

Implementation Strategies

Park Village Elementary School, Poway Unified School District
San Diego, CA

Grade(s): K – 5

Scenario: Computer Lab, Home Access

Purpose: Intervention, Enrichment/Gifted and Talented, Improve State Test Scores, At-Risk Students

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 15%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 1 hour per week, 10 hours per term

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

Heather Marker, Teacher

This is my third year of implementing ALEKS in the classroom. It has been a fabulous way to engage the students in mathematics both in the classroom and at home. I use ALEKS mostly as a homework substitute and a way to challenge students individually. We also use it as a great way to study for California standardized testing. We have tried other math literacy programs over the years, but the kids always tend to enjoy ALEKS over any of the others we have tried.

Scenario

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

There were no individualized programs to help with challenging and intervening with students in math. This program does it all!

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

1–2 days per week.

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

30–60 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

We assign ALEKS as part of their weekly homework assignment. Also, if students finish work early, they can go on ALEKS for extra practice. When we go to the computer lab, students are allowed to access ALEKS.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

We start at fifth grade math; however, I sometimes move kids who are struggling at grade level math down to fourth grade math. Once they pass a grade level, I move them up immediately.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

We have computer lab time once a week, so the students can access ALEKS during that time. Outside of my room, there is also a small mini-lab where students can go when they finish work. It's perfect when I'm teaching math; those students who just whiz through math can then go and challenge themselves on ALEKS!

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

We got rid of math homework completely, besides studying for tests. This helped save paper, losing books, etc. Also, those kids who need a challenge receive individualized instruction.

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

They are required to complete one hour of ALEKS a week, although I encourage most kids to do it in 30-minute segments, twice a week.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

I model how to use ALEKS at Back-to-School Night. Additionally, the kids have a consequence if they do not do enough work each week. The parent is notified if any homework is not complete, so they are usually up-to-date on how their student is doing on ALEKS.

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 assigned as all of their math homework, besides studying for tests. It is at least 25 percent of their workload.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

I grade ALEKS as a homework score. We do not have percentages at our school, but if I had to break it down, it would be at five percent in my classroom.

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

I go to the Reporting page to check on student progress on ALEKS. In our homework reminders, we write down what the minimum number of hours is each week, so they know where they need to be. They are held accountable for completing at least one hour per week.

Learning Outcomes

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

Our math scores on the California standardized test were extremely high in comparison to past scores. My class had started using the program earlier in the year, and we found that they were scoring higher than many of the kids in the other classrooms. Most of my students are highly competitive and would try to pass the fifth grade curriculum and advance to higher grades before their peers! They enjoy the program. They have some control over which subject they study, and if they get stuck, the practice is very thorough in the directions. It is amazing to see how quickly the kids pick up the tools on the program and are able to navigate across the site!

Best Practices

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

When parents come in and say that math is "too easy" for their child, I pull up their child's ALEKS score. If the student is still in fifth grade math, I share with the parent how many of my kids have already passed that grade. If math is easy, then their child should have passed much earlier. This shows the parents how hard their child is working, and helps encourage the student to always do their best!