

Implementation Strategies

Ogallala Middle School, Ogallala Public School District
Ogallala, NE

Grade(s): 6 – 8

Scenario: Computer Lab

Purpose: Supplement

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 50–70%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 2–3 hours per week, 12–20 hours per term

Blaine Cullinan, Teacher

Overall, I have had a very positive experience with ALEKS.

Scenario

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

Our biggest issue was aligning curriculum with students' abilities.

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

3–4 days per week.

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

45 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

It varies. Some days I teach a lesson before going to the ALEKS lab, and other days we go directly to the lab.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

I teach out of the McDougall Littell series, but I let them choose when it comes to the ALEKS program.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

I generally teach a lesson and then take the class to the ALEKS lab.

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

I am now able to give more individual instruction based on students' needs, rather than lecturing and assigning problems out of the book.

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

I encourage them regularly to work outside of the classroom.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

During parent meetings, I explain the program and encourage them to have their students do more work at home on the computer.

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?

I would guess about 60 percent is ALEKS, and the remaining 40 percent is homework.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

I grade four areas of the ALEKS program. Last quarter, I assigned about 10 quizzes that they could take repeatedly. Then I gave them a participation grade based on time spent in ALEKS. I broke down the items learned per hour of use into four categories: 0–2 is 70 percent; 2–3 is 80 percent; 3–4 is 90 percent; and above 4 is 100 percent. I also graded them on total progress based on what percentage of the course they had mastered. They need to be at 25 percent at the end of the first quarter, 50 percent at the

semester, and so on.

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

I am finding that some are incapable of a lot of progress, so I am adjusting somewhat. I am looking at giving them a weekly goal based on what they are ready to learn next, such as mastering 10–15 new items for the next week.

Learning Outcomes

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

I have seen some outstanding progress, especially in my eighth grade Algebra class. Students are spending their time so much better and are covering things in the first quarter that we never even reached last year. Nearly all students enjoy the ALEKS program and it is neat to see some of their responses when they master something new or figure out something for the first time.

Best Practices

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

If I assign a quiz, I usually base it on the daily lesson. Then I let them repeat it as many times as possible over the next week until they get a decent score. I've found that they generally want a good grade and they will retake the quiz many times. This is terrific practice.