

Implementation Strategies

West Lane Technical Learning Center, Fern Ridge School District 28J
Elmira, OR

Grade(s): 9 – 12

Scenario: Online School, Computer Lab

Purpose: Improve State Test Scores, Core Curriculum

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 40%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 2.5+ hours per week; 60–90 hours per term

ALEKS Course: Pre-Algebra, Algebra 1, High School Geometry, Algebra 2

Geoff Barrett, Teacher

I find ALEKS to be an extremely useful tool. Our school uses ALEKS for approximately 40 percent of our math curriculum. I have found that mastery in ALEKS correlates well with state tests scores and other assessments like the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP). Many students gain more from ALEKS than direct classroom instruction.

Scenario

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

We are an online school, so finding effective curriculum was extremely difficult. It was amazing to find a platform that was, in some cases, more effective than classroom instruction.

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?

Varies.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

We are an online school and adopted ALEKS to address low math scores.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

No, we allow students to self-select topics. As the teacher, I do make recommendations to students and monitor their progress in particular areas.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

Students work on ALEKS on their own.

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

It was pretty seamless because we are an online school.

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

They are required to complete a certain level of mastery to earn credit in math. Students are encouraged to work 45 minutes to one hour every day.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

I talk to parents about it to explain how it works and encourage them to check progress from home. I also provide regular updates.

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?

It is assigned as all of their homework.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

I believe students should master 80 percent of a course in order to earn credit. So, 80 percent is passing and earns a C, 86 percent is the threshold to earn a B, and 93 percent is the threshold to earn an A. If a student is working on just a half-credit first semester course, the thresholds are roughly half of that.

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

I set benchmarks for students. At the quarter point in the school year, they are expected to be at 20–25 percent, halfway through the year at 40–45 percent, third quarter at 60 percent, etc. They receive a grade based on their mastery level at each quarter grade report.

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

I have seen students increase their achievement up to 20 points on independent assessments like the NWEA MAP. Generally, students are enthusiastic about seeing their level of mastery increase. They also like knowing exactly where they are and what they've mastered. Students who aren't using ALEKS see the enthusiasm of those who are and ask to be put onto it. I see a much higher level of engagement and enthusiasm for math with ALEKS than in general classroom instruction.

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

Use ALEKS daily and encourage students to do the reviews and prepare for the assessments.