

Implementation Strategies

Wickliffe Progressive Community School, Upper Arlington City School District
Columbus, OH

Grade(s): K – 5

Scenario: Computer Lab, Computers in Classroom, Home Access

Purpose: Intervention, Enrichment/Gifted and Talented, Improve State Test Scores, Supplement

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 20%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 2 hours per week, 30 hours per term

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

Theresa E. Boyle, Teacher

ALEKS has provided me with a tool that allows my students independence and natural pacing. Students become aware of the concepts they know firmly and the concepts where they need support. My experience with using ALEKS for the past four years has been fantastic! I have noticed a positive improvement in test scores, deeper understanding of complex concepts, and better recall of computation skills. My students who use ALEKS on a regular basis routinely score higher than grade-level peers who do not use ALEKS. The explanations provided by ALEKS allow students to take the risk to learn new concepts and put into practice their learning. Allowing this independence supports the classroom instruction and provides a clear safety net for children who are motivated to learn more.

Scenario

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

I found it more difficult to document individual student achievement in some concepts. With ALEKS, I can see the problems and strands the student has completed and note the understanding from the ALEKS assessments to supplement my assessments.

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

4 days per week.

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

10–20 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

Initially ALEKS was an extra resource provided by the school district. As I saw the benefits of the program, I found more ways to encourage student use. I made a weekly commitment to get every child on ALEKS each week for 30 minutes. Now, I arrange for students to use the computer lab so that each child is allowed 30–40 minutes to use ALEKS and play the games in QuickTables. In addition, I assign homework to use ALEKS for 30 minutes per week. Students and their parents have flexibility to do one 30-minute session, two 15-minute sessions, or three or more sessions to fulfill the requirement.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

No, I allow students to self-select topics. However, I do use the Teacher Module to set dates and quizzes to help pace students in a manner more appropriate for my classroom expectations.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

I have students use ALEKS for the first 15–20 minutes of class when possible. We do a mini-lesson on the chapter and unit we are covering and when students complete the follow-up work they can go to ALEKS. About once per month I schedule the computer lab and take the entire class to the lab for 40 minutes of ALEKS time. ALEKS is always a choice during flexible time as well. For students who do not choose to use ALEKS outside of math class, I arrange time for them to work on ALEKS other times during the school day. I provide them with a goal such as, "work toward getting the area of a triangle completed by the end of the week."

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

I haven't needed to modify my teaching approach since ALEKS fits right into my classroom. The students embrace the learning and the delivery of the material. ALEKS has been a welcome addition to the classroom.

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

Students are encouraged to use ALEKS at home for 30 minutes per week.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

My students and families really like ALEKS. They appreciate the rigor and the support provided by the Explain button. In addition, the children like the online aspect because there are no lost papers or "dogs eating" their homework.

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?**

Yes. My students are expected to do 30 minutes of ALEKS at home per week. This is in addition to their other assigned homework. ALEKS is about 50 percent of the total homework load.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

I do not include ALEKS into my grading system other than to provide a check that homework is completed.

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

I haven't needed to set progress expectations on ALEKS because students are motivated to see their pies fill in. The percentage completed and colors filling in the pie chart motivate my students to continue to progress in ALEKS.

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

My students have become more proficient at more content standards than in previous years. With ALEKS, I can document student learning and provide support for the content areas where children struggle. In addition, students are progressing at a faster pace because they have a tool available to them that they can work on in school, at home, or during breaks. They even work on ALEKS on vacations because it is online. For the students, they love to watch their pies fill in and read the progress of concepts they are mastering. My students are very motivated in ALEKS to complete concepts and progress. They have become familiar with the color coding for each slice and compare the color of the pie pieces as they move to another grade level.

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

I think I have only touched the surface of the power of ALEKS. It is a wonderful supplemental tool for my district math program. Continued use of ALEKS is important in supporting all students and providing independence in learning.