

Implementation Strategies

Samuel Bowles School, Springfield Public Schools
Springfield, MA

Grade(s): K – 5

Scenario: Computers in Classroom

Purpose: Special Education, Improve State Test Scores, At-Risk Students, ESL Students

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 20%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 1.5–2 hours per week, 20 hours per term

ALEKS Course: Mathematics – LV 3 (with QuickTables)

Sandra Jaescke, ELL/Special Education Teacher

I really like ALEKS. I work with English Language Learner (ELL) Special Education students in grades 3–5. These students are below grade level in math and this program gives them the success that they need, while also providing them with an individualized program. My students ask to do ALEKS every day. They like seeing the colors change on their pies and the number of skills completed change as they master a concept. I have never had children so anxious to complete the daily lesson and get their turn on the computer.

Scenario

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

Basics in math are hard to teach and re-teach every day. The students get frustrated and feel that all they do is the same thing over and over. With ALEKS, it doesn't seem to matter to them because they are working on a computer.

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

4–5 days per week.

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

15–20 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

We try to get the students on the program every day.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

No, I do not. I let students choose what they would like to do. It makes them feel more in charge of their learning and that is a huge motivation for them to use the program.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

Some students log onto ALEKS right away while I am teaching a new skill or reviewing a previously mastered skill. Then that group goes on the program when they are finished with their independent work. We rotate the students so they are either doing a lesson, ALEKS, independent work, or a math game.

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

I work side by side with students as they work on their ALEKS assignment. If I see a few students who need more help with a specific concept, I will take them the next day to do an additional lesson to explain the concept and provide more practice before they do the skill again on ALEKS.

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

Students do not have computers at home.

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, since students do not have computers at home.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

I don't use ALEKS specifically in grading, but students are making progress in different math concepts which affects their overall grades.

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

No. Because these are Special Education students, their progress is really dependent on how quickly they can master a concept.

Learning Outcomes

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

Students that have struggled with concepts are more motivated to do more individualized problems. They can go at their own pace and they are also completing different problems so there is no competition. Students are spending more time on math because they like using the computer and they are mastering the concepts that they need to succeed. My students are excited and always want to show me what skills they are working on, what their pies look like, and how many activities they have completed. Most of my students do not have computers at home, so this is a wonderful experience for them.