

Implementation Strategies

Cabrillo High School, Long Beach Unified School District
Long Beach, CA

Grade(s): 11 – 12

Scenario: Computer Lab

Purpose: Exit Exam

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 60%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 3 hours per week, 30+ hours per term

Heather Bleecker, Teacher

My students work well with ALEKS. Many students enjoy the relaxed atmosphere and the individualized work. It is easy for them to see what they have learned and what they are ready to learn next.

Scenario

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

With the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), about 30 percent of our enrolled students are not passing the exam by the end of their high school years. We are struggling as a math department to get kids to be interested in math, make the effort to practice outside of class, and ultimately grasp those concepts needed to pass the exit exam.

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

2 days per week.

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

90 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

ALEKS is used with the Long Beach Unified CAHSEE Math Prep Handbook.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

The first day spent in ALEKS consists of students logging in to ALEKS and checking their ALEKS message center to check for messages and announcements. After about 10 minutes, students choose a lesson from their pie and work independently for the next 80 minutes. I put small learning groups of 4–6 students together for 10 minutes each and I provide assistance when needed. The second day in ALEKS is the same as the first, but with the last 15 minutes available for a weekly 10–question ALEKS quiz.

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

I now lecture only once a week and I pull small groups aside during computer time to break up the ALEKS class period. I am also using the ALEKS worksheets and quizzes to create a base for my assessment of the classroom.

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

One hour per week.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

It is hard to get parents involved, but the math department sent out letters detailing the importance of their students passing the CAHSEE exam, along with information regarding the newly purchased ALEKS program to assist students.

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?

Yes, 75 percent.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

Grading breaks down as follows: homework is 10 percent; class work/ALEKS time is 15 percent; notes and projects are 15 percent; quizzes are 25 percent; and tests are 35 percent. ALEKS comprises approximately 50 percent of the student's grade.

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

Students are responsible for completing four hours of ALEKS per week, getting 70 percent or better on quizzes, completing a worksheet, and showing that the time required to complete the program has decreased.

Learning Outcomes

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

Students are showing improvement on mock CAHSEE questions. They are able to attempt the problem and look for an answer before they ask for assistance. It seems that students are more comfortable having the computer tell them if they are wrong instead of the teacher. Students like to see their ALEKS pie charts, standards report, and concepts they have mastered.

Best Practices

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

I encourage teachers to get to know ALEKS. It can be truly beneficial if the teacher knows what to look for and what to create to meet the students' needs.