

Implementation Strategies

Salem Junior High School, Salem City School District
Salem, OH

Grade(s): 7 – 8

Scenario: Laptop Carts

Purpose: Intervention, Improve State Test Scores

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 100%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 1.5 hours per week, 12 hours per term

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

Ashley Kekel, Math Intervention Teacher

My experience with ALEKS has been good, and the more I use it, the more I am able to better tailor it to my students' needs. ALEKS seems to really help those learners who need to build up their basic skills and have been falling behind in their math class because they lack these skills. ALEKS is used for intervention with students who have failed or nearly failed our state assessment in math. The questions/topics within ALEKS are great for building up those skills needed to answer the state assessment questions correctly. These are often the skills that classroom teachers don't get time to review at the beginning of the year or throughout the year, but are skills that the lower ability students need to have reinforced, sometimes multiple times. I run the program using a sticker reward system, and offer prizes and incentives when students get a set number of stickers. For every three topics they complete, they get a sticker. For every assessment that they have at least three percent progress from their previous assessment, they get a sticker. For every three percent improvement they show in QuickTables, they get a sticker. Ten stickers is a "step," and at each step, they get a small reward. At each half-step (five stickers), they get to pick a piece of candy from my candy jar.

Scenario

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

Low test scores, and difficulty differentiating instruction for so many different skill levels within one math class were a couple of challenges. ALEKS has enabled me to work on building the students' basic skills which has helped them to succeed in their regular math class.

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

2 days per week.

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

40 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

I run the program using a sticker reward system, and offer prizes and incentives when students get a set number of stickers. For every three topics they complete, they get a sticker. For every assessment that they have at least three percent progress from their previous assessment, they get a sticker. For every three percent improvement they show in QuickTables, they get a sticker. Ten stickers is a "step," and at each step, they get a small reward. At each half-step (five stickers), they get to pick a piece of candy from my candy jar. Rewards include Polar Pops, free days, lunch line jumper passes, lunch choices where the student brings money and I go buy lunch outside of school for them, pencils, notebooks, pens, silly bands, bonus points for their regular math class, free homework passes for their regular math class, colored pencils, etc.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

No, students are permitted to do topics in the order they become available in the pie chart.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

Students come in, log on to the laptops that are already out on the table, then begin ALEKS immediately. Students are free to complete QuickTables or work on their pies; however they choose to divide their time. They must do topics at some point, and I only allow them ten minutes in QuickTables, with games after five minutes. However, most students spend the majority of the time in their pies.

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

I use the ALEKS program as 100 percent of my intervention curriculum.

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

Every day. Not many students take up the offer, but I offer them double stickers when they work on ALEKS outside of class, such as at home.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

I speak to each parent at the beginning of the year to tell them about the program and see if they would be interested in their student participating in the program. I try to stay in contact with them monthly about the progress their student has been making in 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, I am not allowed to assign homework and do not assign grades.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

I do not provide grades.

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

Student progress is dependent upon each student's individual needs and abilities.

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

Every student has shown progress. I get them for two 50-minute periods each week. Of course, with absences and the time it takes to log on and get started, they usually work for about 40 minutes. Even students that don't like the program still make progress because there are always "quick topics" that I can get them started on before throwing in a couple of harder ones. Even when I think a student isn't learning, the next progress assessment they take nearly always shows at least some progress, which encourages the student to move on. I make sure to take the time to go over the assessments with each student every time they take one. When I talk with them, it helps them see that they really are improving and progressing through the program. The sticker chart that I use also helps students see how much they have progressed throughout the year. As the chart fills up with stickers, it gives them a sense of accomplishment. I keep the chart on the wall all year so that each student can see how they are doing.