

Implementation Strategies

Eastern Hancock Middle School, Eastern Hancock County Community School District
Charlottesville, IN

Grade(s): 6 – 8

Scenario: Computers in Classroom, Home Access

Purpose: Intervention, Special Education, Improve State Test Scores, At-Risk Students

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 35%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 3–4 hours per week; 24–35 hours per term

ALEKS Course: Middle School Math Course 2, Pre-Algebra

Shantelle Ebbert, Special Education Teacher

My special needs students have had the opportunity to work on ALEKS for a few months now. I appreciate how thorough the program is with lessons, reviews, and assessments. My students like having the choice of which lessons they are going to work on each day. I like having the freedom of accessing the reports, data, and assessments anytime to share with parents and teachers at conferences or to share with students when working with them. It is nice to be able to make tailored worksheets for the students to work on, as well have the students visually see the progress that they are making towards their goal. I am very pleased with the ALEKS program.

Scenario

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

We struggled with having some of the special needs students retain and master concepts and skills that were presented in the classroom. Now with the extra practice, we are seeing an increase in concept and skill mastery.

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

2–4 days per week.

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

25–45 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

I use ALEKS to supplement the review and skill building work we do in the math labs.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

No, I allow students to choose an ALEKS topic from their pie to complete each day. If a student is having difficulty with a certain skill, I might sit by that student and have him or her work on that skill so I can offer assistance and one-on-one teaching, if necessary.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

Since I use ALEKS primarily in my math labs, we always begin our class by reviewing the day's lessons from the students' math class and go over any homework questions that the students might have. After this, I have the students complete 20–25 minutes on ALEKS.

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

ALEKS helps decrease the amount of worksheets and review sheets I have to use in order to give my students the opportunity to practice and gain mastery in math skills that are being reviewed. ALEKS allows me to roam around the room helping individual students with questions in the program or observing how students are doing. I like watching students grow their math skills with ALEKS.

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

I encourage my students to use ALEKS at home at least 2–3 times per week.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

We send home letters explaining ALEKS and assessment results to parents, inviting them to ask questions of their students and get involved with ALEKS.

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?

I do not assign ALEKS as part of the homework responsibilities due to being a lab teacher. However, some teachers assign a percentage of ALEKS to be done per grading period and some of that must be done at home.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

ALEKS is used for approximately 50 percent of my lab grades.

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

We require students to make 2–3 percent growth each time they work on ALEKS. This is modified on a per student need depending on disability and ability.

Learning Outcomes

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

Since using ALEKS, I have noticed that not only has my students' basic skill knowledge increased, but also their confidence. I am seeing more homework completion and higher retention of skills and concepts presented to my students in both the classroom and in ALEKS. My students enjoy watching their progress in ALEKS and the ability to see their individual pie charts. They enjoy seeing what concepts they have mastered and are very excited – excited enough to call me over for a "high five" when a piece of the ALEKS Pie has been completed!

Best Practices

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

I like to have student graphs where the students can chart their growth on ALEKS. The charts/graphs give the students ownership of their learning and help them to visualize the progress that they have made. The students also get to see how many concepts and skills they have mastered, which is rewarding. Whenever students seem to get down and say that they can't learn or remember something, I will remind them of the skills that they have already mastered. Knowing where a student has come from and where a student is now helps the child and the adult working with them see the growth that has been made.