

Implementation Strategies

Commerce Elementary School, Walled Lake Consolidated Schools
Commerce, MI

Grade(s): K – 5

Scenario: Computer Lab, One-to-One Laptop Program, Computers in Classroom

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

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 15%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 5 hours per week, 45 hours per term

ALEKS Course: Middle School Math Course 2, Middle School Math Course 3

Jon Bison, Teacher

I've been an ALEKS facilitator for nearly ten years now and have been 100 percent satisfied with the program's effectiveness and user-friendliness. The program is easily understood by students, parents, and teachers. With its extremely affordable subscription prices, ALEKS provides an exceptional return on investment. Most importantly, the program does precisely what it is reported to do: provide a precise learning path for each of its users at an appropriate level of challenge. I've used it with both accelerated and struggling learners with equal success and will continue to do so in the future.

Scenario

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

Differentiation that was "surgically precise." Teachers are stretched to the limit in trying to meet the needs of diverse learners. ALEKS fills this void perfectly.

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?

60 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

It starts with the assessment. Our practice is to enroll students in ALEKS when assessment results show that they have met the criteria for advancement. At the same time, mastery of grade level concepts takes precedence. Integrating delivery of grade level curriculum with ALEKS has been seamless.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

To a degree. Aligning ALEKS to grade level instruction has always proven beneficial. Beyond that, providing student choice in their route along the learning path has shown rewards.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

I utilize a workshop format for math instruction that is based on the assessment. Students showing previous mastery of the day's lesson begin working with ALEKS immediately. Others learn and practice based on their level of understanding.

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

Enhanced implementation of the workshop format. Determining the needs of all learners and structuring a routine to provide appropriate teacher/student interaction is paramount in the workshop approach and to the benefit of all.

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

Daily.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

Sending informational letters, holding "Welcome to ALEKS" meetings, sending periodic progress reports, showing parents how to support their child's learning, etc.

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, 90 percent.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

Students are not "graded" for ALEKS. Their goal attainment and learning progress are the measures used for assessment. Grade level concept mastery is primary along with progress in ALEKS.

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

Students are expected to complete one full course by year's end. Along the way, they are expected to complete a minimum of five hours of "seat time" per week. This typically results in students completing two or more courses during their subscription period.

Learning Outcomes

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

Students have met all grade level expectations and continue to master math concepts beyond their current grade level – often by one or more grade levels. By design, the program provides motivation, encouragement, and support for students in their efforts to master mathematical concepts. I've had a number of students proudly inform me when they've met learning goals or completed a course.

Best Practices

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

Provide workshops for all students in your classroom using ALEKS or otherwise. Have students journal about their challenges and successes every time they work with the program. Create opportunities for students to work with grade level peers to share their learning.