

Implementation Strategies

Jones Middle School, Upper Arlington City Schools
Upper Arlington, OH

Grade(s): 6 – 8

Scenario: Computer Lab, Home Access

Purpose: Intervention, Supplement

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 20%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 1 hour per week, 10 hours per term

ALEKS Course: Pre-Algebra, Algebra 1, High School Geometry

Doug Darfus, Math Department Chair

ALEKS has transformed the classroom into a differentiated instruction classroom. Using ALEKS, I know where the students are in their learning process and can help those who need more practice, while allowing other students to move ahead and be challenged with content not yet covered in the classroom. It has been amazing to see the growth in student confidence and performance in understanding the concepts. When you can share and show the growth that they have made, the students become proud of themselves and are motivated to do more with ALEKS.

Scenario

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

So many of the students were at so many different levels of understanding. Many had holes in their concept knowledge. ALEKS has allowed each student to grow in their understanding no matter where they were when they entered the class.

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

1 day per week.

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

40 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

We spend one class period per week on ALEKS. Students receive points for meeting time expectations and meeting mastery of concept goals set by me and the student.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

We set ALEKS to align with our textbook series. Students can see where they should be with the white dots on the pie graph. This seems to keep them in line with what is going on in class.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

While students work on ALEKS, I either walk around from student to student to help them or call a few students together and work with them on a certain topic they have been struggling with while others students are on the computer.

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

Instead of giving a weekly assessment to "test" student understanding, I use ALEKS. It is better tool because it gives immediate feedback, each student is learning at a place where they are conceptually, and I can look at reports to see exactly what they know and don't know. It is much better than any informative assessment I could make.

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

Generally they have to do at least 30 minutes a week from home.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

We share the data about how student test scores have improved and how we can see exactly what concepts still need work. We don't use it instead of teaching, but as a tool to help us teach more and better. The parents see that it is helping and support our use of it.

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?

It is about 20 percent of their homework, where they have one week to complete whatever I assign.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

About ten percent of their overall grade is based on meeting the time I require them to work on it (usually one hour per week). Another ten percent of their grade is based on meeting the mastery of concept goals that we set together.

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

Yes. About ten percent of their grade is based on meeting the mastery of concept goals that we set together. This varies per student, for example, some need to meet five more goals per week, while others need ten. As the concepts get tougher the number of topics needed per week tends to decrease.

Learning Outcomes

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

It has been amazing to see the growth in student confidence and performance in understanding the concepts. When you can share and show the growth that they have made, the students become proud of themselves and are motivated to do more with ALEKS.

Best Practices

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

This is a computer program that you, the teacher, have to be involved in. Sitting at the desk while the students work on computers is not using ALEKS to its potential. ALEKS is a very powerful tool when the teacher is involved.