

Implementation Strategies

Woodland Elementary School, Henry County Schools
Stockbridge, GA

Grade(s): K – 5

Scenario: Computer Lab, Computers in Classroom, Home Access

Purpose: Intervention, After-School, Improve State Test Scores, At-Risk Students

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 35%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 1.5 hours per week, 13.5 hours per term

ALEKS Course: Mathematics – LV 3 (with QuickTables), Mathematics – LV 4 (with QuickTables), Mathematics – LV 5 (with QuickTables)

Steve McDonald, Teacher

Over the past three years, I have used the ALEKS program in coordination with our 5th grade afterschool remediation group. The results have been excellent. Last year, we had 18 students involved in the remediation group, with several students who had never passed the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) in math. After utilizing the ALEKS program for remediation, 16 of the 18 at-risk students successfully passed the CRCT. Out of the 16 students that passed, four had never successfully passed the CRCT before and another five students exceeded grade-level on the test. ALEKS is an excellent resource and every school should take advantage of the benefits the program offers.

Scenario

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

The biggest challenge was trying to meet the needs and differentiate instruction for each of our at risk students in the remediation class. Despite the reduced number of students, the different skill levels made remediation difficult. ALEKS allows me to individually target skills for each student, while other students can continue working at their own pace. ALEKS also offers helpful tutorials that help students to self-correct minor misconceptions without needing my attention or instruction.

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

3 days per week.

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

30 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

At the moment, ALEKS is utilized strictly as a remediation tool for our at-risk student population. We also use the ALEKS program during morning warm-ups for at-risk students in our classes. We hope to one day to purchase a subscription for every 5th grade student to use as a supplement to instruction and for acceleration purposes.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

Yes, because we use ALEKS for remediation purposes, I generally have students start in the numbers and operations slice of their pie. Once students demonstrate mastery over a large portion of the numbers and operations strand, I allow them to expand to selected topics in other areas of their pie.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

The afterschool remediation program consists of one hour of direct instruction and learning activities, then 30 minutes of individualized ALEKS instruction with remediation and acceleration.

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

During ALEKS instruction, I have students work on their individual pie charts. As questions and problems arise, I work with each student one-on-one to clear up misconceptions and remediate when needed. Students that don't need assistance are allowed to continue working at their own speed.

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

We encourage students with ALEKS subscriptions to work on it as often as they can.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

I cultivate parent involvement during conferences, where I discuss the benefits of ALEKS and explain how they can use the program at home to supplement what is being taught in the classroom. Many parents like the fact that ALEKS has tutorials to help them assist their child perform activities, thus eliminating the "I didn't know how to do it either" problem some parents encounter.

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, I ask students with computers at home to work on ALEKS for at least 15 minutes a night. However, it is not calculated into their overall grade.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

Presently, I do not utilize ALEKS as a grade, only a motivator.

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

Yes, I generally encourage ten or more topics mastered each week. We track results using line graphs and charts. Students that meet or exceed goals are rewarded frequently with various incentives established between students and teachers.

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

I have been able to achieve very promising results while using ALEKS for 5th grade remediation. Over the past three years, our grade level's achievement has grown from 85% meeting/exceeding the first year, to 95% meeting/exceeding by our third year. The students utilizing ALEKS are demonstrating better overall number sense, and becoming more confident in their problem solving ability. Once the students experience success and see their pies begin to grow, they want more. Many students begin competing against one another to see who can get the biggest pie. ALEKS achievement gives them a great sense of accomplishment and they can take pride in their success.

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

Keep track of results, celebrate milestones and achievements, and most importantly, make it fun.