

Implementation Strategies

North Parkway Middle School, Jackson – Madison County School System
Jackson, TN

Grade(s): 6 – 8

Scenario: Computer Lab, Computers in Classroom, Home Access

Purpose: RtI, Enrichment/Gifted and Talented, Improve State Test Scores, ESL Students

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

ALEKS Course: Mastery of SAT Math

Susannah White, Teacher

For the past three years, I have served as a tutor in the ALEKS controlled data test program through our school system. It compares the growth patterns of students in teacher-led tutorials versus ALEKS-led tutorials two days a week. I served as both a teacher-led instructor and as a computer-led supervisor to groups of sixth graders. As a classroom teacher, I am able to see the growth of my students as they become more confident and independent in their academic knowledge base. The program gives them ownership of their learning, as it allows them to choose from the areas that have been identified as weak. My students are engaged, able to get self-help tutorials, and able to re-teach and re-test with ease and confidence. The feedback is rewarding to them, and their classroom participation includes statements that begin with "I learned from ALEKS how to..." I see growth in all students!

Scenario

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

It is hard to have a class with 30 students who learn with various styles and at different pace levels, and to help them find their own independence and keep them excited about the things they CAN learn. ALEKS addresses the individual student, which is not easy to do effectively in the time-constrained classroom.

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?

60 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

I provide access to the computer lab when a student needs individual intensive care, and also allow the students who miss the teacher-led classroom lessons to be taught through ALEKS. Also, parents are able to put their child on the program at home, and often the parents learn with their child which helps us all with their growth!

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

Yes, we follow a standards-based curriculum that is aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Those standards are broken down into sequential learning quarters: 1) Numbers and Operations, 2) Mathematical Processes, 3) Algebra, 4) Geometry, and 5) Data and Statistics.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

Students spend 20 minutes in ALEKS, then take 20 minutes for a break and a snack. They then repeat with two more 20-minute teaching sessions and one break for a snack (60 minutes total in a period per day).

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

I run student progress reports every six weeks to determine the student's growth pattern, time allotments, and needs for growth. These are discussed with the student and shared with the parents.

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

Students use ALEKS at home as often as they wish or as suggested due to student attendance or a weak area of concern.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

We involve parents quarterly.

Grading

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

With the quarterly data on student growth patterns, we determine which areas the student should focus on and our expectations for growth on the next report. These decisions are made in student–teacher evaluations of progress growth charts from ALEKS and student progress in the classroom.

Learning Outcomes

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

Each student is responsible for keeping up with their growth in their independent pie chart, and they take pride in seeing the chart fill with success. They look forward to getting on the program, and anticipate earning games from success. I see a rise in understanding in all categories of our standards. Students love it!

Best Practices

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

Time management. Students are charmed by their pie chart, and will spend too much time (especially at first) going back to the chart and switching lessons before they have adequately spent time learning in their first lesson. Students have 20–minute segments dedicated per lesson, and the lessons that grow out of that first one work well.