

Implementation Strategies

Denison Middle School, Denison Community Schools
Denison, IA

Grade(s): 6 – 8

Scenario: Laptop Carts

Purpose: Intervention, Improve State Test Scores

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 0

Time Spent in ALEKS: 1.5–2 hours per week, 14– 20 hours per term

ALEKS Course: Mathematics – LV 3 (with QuickTables), Mathematics – LV 4 (with QuickTables), Mathematics – LV 5 (with QuickTables)

Jane Badow, Teacher

This is my first experience using the ALEKS program. For the most part, the students improved immensely over the course of the school year. About 91 percent of my students have grown tremendously in their math skills. The program is student friendly as each child works through each of the skills on the pie slices. Many of the students use the Explain button to assist them as they practice on the various skills. This is a nice feature of the program. I also like the immediate feedback that the students receive after each problem; I think this is valuable information for the students because they need to see where they are going and how close they are to reaching a new level/skill. The students and I love to see the pie slices fill up, and it helps them to set a goal for each new day. The students grew in their math skills, and we are all excited to see the improvement in their state assessments, which was our overall goal!!

Scenario

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

More and more of our students were weak in basic math skills. We were also seeing gaps in certain areas of the math curriculum.

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

2–3 days per week.

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

42 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

We have a separate class for those who qualify for Math Intervention. It is based on their state assessment scores.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

Yes, the students need to master the addition/subtraction skills first and then move to multiplication/division. Then they need to master fractions and decimal skills, measurement, geometry, and finally, the algebra skills.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

It is a separate class called Math Intervention.

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

I did not modify my regular classes.

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

They are always encouraged to work at home.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

We discuss it at registration time and at conferences for those involved in the program.

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, it is not assigned as homework at all.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

I grade the students on their effort and behavior in the classroom and by how much work they show in their class notebook (50 percent). The other component is how many skills they have attempted in a week's time compared to how many skills they have mastered. Their goal is to try and master at least five skills a week (50 percent).

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

We aim for the students to master about five skills a week. This varies as the skills in some sections are harder than others.

Learning Outcomes

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

About 91 percent of my students have grown tremendously in their math skills. I notice improvement in their daily work/participation in the classroom. Also, most of them had great leaps of growth in our state assessments or are now on grade level. They are excited to see their pie slices fill up.

Best Practices

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

Peer tutoring is a plus; the students benefit from this on both sides. Celebrate even small gains done by individuals with the whole class. Visuals and handouts can be used as supplementary aids.