

Implementation Strategies

Netcong Elementary School, Netcong Borough School District
Netcong, NJ

Grade(s): K – 8

Scenario: Computer Lab, Computers in Classroom, Home Access

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

Time Spent in ALEKS: 2.5 hours per week

ALEKS Course: Mathematics – LV 3 (with QuickTables), Mathematics – LV 4 (with QuickTables), Mathematics – LV 5 (with QuickTables), Middle School Math Course 2, Middle School Math Course 3, Pre-Algebra, Algebra 1

Mary Frances Koch, Teacher

This is the first full year I have used ALEKS in my fourth grade and sixth through eighth grade math classes. I wanted to use the program to supplement my teaching, as my textbooks are quite outdated. I was also looking for a way to put my lower level students on a level that would reinforce the skills they missed and, at the same time, give my more advanced students a chance to work at their level and pace. I find the ALEKS program does help me accomplish what I was looking to do and I hope to use it again next year.

Scenario

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

Our textbooks are outdated for our state standards, and at the pace at which our state curriculum is designed, many students get moved on to topics they are not ready for. Our better students sometimes got bored when clearly they were ready to move on, but could not.

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

1 day per week.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

I have my students do two and a half hours of ALEKS a week. The time spent in the program comes from whatever they can get done in computer class and at home. Every two weeks students receive a grade based on their time logged. When a cluster skill is completed in class (i.e. a textbook chapter), I create an ALEKS Quiz to go along with that skill, which is due by a certain date for a grade. During our state testing, students use ALEKS as a direct homework assignment. All students eventually have to complete an ALEKS Pie by a set date in June and will receive a grade based on the pie completion.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

No. Students are free to choose topics.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

My students do not do ALEKS as part of a math class. Once a week they get computer class time to work in ALEKS, and the rest of the time in ALEKS is spent working at home. Students do work in ALEKS in my class when their regular math work is complete and there is time left in the period.

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

I have not modified my regular teaching approach as a result of ALEKS.

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

Students in sixth through eighth grade need two and a half hours a week in ALEKS. Students in fourth grade need one hour a week in ALEKS.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

Parents are notified via letter when the program starts, and are kept apprised at conferences and in progress reports.

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, every two weeks students' time is logged and turned into a homework grade.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

When I create a quiz in ALEKS to correlate to a recent end of a chapter, the quiz grade is used in my gradebook with other quiz/test grades for that marking period. Time logs are done every two weeks for a homework grade.

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

I have not required students to make regular amounts of progress.

Learning Outcomes

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

Looking over the last year of use, I have found several of my better math students were able to move through two and even four courses. They have been exposed to more math than I could have hoped to cover on my own with them. I have also had one or two students who tend to be weak in math mention that they seem to understand some of the skills a little better now that they have used the ALEKS program. Most of my students want to finish their ALEKS Pie, and quite a number of them have already finished and moved on to other courses. They feel a sense of accomplishment and are the first to tell classmates when they have finished.

Best Practices

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

I like the feature of being able to make my own quizzes and assign them for a due date. I use the Time and Topic reports each week to be sure students are really working – I have caught many of them just letting the time run.