

Implementation Strategies

Brainerd High School South Campus, Brainerd Independent School District 181
Brainerd, MN

Grade(s): 9 – 12

Scenario: Computer Lab

Purpose: RtI, Intervention, At-Risk Students, Supplement

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 25%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 2.5 hours per week, 45 hours per term

ALEKS Course: Algebra 1

Janelle Menzel, Teacher

The students that I am working with in ALEKS are at-risk students who have struggled in the past academically, and who struggle with consistent school attendance and life-issues that have interrupted the fluidity of their learning. I see students filling in some gaps in their learning by their ever increasing pie charts and the increasing difficulty of the topics being studied. I also see students becoming more independent learners as they are required to view explanations to topics that they have a question about; they read for understanding before they ask for a verbal explanation. Students are feeling more confident and are proud of their growth on their pie chart. They appreciate the ability to work at their own pace and some like being able to move faster than they have been able to in the past. Others appreciate not feeling like they are holding other students back, which makes them more comfortable asking questions about topics that they are struggling with. For students that struggle with attendance, ALEKS allows them to return to school after one absence or several absences and continue from where they left off as opposed to a traditional environment where they would be several lessons behind. ALEKS is user-friendly and implementation is made simple by tutorials available on the ALEKS website that walk you through the process of registering students and creating classes. Students are able to begin their assessments immediately after logging in for the first time and began their individualized instruction from that point forward.

Scenario

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

Our special education population is not currently making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), and we feel we can close the gap through Response to Intervention (RtI) with ALEKS. Students still have a traditional math class in addition to the work that they do in ALEKS; the program provides additional time on topic.

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

3 days per week.

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

50 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

ALEKS is a supplement to our core curriculum in an RtI model. We want to fill in gaps of learning for our at-risk population and provide more time on core instruction in order to close the gap for these students.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

No.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

Students who are enrolled in our math lab log in to ALEKS every other day for 50 minutes. The other class periods are used for pre-teaching and reteaching of topics for our traditional classroom setting.

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

We rearranged the students' schedules to provide more time for core instruction with ALEKS in an effort to close the achievement gap.

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

Because I am working with an at-risk population in a school that has a significant amount of students receiving free and reduced lunch, we have not required students to work on ALEKS from home. Many of these students do not have Internet access in their

homes.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

Parents have been supportive of the individualized environment and the ability to track a student's individual progress in real time.

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?

I use the amount of topics mastered over the amount of topics attempted to determine a participation grade. 0–20 percent is one point, 21–40 percent is two points, 41–60 percent is three points, 61–80 percent is four points, and 81–100 percent is five points. I do the same with an individual student's time in the program for a day over the length of the class period to determine the amount of participation, using the same scale.

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

No.

Learning Outcomes

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

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Best Practices

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

I require students to turn in their scratch paper from their ALEKS session each day. If they were not required to do this, many would not use scratch paper. I have found students have a stronger thought process and better problem solving skills when they do not hold everything about a problem in mentally. It is beneficial for many of them to try a problem on paper and adjust if they did not get the correct answer on the first try.