

Implementation Strategies

Spartanburg Day School, Private
Spartanburg, SC

Grade(s): K – 12

Scenario: Computer Lab, Laptop Carts, Home Access

Purpose: Intervention, Summer School, Supplement

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 30%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 1–2 hours per week; 50 hours per term

ALEKS Course: Mathematics – LV 3 (with QuickTables), Mathematics – LV 4 (with QuickTables), Mathematics – LV 5 (with QuickTables), QuickTables, Rtl 6, Pre–Algebra, Algebra 1

David Perkinson, Head of Middle School

We have had great success using ALEKS. Students are engaged and motivated to finish their courses. The technical and mathematical support makes it easy for students to use. We use the program to supplement regular math courses, as summer refreshers, and as summer review for struggling students in lieu of summer school.

Scenario

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

We struggled to have enough time to develop procedural proficiency and conceptual understanding. It was also difficult to meet the differing needs of students – challenging the top and supporting the lower performers.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

We purchased a subscription for every student, showed them how to log on, and how to find the tutorial. We sent a letter to parents explaining the program and provided some technical support to them about getting the right plug-in installed on their home computers. After that, the students were assigned lengths of time (work for 20 minutes, etc.) in ALEKS as part of their homework assignments.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

We let students choose most of the time. This choice is a motivating factor for them.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

Sometimes students work in small groups, with one group working in ALEKS while other students get small group instruction. At other times, the entire class is working in ALEKS. Still at other times, only one or two students might be reviewing a topic or advancing using the program while the rest of the class is working on something else.

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

We are able to differentiate instruction much more easily.

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

Student work in ALEKS at home two or three times a week.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

We didn't have to cultivate involvement, since parents watched how engaged their students were.

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?

On nights that ALEKS is assigned, it is all of their homework responsibilities.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

The assessments are averaged into students' regular coursework.

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

We use the built-in measures of progress, and everyone has the goal of completing the course.

Learning Outcomes

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

Many students who have doubted themselves as mathematicians have developed a great sense of pride about their accomplishments after using ALEKS. Students at the top of the class feel challenged with their learning needs served. Lower performing students feel better prepared. Some students have worked through entire courses more quickly than we expected and moved to the next level. Most students spend more time in ALEKS at home than is assigned. The program allows the teacher to focus on more conceptual development in class as they maintain their procedural proficiencies through ALEKS.

Best Practices

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

We love the ways we use ALEKS: as a tool for differentiation, as a summer skills review, as a summer school course, and as a supplement to our regular curriculum.