

Implementation Strategies

Goshen Middle School, Goshen Community Schools

Goshen, IN

Grade(s): 6 – 8

Scenario: Computer Lab, Computers in Classroom, Home Access

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

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 40%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 2.5 hours per week, 30 hours per term

Theresa Hussey, Teacher

To put it simply, I love ALEKS. I use it in an Algebra Honors class and students are so motivated to learn. Advanced students have the opportunity to move on as soon as they master a topic, and don't get bored while I work with other students that need a bit more help. My class now feels that the state algebra exam is easy. ALEKS includes great application problems, and not just drills. I have also implemented ALEKS in another class where I hold mini-lectures. I split the class into two groups; one is taught new curriculum, while the other works on ALEKS RtI courses. The students feel a sense of accomplishment and are catching up after years of being left behind. Students feel good about themselves and this gives them the mindset that they can learn, which is a great classroom climate to teach in. One day I had a game day and many students asked to go on ALEKS. Many told me that day, "I feel more ready for high school." That proves that students want to learn.

Scenario

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

Our biggest challenge was engaging students and passing the state exam. Students also had trouble understanding numbers, fractions, and decimals.

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?

30 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

I use ALEKS with a textbook and choose corresponding topics in the program.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

I cover topics in the same order as the textbook.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

In my Algebra 1 class, students get access to the lab to work on ALEKS once or twice a week; I also assign topics for homework.

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

I have more flexibility. If I see that students understand a learning goal, I send them to ALEKS. This gives me a chance to re-teach certain concepts. I also work with students on ALEKS to re-teach topics. The quizzes also help me with formative assessments.

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

Students are required to work from home one hour per week.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

I send a letter home to parents offering time to work on ALEKS before school for those who do not have computer access at home.

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 33 percent of a student's homework.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

Currently, ALEKS is 15 percent of a student's grade. However, now that I understand the program much more, I plan to increase this to 30 percent.

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

When I first started using the program, I required that students spend two or more hours a week on ALEKS. Now, I require that students master 6–8 topics per week.

Learning Outcomes

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

I saw huge progress in number sense. My biggest "aha!" moment was finally understanding how mastery works. Students may have to work on a topic twice, but they get it. As a teacher you are so busy, you do not always go back and test mastery. ALEKS helps me do that. For students, they watch their pies fill up and I think this is a great visual tool. Students sometimes get upset when a topic is put back in their pie after an assessment. However, as the year progressed, students begin to understand what mastery means and use the review to do an extra problem.