

Implementation Strategies

Beatrice Rafferty School, Maine Indian Education
Perry, ME

Grade(s): K – 12

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

Purpose: Supplement, Intervention

ALEKS Course: Essential Mathematics (with QuickTables)

Ravin V. Gustafson, Seventh Grade Classroom Teacher

My seventh grade students are enjoying ALEKS. We go into the technology lab and work on it as a class, and several have used their computers at home to add to their pies. Some of the students who formerly took up a lot of my time with individualized instruction are now realizing ALEKS can teach them how to do things, and they're becoming excited by their own progress. It is still in its early days, but I'm very satisfied so far.

Scenario

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

The students in my school have historically been deficient in math on our state assessment exams. Three years ago we began a campaign to upgrade math instruction, staff professional development, curriculum, and student interest. We purchased new textbooks, hired a math consultant from the state university, and put a lot of emphasis on math. Several of us earned our highly qualified status during this time.

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?

40 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

It is a supplement to regular instruction. I have offered rewards for pie completion, number of topics added after initial assessment, and work done at home.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

Students are encouraged to finish their pies in the order of most complete first, so topics vary each time we use the program.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

We go to the technology lab to work on ALEKS after regular instruction, handing out homework, and answering questions. It is almost a reward for the kids.

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

I haven't. I'm quite satisfied with our new math textbooks, but they don't offer sufficient practice. That's where ALEKS is helping us out. It offers the students practice, practice, and more practice.

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

I encourage my students to work on ALEKS during the after-school program and at home as often as they can.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

I included information about ALEKS in the information packet I sent out to parents before school started.

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 is too early to tell, but it will probably be about a third of their homework load.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

I haven't had to do this yet, and am still working on a plan.

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

I haven't had enough experience yet with the program to be able to gauge what kind of progress is possible or desirable.

Learning Outcomes

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

My students have made progress in basic skills that aren't included in our regular instruction. It's impossible to teach algebra without an underlying understanding of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Fractions, percents, and decimals are also skills that I can never assume have been mastered by the time my students arrive in my class. ALEKS allows me to differentiate instruction much more easily. I can set some to work on basic skills and work on advanced concepts with the ones who are ready for them. They seem excited by progress. The visual of the pie is so simple, yet it really helps them see that all the work they're doing is getting them somewhere.

Best Practices

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

During regular work, use the "Explain" button. ALEKS provides step-by-step, clear instruction that is valuable to students. Encourage students to do their best, but realize they aren't competing with others.