

Implementation Strategies

Bethel Christian School, Private
El Paso, TX

Grade(s): K – 12

Scenario: Computer Lab, One-to-One Laptop Program, Home Access

Purpose: Intervention, Enrichment/Gifted and Talented, Special Education, Summer School

Time Spent in ALEKS: 4.58 hours per week, 90 hours per term

ALEKS Course: Mathematics – LV 3 (with QuickTables), Mathematics – LV 4 (with QuickTables), Mathematics – LV 5 (with QuickTables), Middle School Math Course 3, Pre-Algebra, High School Preparation for Algebra 1, Algebra 1, High School Geometry, Algebra 2, PreCalculus

Marsha Cardenas, Principal

I have enjoyed the tremendous flexibility the ALEKS program has brought to our students. We use the program for credit recovery, classroom homework support, skill strengthening with those who need to build math foundations, and for our homeschool students.

Scenario

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

Some students just don't do well in a traditional classroom environment. We had some students, particularly a few with ADHD, who really needed a non-distracting, low noise, visual math program that would prescriptively target their needs and move them quickly toward mastery. ALEKS was perfect. The pie chart was colorful and drew their attention. I noticed that they love to check their progress often. What I also like is that they have their work saved constantly and there isn't anything for them to lose or forget to turn in. Their math ability and confidence have soared!

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?

55 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

We have the students create a notebook with tabs for each pie slice. They are required to keep notes for each type of math problem within the appropriate section. This helps classroom teachers align the student to the topics covered in class. If the student is not in a traditional math class and they are using ALEKS for credit recovery, enrichment, or strengthening math skills, the notebook supplies study materials. The students with special needs use the notebooks to assist with memory during exams.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

We assign the ALEKS lab to students who have been selected to use the program. A math teacher is assigned to the lab during that time and assists the students in a tutoring format. The only exception is our homeschooled co-op students. In this case, the ALEKS course is assigned to them and their parent becomes the teacher.

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

I have become more of a facilitator and tutor. Rarely do I use large group instruction.

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

For students using ALEKS for credit, we ask that they complete 30–45 minutes of ALEKS at home per night if possible.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

We use homeschool parents as the teacher. For the other students, we provide their username and password to the parent so they can check progress.

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 depends on the student. For some, it is 100 percent. For others, it is only used for enrichment and curriculum support.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

Eighty percent of the grade is ALEKS and 20 percent is the notebook.

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

No. Because many who use it have special needs, each plan is individualized to meet the needs of each learner.

Learning Outcomes

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

We have seen tremendous gains with our students who use ALEKS as part of their special needs modifications. We have also been able to provide credit recovery for several students who had previously failed in a traditional classroom environment. The students are proud of their progress and especially feel a developing confidence in math that they have never felt before.

Best Practices

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

I really recommend having students keep a notebook. I have found that many students try to use ALEKS as a shortcut to their math grade. Often, they try to do the problems in their head and jump back and forth between the help buttons and the math problem page. Making them use paper and pencil to take notes brings some discipline to the table, which seems to stop the "hunt and peck" mentality that poor math students often develop. I have noticed that the notebook also provides a mental "jump start" when they freeze during exams. Many poor math students get extremely nervous when it comes to exams. It seems that no matter how well they have done on their homework, once the test mode is engaged, they can't seem to remember what to do. The notebook acts like a trampoline; students take a peek, then remember the concept and move on. It seems to give them confidence.