

Implementation Strategies

City Academy, Independent
Salt Lake City, UT

Grade(s): 8 – 12

Scenario: One-to-One Laptop Program, Computers in Classroom, Home Access

Purpose: RtI, Credit Recovery, Special Education, Summer School

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 90%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 2–3 hours per week, 18–27 hours per term

ALEKS Course: Mathematics – LV 3 (with QuickTables), Mathematics – LV 4 (with QuickTables), Mathematics – LV 5 (with QuickTables), Algebra 1, High School Geometry, Algebra 2

Deanna L. Taylor, Educational Support Services Director

ALEKS has proven to be the perfect solution to the very diverse needs of the students with whom I work and monitor. I am able to use ALEKS as a tool for: creating and monitoring progress for Independent Education Program (IEP) goals; monitoring progress for students in tiers two and three of our Response to Intervention (RtI) system; enrolling and assigning work in the most suitable ALEKS math course for students with lower abilities; extending school year services in the summer for students with disabilities; and allowing students to make up high school credit for graduation. My students really like the step-by-step instructions and ability to use ALEKS outside the school setting. Students generally feel proud about their progress on ALEKS. The pie graph is an excellent visual for the students to monitor their progress, especially for students with disabilities. Overall ALEKS has given my students an increased sense of confidence in their ability to work towards their goals.

Scenario

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

Prior to ALEKS, it was difficult for us to find a suitable progress monitoring tool; they are lacking at the high school level. When our math department started using ALEKS, I found that it was perfect for monitoring my students' progress and using the data in their IEPs and other special learning plans.

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?

30 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

Since the nature of my department's work is with students with disabilities and at-risk students, we focus on the individual needs of each student. We create and implement the best program in ALEKS to meet the students' needs and to close the achievement gap as quickly as possible so that the students can progress to grade level standard courses. Our school uses ALEKS in the grade level courses as a supplemental to the curriculum. The courses on ALEKS are customized to meet the needs of the students while connecting with state standards and providing students with the extra practice they need on concepts.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

No. We allow students to work at their own pace in the order they feel most comfortable following, within the parameters set by ALEKS.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

It depends on the environment. In the Basic Math class where students are all at different levels, we begin the class with a starter problem that reviews some concepts, and then students work on their individual ALEKS courses the rest of the period. They receive teacher support and support from the paraeducators in the classroom. In the study support classes, students spend time working on ALEKS as appropriate (depending on the rest of their workload), and receive support from the study support teacher and other teachers who pop in to their study classes to check up on them.

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

The teaching approach in our department has been modified from using a textbook and worksheets to using ALEKS as the primary curriculum for our students with disabilities. The ability to run progress reports from ALEKS is a wonderful tool and asset and

eliminates hours of work for the teacher.

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

We encourage our students to work on ALEKS daily outside of class.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

With my own students, I involve the parents as much as possible. I explain ALEKS to them, provide them with the website, and work with them on helping their student at home. I have my students' subscriptions renewed for summer work as well so that work at home can be accomplished.

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?

We do not require our students with disabilities to complete ALEKS as homework. In our regular courses, ALEKS is assigned as approximately 10 percent of the homework load.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

I do not incorporate it into my grading system for students working on individual IEP goals.

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

Each student is different and has different goals on their special plans. We, as a team, decide on the goal, make it measurable via ALEKS, and monitor and report on progress each quarter.

Learning Outcomes

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

I have seen a variety of learning outcomes and progress for my students with special needs. I have witnessed a class average increase in skills of approximately 17 percent in the first half of this year. Several students have been able to complete their course and move on to the next appropriate level course during the school year. I have also seen several students become Algebra 1 ready in preparation for the next school year, getting them to grade level standards. We have also had a few students recover credits with ALEKS so they can graduate on time with their class. Students generally feel proud about their progress on ALEKS. The pie graph is an excellent visual for the students to monitor their progress, especially for students with disabilities. Students also appreciate the ease of use and step by step instructions, making it easier to use the program from school or from home. Overall ALEKS has given my students an increased sense of confidence in their ability to work towards their goals.

Best Practices

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

Make sure each student is making progress by assessing them frequently and basing the amount and type of instruction on the assessments. In our work with students with disabilities, this is the standard practice that enables our students to make progress on their individual goals for learning.