

Implementation Strategies

Wilson C. Riles Middle School, Center Joint Unified School District
Roseville, CA

Grade(s): 6 – 8

Scenario: Computer Lab

Purpose: Supplement

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 30%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 1–2 hours per week, 25 hours per term

ALEKS Course: Essential Mathematics (with QuickTables)

Jennifer Slay, Teacher

ALEKS has been a great asset to me when working with students with varying levels of ability. I use ALEKS with one section of a remedial seventh grade class and it helped me to reach the needs of each student. I was able to target where the students had weaknesses, as well as provide opportunities for the more capable students to complete the standards necessary to join their peers in a grade-level class the next year.

Scenario

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

The remedial class I teach has been difficult in the past because of the varying degrees of knowledge each student possesses. It has been difficult to meet the needs of all students at the same time. ALEKS has given me a tool to not only better assess where the students are, but to also engage them and motivate them at their individual level.

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

1–2 days per week.

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

50 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

We use ALEKS 1–2 times a week to help students with skills they may not have. Meanwhile, during the rest of the week, we are working on the current standards as a whole class. For example, last month in class we were studying data representation and on computer lab days students were working on their individual ALEKS goals. For homework we were doing both graph/chart homework, as well as ALEKS worksheets.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

No, I felt that giving students the power to make their own decisions about what topics to cover has added to their buy-in with the program.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

My class goes to the computer lab 1–2 days a week, on average, and students log in and work on ALEKS for the entire period that day. I monitor student progress, both by observation and by looking at the online reports, and help students individually who may be stuck on a topic and need more information to move on. We also utilize the worksheets for added practice when we are not in the lab.

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

I had previously relied on basic fact practice worksheet programs to identify and address students' weak areas, but with ALEKS, the assessments and activities are much more thorough and engaging for students. This program has allowed me to fully understand where my students are strong and where they need help.

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

I do not require it, but I encourage my students to work on ALEKS at home as much as possible.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

We send letters home to each parent that explain the program and give them their student's individual login information. I also talk about it at parent-teacher conferences.

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?

The ALEKS worksheets are assigned as part of the homework, ranging from one night a week to the whole week.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

I grade ALEKS as participation points, worth about five percent. I also count homework as part of their grade at about five percent, and give an assessment grade for the quarter based on their progress, worth about five percent.

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

No. I check each day but all my students are at different levels so requiring a standard amount of progress does not work for us.

Learning Outcomes

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

Most of my students feel more confident in their abilities. Since ALEKS is personally paced for them, they feel a lot more successful than they do with traditional class activities. My students seem much more confident with basic whole number operations and are beginning to master operations with fractions and decimals. They love looking at the pie chart each time we log into ALEKS and seeing how much progress they have made. They seem to have a real sense of pride as they see the colored sections grow. I was surprised by how much that visual has had an impact on my students.

Best Practices

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

I have found that I am seeing the greatest results by giving students as much ownership as possible. Making sure that they understand the pie and the complete control they have over it has been a very powerful tool.