

Implementation Strategies

Yolo High School, Washington Unified School District
West Sacramento, CA

Grade(s): 9 – 12

Scenario: Computer Lab, Home Access

Purpose: Credit Recovery, College and Career Readiness, Enrichment/Gifted and Talented, Exit Exam

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 100%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 2–3 hours per week, 50–60 hours per term

ALEKS Course: Algebra Readiness, High School Preparation for Algebra 1, Algebra 1, High School Geometry, Algebra 2, PreCalculus, Trigonometry

Michael Granchukoff, Teacher

ALEKS has made a huge difference for our students. The self-paced aspect of it really has helped both our struggling students as well as our more gifted students. I highly recommend ALEKS for any teacher who wants to better differentiate instruction. The Spanish language toggle is also very helpful for our English Language Learners (ELL). Many students that previously failed the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) passed it, due in large part to ALEKS.

Scenario

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

At our school we have a lot of students that are not engaged. Our population also is very diverse when it comes to skill level. Some students are several grades ahead while others are several grades behind. Teaching to such a wide diversity of learning styles is challenging, but ALEKS makes it easy. ALEKS has made my job a lot easier and I have far less classroom management issues thanks to the fact that all students are individually engaged.

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?

45 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

I use ALEKS as my primary mode of teaching. The students are required to complete a certain number of lessons per day and I use the Time and Topic Report to ensure they do. We also use the assessments as our school's benchmark tests. The results are easy to read, quickly accessible, and based on what the students are actually learning.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

I periodically schedule assessments for my students and they select the pie slice they want to work on the most. If they get frustrated with Geometry, they can choose Algebra. They work on it in whatever order they want as long as they finish their pie chart by the end of the term.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

My students just come into the class, log in to ALEKS and begin working. There is very little instruction from me because the program is completely self-contained. The students log in and work in ALEKS for the entire class and they LOVE IT!!!

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

I used to teach one lesson per day and have the students practice the skill in multiple formats. Now, thanks to ALEKS, the students are completing five or more lessons every class period. Some days, I group students by skill-level and have them work on ALEKS in groups (each logged in individually). Whether the students are working on their own or in groups, they enjoy the program, are engaged, remain focused, and make outstanding progress each day.

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

One of the best things about ALEKS is that when students are sick or absent, they can make up the work from home. Some students even log in from home just to get ahead of their friends. The positive peer pressure resulting from the competition has helped our students greatly.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

Parents are encouraged to check on their students' progress. The reports in ALEKS have helped me keep parents informed and involved. I have had nothing but positive feedback from parents regarding ALEKS.

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 makes up the majority of our homework and classwork. ALEKS has allowed me to cover the basics and answer questions in class while most of the work is done in the computer lab three to four days per week.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

Our grading system is as follows: 40 percent for completing five or more lessons per day (classwork), 40 percent for assessments (most in ALEKS, a few state required tests are in class), 10 percent for participation (logging in and not viewing other sites), and 10 percent for warm-ups (board problems not on ALEKS days).

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

I assign a point value for student progress from the last test to the next. For instance, a 20 percent increase is an A, 18 percent increase is a B, 16 percent increase is a C, 14 percent increase is a D, and 12 percent or less is an F. Students that finish their pie chart automatically get an A on the next assessment and are moved to the next class early.

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

The best thing about ALEKS is that it is self-paced. Instead of the material going too fast for some students and too slow for others, all students are engaged all the time. It has really helped some of our lower-level students gain not only math skills, but confidence because they are competing against themselves instead of the top students. My students LOVE ALEKS because it is fun. When we are not in the computer lab working in ALEKS, they often ask "why can't we do ALEKS today?" Students that were not engaged before in the classroom are the first ones waiting to get in so they can complete more of their pie chart. ALEKS has helped change our school culture because now students are competing with each other not for attention, but for bragging rights. Students race to complete the pie faster than their friends. I could not be happier with ALEKS.

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

Let students work at their pace individually or in groups. Keep mobile to help students and give bonus points to those that finish early so they can help tutor others. I had a student with attention problems, but was great at math. With ALEKS, he finished his lessons far ahead of the other students and became my teaching assistant for the rest of the term. He has become the best tutor I have ever had. His role as the ALEKS tutor gives him self-confidence, allows him to channel his social nature, and gives him the opportunity to work with others. ALEKS has made a huge difference in my class – I don't know how I ever got along without it.