

# Implementation Strategies

**Fenster School, Private**  
Tucson, AZ

**Grade(s):** 9 – 12

**Scenario:** Computer Lab

**Purpose:** Core Curriculum

**ALEKS Portion of Curriculum:** 90%

**Time Spent in ALEKS:** 3.33 hours per week, 51 hours per term

**ALEKS Course:** Foundations of High School Math, Algebra 1, High School Geometry, Algebra 2, PreCalculus, Trigonometry

## **Kenneth Kral, Teacher/Math Department Chair**

We began using ALEKS this year, and we have had good success with it. As a result of using ALEKS, we no longer have students in the wrong math class. Each student begins where he needs to and progresses from there. Students move at their own pace. Now, at the end of the year, some students have finished the courses they started in and are able to move on to the next course.

## **Scenario**

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

We had the usual problems of a high school math class: inadequate preparation (wrong math class), fear of math itself, different learning speeds, and vastly different starting points.

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

2–3 days per week.

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

70–80 minutes.

## **Implementation**

### **How do you implement ALEKS?**

After a tentative start trying to combine traditional classroom methods with ALEKS, we discovered that this involved a serious duplication of effort. We were covering topics in class which the students had either never heard of or had already covered. After a few weeks, we changed the entire structure of all of our math classes. Students became free to cover topics in any sequence they wish, and we use class time entirely for enrichment.

### **Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?**

No.

### **How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?**

On "Pure ALEKS" days, students are on the computer with ALEKS for the whole period (80 minutes).

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

They use ALEKS during class time and afterschool as much or as little as they need in order to stay on-task with their weekly goals.

### **How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?**

We send weekly ALEKS reports, such as the pie chart and all that goes with it, home to parents via email.

## **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?**

The homework is merely to keep up or catch up.

### **How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?**

Homework, which is entirely made up of projects and assignments that are outside of ALEKS, is 14 percent; ALEKS, which is

measured weekly by comparing progress with goals, is 56 percent; the midterm which is a scheduled comprehensive ALEKS Assessment is ten percent; and the final is 20 percent. In addition, in order to receive full credit, the student must achieve an 80 percent level of mastery in ALEKS. Once the student is at 85 percent, he may move on to the next course or stay and finish.

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

The score on the Initial Assessment is subtracted from 100 percent, and that number is divided by the number of weeks until the end of the semester. This gives the student a weekly goal in terms of percentage of the entire course. Their actual percent is compared with the weekly goal, and that percentage is counted as the weekly test grade.

**Learning Outcomes**

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

For most of our students, ALEKS has been a good motivator. We email each student a calendar with weekly progress goals and grade them on their proximity to those goals. We have been able to spend extra time with those who need more help. In addition, we are able to spend more class time on enrichment activities designed to stimulate their curiosity. In almost all cases, the students prefer ALEKS to regular classroom instruction. We have nearly eliminated the problem of wasting the whole class' time explaining a concept to just one or two students. The students caught on to this very quickly and do not want to return to group instruction.