

Implementation Strategies

Southeast Elementary School, Salem City School District
Salem, OH

Grade(s): 5 – 6

Scenario: Computers in Classroom, Laptop Carts

Purpose: RtI, Special Education

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 20%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 90 minutes per week; 12–15 hours per term

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

Russell Hopple, Special Education Teacher

ALEKS is a great program and my students are seeing growth in the basic skills they need to develop and master. The program is an excellent addition to my classroom and is both kid- and user-friendly. ALEKS also provides teachers with data that is easy to read and understand. One of the best features of the program is that it makes the student master a topic before moving on to the next one. I would recommend ALEKS for any classroom.

Scenario

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

One of the biggest things my class was lacking was the basic skills associated with their instructional level. Because of this, students struggled with solving problems at grade level. Another area of weakness was the lack of fluency with their basic math facts. However, ALEKS has been able to put the student at their instructional level and build mastery of topics.

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?

25 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

I substitute ALEKS for the data folders I used, which contained skills that students were working on at their instructional level. Instead of "mad minutes," I used QuickTables for basic skill mastery. Additionally, since ALEKS is correlated to state standards, I have had no problem setting up the curriculum.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

No, students work at their own pace and work on topics off of the pie chart. The topics that are completed first are usually the ones students find the easiest.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

My class period is 80 minutes long, so students work on ALEKS using laptops for the first 25 minutes.

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

I use ALEKS as a tool to help students master topics at their instructional level. The program has also allowed me to work with students in groups of two who are working on grade-level topics.

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

Students are encouraged to work from home as much as possible. At conference time, I tell every parent about ALEKS and how they can access it from home on just about any computer.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

I tell every parent about ALEKS at conferences and then show them on a laptop what the program does. This allows them to see what their son or daughter is doing. I also use ALEKS data at Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings 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. However, students do have ALEKS Quizzes on weekly basis.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

I give an ALEKS Quiz each week and count it as grade. These quizzes are about 10 percent of a student's total grade.

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

No, however, I do use a sticker chart to show the amount of progress students are making. My students like using the program, so I have not had to put a requirement on how much progress they need to make in the program.

Learning Outcomes

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

We have seen an overall improvement on the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement (KTEA-II) assessment, which we give to special education students once a year. What I have noticed when working with my students in a small group is that their overall "problem attack" skills have increased. The main reason for this is because ALEKS puts them at their instructional learning level. Since students are learning at their instructional level, it builds the foundation they need to solve and answer math problems that are above their usual instructional level. One of the biggest improvements I have seen has been from students who use QuickTables. It is amazing how much more fluent my students are with recalling their basic math facts. I truly believe that it is because of the ten minutes we spend per day on QuickTables. My students also love ALEKS and love that they can see the growth they are making instantly through their pie chart. They realize that they have mastered topics, which allows them to be more confident with their math skills. I keep a sticker chart of all the topics students have learned and they love being able to see that chart and are proud of their progress. To sum it all up, I have seen a huge increase in my students' fluency in basic math facts and an increase in problem solving skills, which in turn has led to an increase in my students' overall math skills, as well as their confidence and attitudes towards math.

Best Practices

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

I feel that ALEKS is excellent for students who need IEP's because it allows them to work at their current instructional level. I also feel that the program builds mastery of basic topics or skills a student may lack. QuickTables has been great for building fluency of basic math facts.