

Implementation Strategies

Cummings Elementary School, Grandville Public Schools
Grand Rapids, MI

Grade(s): K – 6

Scenario: Computer Lab, Computers in Classroom, Home Access

Purpose: Enrichment/Gifted and Talented, At-Risk Students, Supplement

Time Spent in ALEKS: 2–3 hours per week

ALEKS Course: Mathematics – LV 3 (with QuickTables), Mathematics – LV 4 (with QuickTables), Mathematics – LV 5 (with QuickTables)

Ryan Roberts, Teacher

With the economic situation causing continued reductions or elimination of our classroom aides, ALEKS has been the answer to a developing need. We are able to use the program to help supplement our instruction for our more talented students and it is great for extra remediation for our at-risk students. Monitoring student progress is quick and easy. Being computer-based also spurred interest in many students who are struggling in math and usually resistant to extra support (the students feel like they are able to figure math out on their own terms). The pride our students show when sharing their progress with teachers, students, or parents is always a highlight for us. We are very pleased with ALEKS and fully intend to continue to use it to support our math instruction.

Scenario

What challenges did the class or school face in math prior to using ALEKS?

We were challenged with teaching to all students. We used to have one hour of aide time per class to help with struggling students and it has been eliminated. ALEKS has been very helpful in filling that void.

How many days per week is class time dedicated to ALEKS?

3 days per week.

What is the average length of a class period when ALEKS is used?

15 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

It is used strictly a supplement for both talented and struggling students and is to be used outside of our regular instruction.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

No, we do not.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

If students finish early, they are allowed to use ALEKS. We have a pretty rigid schedule and work the program in when there is downtime for various reasons. Additionally, ALEKS has been used quite a bit during the lunch hour and afterschool.

How did you modify your regular teaching approach as a result of ALEKS?

I have not really modified much, but I know we have the support of ALEKS to help us even more.

How often are students required or encouraged to work on ALEKS at home?

Students are encouraged to work from home three days per week.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

Whenever parents ask, "What can I do as a parent?," we recommend replacing a little recreational time with ALEKS. We also inform parents via a newsletter, blog, and word of mouth. Sharing student progress in the program is one other way we connect with parents.

Grading

Is ALEKS assigned to your students as all or part of their homework responsibilities? If so, what part of the total homework load is it?

No, we merely suggest use and student activity is tracked for positive reinforcement.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

We do not include ALEKS in our grading system.

Do you require students to make regular amounts of progress in ALEKS?

Individual progress expectations are different for each student. We set a standard to meet based on ability, time available for ALEKS, and parent involvement.

Learning Outcomes

Since using ALEKS, please describe the learning outcomes or progress you have seen.

When using a scripted math program, it is sometimes very difficult to find time to pinpoint weaknesses for students. However, ALEKS shows you and the student which areas they need the most work in. This has saved us both time and effort, which is at a premium these days. For a large portion of our ALEKS-using students, seeing the pie chart and witnessing their progress in real time has been very motivating. The pride our students show when sharing their progress with teachers, students, or parents is always a highlight for us.

Best Practices

Are there any best practices you would like to share with other teachers implementing ALEKS?

Let students navigate the program on their own. Students who have ownership in the program is one of the most important parts in my eyes.