

Implementation Strategies

Swain Middle School, Swain County Schools
Bryson City, NC

Grade(s): 6 – 8

Scenario: Computer Lab

Purpose: Intervention, Improve State Test Scores, Supplement

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 75%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 3 hours per week, 45–50 hours per term

ALEKS Course: Algebra 1

Dora Robinson, Teacher

ALEKS is easy to use and I like the individualized instruction it provides for each of my students. They are able to work at their own pace and get the help they need based on their assessments. I like that lessons can be re-introduced if the assessments reveal that the student needs additional practice. ALEKS makes a difference in the classroom as well. The students have more confidence in their abilities and definitely remember more as we review for our state end-of-course test.

Scenario

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?

35–40 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

It is not used in the regular classroom. ALEKS is an elective to assist students that are struggling in my two Algebra 1 classes. I choose certain students that I know will benefit from the extra practice and help, and I let students volunteer to join the class.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

Not at this time.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

Students go to the computer lab, log in, and begin working individually. They choose the lessons they want to work on. I circulate and offer assistance and explanations about problems when students ask.

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

I really did not modify what I do in the classroom. As I become more familiar with ALEKS, I will definitely be more prepared to integrate some activities and problems during the next school year.

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

I regularly encourage students to work on ALEKS at home, especially if I know they will not have a homework assignment that evening. I always encourage them to complete some lessons over the weekends.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

I call and email parents about ALEKS and explain how and why their child is using it. Several parents make sure their child works on ALEKS at home, and all are very supportive of the program.

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?

Since ALEKS is used as a math elective, students receive a grade for the class. I base their grades on participation. All students' grades were from 93–100.

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

I do check their progress regularly and expect them to complete lessons. I share their lessons completed per day and time spent working on ALEKS. Because our class time is only 45 minutes and we have only used ALEKS for one semester, students will not be able to complete all of the lessons. We have also had several interruptions in our school schedule that prevent students from working every day.

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

The students like the program. When they complete an assessment, they always look forward to seeing their growth on the pie chart. Students are remembering more in the classroom from the practice they are doing in ALEKS. The students are more confident in their math abilities because ALEKS reinforces their learning of Algebra concepts. 15 of the 16 students that are participating in ALEKS passed the Algebra 1 end-of-course test. The student that did not pass has not spent as much time on ALEKS and does not seem to work as hard as the other students.

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

I find that ALEKS is great to help reinforce skills, and because of the regular assessments, it helps students better retain what they learn. I did create a challenge for my students. All students who complete 200 or more of the 288 lessons in Algebra 1 by the end of the school year would be taken out to lunch during a school day. Six of the 16 met the challenge, and several others came close.