

Implementation Strategies

Calexico Mission School
Calexico, CA

Grade(s): K – 12

Scenario: Computer Lab

Purpose: Intervention, Summer School, Core Curriculum

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 100%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 3.2 hours per week, 60 hours per term

ALEKS Course: Pre–Algebra, Algebra 1, High School Geometry, Algebra 2, PreCalculus

Mikal Clark, Teacher

I use ALEKS 100 percent of the time in my 9th grade Pre–Algebra class, as well as with a few additional independent study students. It is a perfect fit for the students who need to have gaps filled in so they are ready to continue on with high school mathematics.

Scenario

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

Our school had difficulty in teaching all students at their individual level. With such a wide range of aptitudes, it was impossible to maintain focus when every student had to study the same lesson, ready or not.

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?

45 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

We converted our whole Pre–Algebra program from the regular textbook and classroom environment to the computer lab using ALEKS. We have not implemented ALEKS at higher levels except for remedial work and independent study.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

No. Students choose the topics they want to study based on what ALEKS determines that are ready to learn.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

The Pre–Algebra class is conducted 100 percent on the computer; students work on ALEKS from when they enter the lab until the bell rings. I work my way around the room helping students and explaining concepts on an individual basis. To increase efficiency, I have explained the same topic to as many as three or four students at once.

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

Since there is no regular teaching in the Pre–Algebra class, there really isn't any modification. ALEKS completely replaced the course curriculum for the grade level.

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

For slower students, use of ALEKS at home is strongly encouraged. If students work hard enough on ALEKS at school, they don't have to work on ALEKS at home.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

Parents are informed of ALEKS at the beginning of the school year during orientation and reminded of the program during parent–teacher conferences. We recommend ALEKS to parents who are looking for additional math practice and assistance for their students.

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 100 percent of the students' homework and class work responsibilities.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

Students are graded based on how many topics they complete (50 percent of grade) and how much work they actually complete every day (50 percent of grade).

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

Students must stay on pace to complete 100 percent of the course by the end of the year: first quarter = 25 percent, second quarter = 50 percent; and so on. Students are given points each day based on how many topics they complete.

Learning Outcomes

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

Students have begun to enjoy and understand math. It is now possible to explain a concept to any student in about one minute or less, and they can understand it and apply their knowledge. Students accept the responsibility for their own learning; they feel like they can be successful at a subject that used to be their worst nightmare.

Best Practices

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

I keep track of individual student progress in a spreadsheet. Percentages for each category are cut off at 100 percent so there is no extra credit and a strong category will not compensate for a weak one. For example, some students start the program with 50 percent mastery on the first day of school, but if they don't complete a topic each day and make progress, they will lose points.