

Implementation Strategies

St. Mary Immaculate Parish School, Diocese of Joliet
Plainfield, IL

Grade(s): K – 8

Scenario: Computer Lab, Home Access

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

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 25%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 2 hours per week, 20–24 hours per term

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

Karrie O'Connor, Teacher

I am very pleased with ALEKS, especially its ability to differentiate for all 30 of my fifth grade students. Each student is working at his/her own pace, with several students exceeding the standard fifth grade curriculum and working at the seventh grade level of ALEKS. I feel this program is giving these students a greater challenge than what I can offer them in such a large math class. If they have questions and I am unavailable to work with them, they can either use the Explain button that walks them through the topic at a level in a way that they can easily understand, or they can work on another topic until I can get to them. On "Pie-day Friday," any student that has completed a slice of a pie has their name called and comes forward to choose a Hostess pie, sugar free apple pie gum pack, or Whoopie pie of their choice. It is fun seeing how excited they get over a pie and how much it motivates them.

Scenario

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

Many students did not retain topics that had been previously taught or had difficulty recalling basic math skills.

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

1 day per week.

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

40 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

ALEKS counts toward the homework score if the student has logged in for two hours. In addition, students take ALEKS Quizzes at school.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

I set up assignments according to the topics in our textbook.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

My students are required to work on ALEKS for a minimum of two hours per week. They have one forty minute math lab each week which counts toward their two hours, and the rest of the minutes must be budgeted into their busy weekly schedule from their home computers. They have bi-weekly quizzes in the lab on topics they have been working on from our math text. To provide incentive and reward the students, I have created "Pie-day Friday." Every other Friday, I print the report from Knowledge Per Slice Report. Any student that has completed a slice of a pie has their name called and comes forward to choose a Hostess pie of their choice. It is fun seeing how excited they get over a pie and how much it motivates them.

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

I have been able to move through some topics much quicker because they have been introduced in ALEKS.

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

Students must complete at least two hours per week.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

I introduce ALEKS to parents at the Parent Meet and Greet and at conferences, sharing with them the great benefits ALEKS has for each individual child.

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 quarter of the weekly homework responsibility.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

The weekly homework, a minimum of two hours on ALEKS, counts for five points. This is a quarter of the weekly assignments.

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

No, I let each child work at their own pace.

Learning Outcomes

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

I have seen great growth in the students' ability to quickly grasp a concept I am teaching them, as well as their ability to retain that information if they have previously worked on the topic in ALEKS. Overall, they are happy with the program.

Best Practices

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

"Pie-day Friday" has worked well to motivate students. Additionally, sometimes busy students and families are on the go and do not have easy access to a computer after school; allow for an assignment to be completed within a two day window to avoid this problem. This helps students learn to budget their time better.