

# Implementation Strategies

**South Plaquemines High School, Plaquemines Parish School Board**  
Port Sulphur, LA

**Grade(s):** 7 – 12

**Scenario:** Computer Lab

**Purpose:** Intervention, At-Risk Students

**ALEKS Portion of Curriculum:** 85–90%

**Time Spent in ALEKS:** 2.5 hours per week, 22–25 hours per term

**ALEKS Course:** Middle School Math Course 2

## **Christina McCarta, Teacher**

This is my first year using ALEKS for seventh and eighth grade math intervention. I love all the additional help that the students receive, such as the math dictionary, calculators, explanations, and help button. No other program I've used has put so many tools at the students' and my fingertips at one time. As I started collecting my data, I could hardly believe the gains and growth my students were experiencing. Students also started using more math vocabulary thanks to the math dictionary they have access to in this program. This feature helps free up time for me to work one-on-one with struggling students. When it came time for state testing, I was so impressed when I realized how closely ALEKS correlated to the state test. Last but not least, I have students who began with an Initial Assessment of only 35 objectives mastered who now have over 199 objectives mastered to date. My students' progress has been phenomenal with this program!

## **Scenario**

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

The kids who I work with are very, very behind in even the most basic math skills. They all need a lot of one-on-one instruction. The use of explanations in ALEKS helps students get a little more information until I can get to them. A lot of times they can figure out on their own how to work out a difficult problem. This builds their confidence and independence.

### **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?**

30–37 minutes.

## **Implementation**

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

I run a Title I computer lab with 24 computers, so everyone works on a computer. Because it is intervention, I also have small groups. My groups range from 7–10 students.

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

I let students work on topics they want to work on. I sometimes help them choose using a teacher recommendation. I try to stick with the most basic topics first, like Number and Number Relations. Though I gave my students a lot of freedom this year, next year I will require them to work on one topic area, or pie slice, at a time to see if this produces even more progress. I think the students like having some choice about what they work on since so much of their school day is structured and scripted!

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

My students come to my computer lab for a total of 47 minutes every day. For 37 minutes of the period, they work on ALEKS.

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

This is my first year in an intervention position so I have not made any modifications.

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

I do not encourage them to work at home. I don't want them to experience program burnout when they come to class.

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

I introduce it to parents at our technology night and math night. I also send updates to parents about their child's 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?**

No.

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

My students get a daily participation grade. They can earn five points daily for a total of 25 points at the end of the week. Most of their points are based on properly logging in and out, participating, picking up materials, and behaving. No grade is given for right or wrong answers in ALEKS. This is a class of lower level students, so they're not graded on their skill because we want to build and boost confidence. Grading on classroom management helps class run more smoothly.

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

They just have to make progress, period! I monitor my students closely. If they are working hard and diligently they always make progress. I do not dictate a specific quota, as this is differentiation for my kids who are at all different levels. What's progress for one is not the same for another!

## Learning Outcomes

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

My students have more than tripled the topics learned from the beginning of the year. Students get excited about their achievement with ALEKS. The ALEKS Pie chart gives them instant feedback, which both students and teachers love, and it has also made them more determined and competitive. In my lab, the class that masters the most objectives every nine weeks has a party. These kids push themselves and one another to be successful!

## Best Practices

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

Fidelity. Have a routine. My students attempt every problem on their own. If they get it incorrect, they click the help button. They click Explain, read the information, and try to work the problem out on their own again. If they get it incorrect this time, they raise their hand and I intervene. This has been very successful for my kids this year.