

Implementation Strategies

Taylor Middle School, Taylor Community School District
Kokomo, IN

Grade(s): 6 – 8

Scenario: Computers in Classroom, Laptop Carts

Purpose: RtI, Intervention, Improve State Test Scores

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 100%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 3.75 hours per week; 34 hours per term

ALEKS Course: Middle School Math Course 2, Middle School Math Course 3

Sharyle Burwell, Teacher

ALEKS has been great for my Math Plus students. This class is comprised of students who failed the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress (ISTEP) as seventh graders or just barely passed. They have this class 45 minutes per day, five days a week for a semester. I expect them to master about 50 percent of the topics they did not have mastered on the Initial Assessment every nine weeks. I take the number of topics not mastered and divide by 18 weeks to determine the number that they need to complete per week. They also have an ALEKS Worksheet on Fridays. I base a student's grade on the number of topics mastered per week, percent correct on ALEKS worksheets, and continuous improvement in assessment scores. I reward students with snacks or juice drinks when they finish a section of pie and when they master 50 topics. If a student completes more than the required number of topics each week, I let them play math games on the computer. Last year was our first year with ALEKS. I had 22 students in ALEKS and 14 of them improved their ISTEP scores significantly. I had one student complete her ALEKS Pie in one semester. This year, I have 16 students in ALEKS and three will complete their ALEKS pies in one semester. I am hopeful that these students will show significant improvement as well.

Scenario

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

We only had about a 75 percent passing rate on our state test.

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?

45 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

ALEKS is used as a separate course for students who have failed or barely passed the state assessment test.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

No, I let students choose the order in which they complete their topics.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

Students work on ALEKS every day, as this is all they do in the Math Plus class.

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

I work individually with students as they need assistance.

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

They do not work on ALEKS from home.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

Parents are aware that their child has not passed the state assessment, so they are happy that we are providing additional learning opportunities in math 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?

No.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

The number of topics mastered divided by the number of topics not mastered on the Initial Assessment is 50 percent of a student's grade; 30 percent is weekly ALEKS worksheets; and 20 percent is the improved assessment score from their previous assessment.

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

I take the number of topics that students have not mastered on the Initial Assessment and divide it by the number of weeks in the semester, so they know what they need to do each week. I calculate a percentage based on number of topics mastered by the number of topics required, which is 50 percent of their grade.

Learning Outcomes

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

Student test scores and general math grades have improved. Most of the students feel good about the progress they are making. This year, I have 16 students in ALEKS and three will complete their ALEKS pies in one semester. I am hopeful that these students will show significant improvement in their ISTEP scores as well.

Best Practices

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

Make sure that you constantly walk around to keep students on track and help them understand the topics and encourage them to read the explanations. Sometimes I sit beside a student and we discuss the examples. I find that I need to do this less and less as they progress throughout the year.