

Implementation Strategies

John Paul II School, Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas
Overland Park, KS

Grade(s): K – 8

Scenario: Computer Lab, Home Access

Purpose: Intervention, Enrichment/Gifted and Talented, Summer School, Improve State Test Scores

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 95–99%

Time Spent in ALEKS: Varies

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

Terri Van Dyke, Teacher

We are using ALEKS in many capacities. We pinpointed those students who fell below state standards, and offered them a before-school time twice a week to work on ALEKS. These students faithfully came in to the computer lab 30–45 minutes before the start of school, and all of these students showed growth on this year's Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test scores, as well as their state assessment scores. We also use ALEKS for small group or individual work within our school day. Students are supervised by parent volunteers or learning center teachers to provide extra math time for those students who need more practice and instruction. These students work on classroom computers as well as computer lab and learning center computers. There are also students in our school who use ALEKS for practice and further instruction from their home computers. Students in the middle school who typically scored high on state assessments and standardized tests were also given computer time to work on ALEKS as a means to challenge and provide growth over and above what is provided in the classroom.

Scenario

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

Many students continually fell below standards in math. So our challenge was not only to catch kids up in middle school, but to reach out to younger students by providing reinforcements to what they were learning in the regular classroom. The challenge we had was to give the students actual instruction, not just drill and practice. The ALEKS program provided the instruction, as well as the ability for each student to work in areas where they struggled most.

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

3–4 days per week.

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

10–15 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

We started with baby steps, using ALEKS with a few kids. As I became more comfortable with the program, I was able to implement and meet the needs of more students. The reports available through ALEKS in relationship to our state standards helped me to make sure my students were working on the right skills.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

My sixth graders need work on fractions the most so they are encouraged to start in that area first. My seventh graders need work on many areas of Geometry and measurement, and are encouraged to work in those areas. My eighth graders are encouraged to work on Algebra skills as well as in the area of Geometry.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

I offer early morning sessions that are 30–45 minutes prior to school two days a week. I allow my overachievers to leave my class after the end of instruction for work on ALEKS in the computer lab. This is usually 10–15 minutes, 3–4 times a week. Students who struggle with math are kept in the classroom setting for as much instruction as possible. ALEKS is then scheduled for them early in the morning, during study hall, or computer lab time.

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

I don't think I modified what I was teaching in the classroom as a result of ALEKS, but ALEKS was used to enhance and reinforce what I was teaching.

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

They were not required, but I encouraged my students to work on ALEKS twice a week for 30 minutes at home.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

Parents were given information about the program, as well as their son or daughter's pass codes. After about 4–5 weeks, I sent an update to show what the student had accomplished. I also encouraged parents to look at a particular area that may show particular progress or lack of progress.

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?

No.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

No grades are given for ALEKS.

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

They are not required to make a certain amount of progress. I met with each student once per quarter to show them how much progress or growth they had achieved, and set a goal for the next quarter.

Learning Outcomes

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

All of the students that were using ALEKS at our school showed improvement on their MAPS test scores, as well as growth on state assessments. The students that were below standards, but committed to our early morning sessions showed the most growth. Many improved as much as ten percentile points. Our students were all extremely excited to see the growth and changes that took place from the beginning of the year to the end. It was very rewarding for them to see that their hard work and commitment paid off.

Best Practices

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

My advice would be to sign on as a student and begin working through the program on your own. Work through all aspects so you better understand what you can do or assign as a teacher.