

# Implementation Strategies

**Utterback Middle School, Tucson Unified School District**  
Tucson, AZ

**Grade(s):** 6 – 8

**Scenario:** Computers in Classroom, Home Access

**Purpose:** Enrichment/Gifted and Talented, After-School, Improve State Test Scores, Supplement

**ALEKS Portion of Curriculum:** 20–50%

**Time Spent in ALEKS:** 1–3 hours per week, 8–24 hours per term

**ALEKS Course:** Middle School Math Course 2, Middle School Math Course 3, Algebra 1

## **Kathleen Barber, Teacher**

ALEKS has assisted all students who have spent more than one hour a week on it. ALEKS has been especially great for my students who need to be challenged with higher level mathematics. I teach eighth grade math and Algebra for high school credit to eighth graders. This year, I had three seventh graders in my eighth grade class; two of the seventh graders scored 23 percent on the Algebra Initial Assessment after using the ALEKS Middle School Math Course 3 for one quarter. We use the results of the Algebra Initial Assessment to measure readiness for the Algebra for high school credit class. I require my Algebra students to use ALEKS, and I assess their learning through ALEKS and with a paper and pencil test. Next year, I will print out their initial goals, require at least three hours a week for their weekly grade, and set specific goals for each quarter in order for them to receive high school credit for Algebra.

## **Scenario**

**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?**

20–30 minutes

## **Implementation**

**How do you implement ALEKS?**

I struggled at first but have learned that it is necessary to require students to commit to using ALEKS. I assigned ALEKS to students during afterschool tutoring and to the students enrolled in the Algebra for high school credit class. Next year, I will assign specific parts of the pie for students to work on that will complement our textbook's structure, and I will use progress as a measure to assess learning.

**Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?**

No, I allow my students to select which pieces of the pie they cover during independent study. Next year, I will ask students to select topics from ALEKS that support, teach, or extend their learning.

**How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?**

For full days and 85 minute periods: starter and objectives is 5 minutes; the lesson is 15 minutes; practice and ALEKS is 30 minutes (there are two groups of six students on ALEKS each day); and ALEKS and extension or practice is 30 minutes.

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

I am now using a more "center-like" approach to my teaching, such as using the computers as a "center" for the students. I am now making plans to change the seating in my classroom to tables and chairs instead of desks to support this "center-based" approach.

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

I encourage my students to work 15–30 minutes a day at home. However, many of my students do not have Internet access at home; therefore, I make myself available afterschool twice a week for an hour to allow them access to the Internet.

**How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?**

I am working on that.

## **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?**

ALEKS is 50 percent of their homework responsibility.

**How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?**

I have not used ALEKS for a grade this year. Next year, I will use student progress as a single test grade worth 100 points each quarter. If students achieve 25 percent in the first quarter, they will get 100 points; if they do not reach 25 percent, they will receive a percentage based on their level of attainment. I will pro-rate the score for the second, third, and fourth quarter accordingly with the attainment level I expect for a 100 percent by the end of the fourth quarter.

## **Learning Outcomes**

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

Students who use the system from home or in afterschool tutoring at least twice a week have shown the most improvement. All students who use the system improved their classroom participation. I found that students like being able to compare where they are at in ALEKS; some students become competitive trying to attain the highest percentages in their pie!

## **Best Practices**

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

Students should be encouraged to use ALEKS to help their learning. Some students will not use ALEKS effectively and will need more one-on-one assistance to get started. Allow students the freedom to compete with each other which makes ALEKS even more fun!