

Implementation Strategies

St. John School, Private
Essexville, MI

Grade(s): K – 5

Scenario: One-to-One Laptop Program

Purpose: Core Curriculum

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 95%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 2.5 hours per week, 22.5 hours per term

ALEKS Course: Mathematics – LV 4 (with QuickTables), Mathematics – LV 5 (with QuickTables), Middle School Math Course 2

John Leaman, Teacher

I use ALEKS as our main math tool. Students work on ALEKS daily. I work with individual students, small groups, or large groups as needed. I like the way the students can progress at an appropriate rate, that they can access the program from home, and that I can monitor their progress frequently and easily. Students that have a particular gift in math are doing some amazing things! I have one fifth grader that is just about done with the seventh grade level. Also, the students have done quite well on their Iowa Test of Basic Skills. I like the way students have to really know sets of skills before they can advance. Students like ALEKS because they are using their laptops, can see their progress on the pie, and are rewarded for time and effort. They get really excited when they complete their pies and can advance to the next level.

Scenario

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

We worked with another program in the past that involved filling in scan forms which used up a lot of paper. A lot of time was wasted as the students made mistakes in filling in the circles on the form. The major challenge of the past was that struggling students were pushed too hard and became frustrated, while advanced students did not have enough opportunities to move ahead.

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

5 days per week.

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

30 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

We already had laptops and Internet access at school, so getting the hardware was easy. Once students had some instruction in how to navigate through the program, including QuickTables, they were off and running. The elements of the program dove-tail very well with our curriculum.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

I don't necessarily try to cover topics in a particular order. Sometimes the student chooses what he/she wants to practice on a given day, and sometimes I choose because the student is part of a small group.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

Students have work to do for other subjects, often times needing their laptops. While they are working, I meet with individuals or small groups to determine what objective(s) they will work on and to make sure they know how to do the problems. Students also help each other, especially the fifth graders helping the fourth graders.

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

Using ALEKS is both easier and harder than teaching whole group lessons. I have to be very quick using the tools of the program, especially the various reports, in order to get the students started on the practice for the day. The easy part is that the program does the record-keeping.

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

Students are encouraged to work on ALEKS at home on a daily basis, especially if they don't finish a topic at school. The idea is that the more they put into it, the more they will get out of it.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

I ask the parents to be supportive of their child, to answer questions as they are able, to allow the child to make mistakes and learn from them, to use the help button, to not help on assessments, and to stop for the day before their child gets frustrated and discouraged.

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?**

ALEKS is a part of their homework. I encourage up to 20 minutes.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

The area of grading has been a concern. What I am doing now is scoring students on the basis of effort (how much time is spent on the program) and achievement (how many objectives have been mastered). They are scored every two weeks and are weighed equally.

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

There is no required amount of progress because students are working at individual rates. However, I do look for them to spend a reasonable amount of time and effort on their math.

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

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

My students are rewarded with a "free homework" coupon for every 25 hours they spend online. Also, use the reports! They contain so much information and can save a lot of time. Allow students to help each other, as they can sometimes explain things just as well as I can.