work on homework?

I didn't assign Khan Academy as homework. Some teachers choose to. But in my class it worked best to use the videos in class while I worked with other students.

Do you get paid a stipend to use Khan Academy?

No. I received no extra funding for Khan Academy. Kuna Middle School is part of the Khan Academy Idaho pilot project, which is funded by the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation.