

ALEKS Has Absolute Value for At-Risk Math Remediation



SUCCESS STORY

ABOUT THE SCHOOL



Name

Shoshone-Bannock Jr./Sr. High School

Location

Pocatello, Idaho

Enrollment

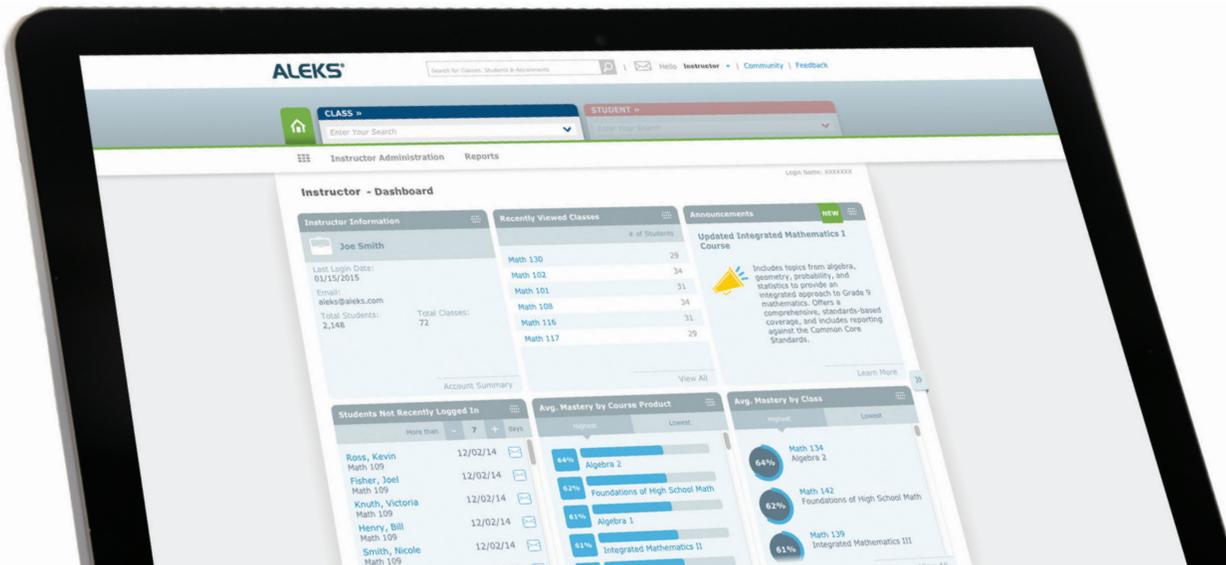
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Amidst challenges, school angles for transformation

The Shoshone-Bannock Jr./Sr. High School (Sho-Ban) is a small school located on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation in southeastern Idaho, serving students in grades 6-12. Sho-Ban has received a School Improvement Grant funded by the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Education to substantially raise the achievement of their students.

Fort Hall, a small reservation community, has high levels of poverty, underemployment, high-needs families, and adults with low levels of formal education. Students enrolled at Sho-Ban often face social problems indicative of communities and families in poverty, such as: low attendance rates, low academic achievement, anger management issues, difficulty with authority, and chemical dependency.

Sho-Ban began foundational work during the 2011-2012 school year to strengthen their academic program and bring accountability to both students and staff in order to achieve the following goal: Transforming into a high-performing school.



Much needed customization for attendance remediation

Allen Mayo, high school math teacher at Sho-Ban said, “The biggest challenges at Sho-Ban are attendance and proficiency.” With low attendance rates and at-risk students, teachers at the school struggle to ensure students are getting the most out of their lessons and gaining proficiency in math and reading.

Then Mayo came across *ALEKS*, an acronym for Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces, during an in-service event hosted by the Idaho State Board of Education in October 2013. Mayo was interested in the program immediately.

During the in-service, he learned that *ALEKS*, a web-based, artificially intelligent learning and assessment system, uses adaptive questioning to quickly and accurately determine exactly what a student knows and doesn’t know within a course.

It then instructs the student on the topics they are most ready to learn. As a student works through a course, *ALEKS* periodically reassesses the student to ensure that topics learned are also retained.

When Mayo considered how this program could help remediation efforts at Sho-Ban through its focus on mastery, differentiated instruction, and 24/7 digital access, he knew he had to bring *ALEKS* to his school. Mayo worked expeditiously to implement the online math program within the same month.

“Students who have had little focus before ALEKS are now more engaged because they don’t feel they are so far behind in a lesson.”

– Allen Mayo,
Math Teacher

SHO-BAN MATH PROFICIENCY

17%
2011-2012

5%
2012-2013

23%
2013-2014

100
Students Attending

“About 95 percent of the students have used *ALEKS*,” said Mayo. “We require the students in credit recovery classes and/or intervention classes to work on the program.”

When asked about the best feature of *ALEKS*, Mayo points to the ability for students to “Work through concepts they don’t understand using *ALEKS*’ thorough explanations. And once they master the concept and move on, there is a great sense of accomplishment.”

He added, “This is important in ensuring we motivate our students and overcome attendance issues so that we can meet our school achievement goal of becoming a high-performing school.”

The *ALEKS* program tracks student progress in a highly visual form. A customized pie chart shows what the student knows and what the student has yet to learn. As the pie chart changes and the mastered portion grows, students can feel a sense of accomplishment in their progress and motivation in their learning. *ALEKS* provides educators with student, class, and school reports that detail concept mastery and can guide teachers in targeting their instruction.

“ALEKS prepares students to succeed in regular classes by helping them to deepen their understanding of the concepts, retain the material, and be confident in their learning ability.”

– Allen Mayo,
Math Teacher

Students make gains in short amount of time

“The majority of students are behind in [grade-level math] proficiency, almost 85 percent of them,” Mayo said. “Essentially, they are in the pool of almost proficient, which is also known as low-basic proficiency, and we rarely have advanced proficiency.”

Sho-Ban administers the Northwest Evaluation Association test three times a year (fall, winter, spring) to help students measure their progress toward proficiency and advance their scores.

In the 2011-2012 annual school report issued by the U.S. Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), 17.78 percent of Sho-Ban students taking the NWEA fall assessment met proficiency in mathematics. This percentage fell in the 2012-2013 school year, where the BIE’s annual report showed that 5.77 percent of Sho-Ban students achieved proficiency in math.

After only three months of using *ALEKS*, students took the NWEA winter math assessment in January 2014. Mayo notes, “There was a nine percent advancement in [math] proficiency.” In just six months, students taking the NWEA spring math assessment showed an increase in [math] proficiency of 18 percent. “It was exciting to see those sort of results in such a short time. *ALEKS* is really helping our at-risk students improve,” Mayo said.

The *ALEKS* program delivers standards-based content correlated to the Common Core State Standards and all 50 states’ standards. At Sho-Ban, students spend three to five hours a week using *ALEKS*, with an opportunity to spend additional time on *ALEKS* in the after-school program.

This is instrumental in getting them to advanced proficiency and transforming Sho-Ban into a high-performing school.