Implementation Strategies

Riverview Middle School, Huntington County Community Schools
Huntington, IN

Grade(s): 6 – 8
Scenario: Computers in Classroom, Home Access
Purpose: RtI, Special Education, Supplement
ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 40%
Time Spent in ALEKS: 2–3 hours per week, 18–20 hours per term
ALEKS Course: Middle School Math Course 2

Heather Hiple, Teacher
My students use ALEKS twice a week in the general education classroom. Most of the students in my caseload are behind one grade level or more in math. Response to Intervention (RtI) can be tricky because not only do students need to learn grade–level material, but they also need to have remediation on weak skill areas. If I have ten students in a resource classroom, I could have ten different deficient skills that need to be taught. It can get tricky! I started using ALEKS as an RtI tool in my resource room on a daily basis midway through the year. After spending some time teaching my students how to fully utilize ALEKS, I would occasionally assign an area in which I wanted the students to work. Eventually, I had kids begging me to work in a different area so they could earn that piece of pie. Little by little, I began to see them take ownership of their learning and growth in math. I had two students with learning disabilities who worked very hard. When analyzing some end of the year Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) data, I found that those two students grew more than any other student on our entire team of approximately 200 students. One went from a score that was "at grade level" to a score that was "high achieving" on the NWEA. He was so excited to finish his first pie and move into his Pre–Algebra pie! The other student started out "two or more levels below grade level" and finished just "one level below" where he should be. He was so proud of his growth. The fact that he is not so far behind gives him confidence to continue to work hard in the general education classroom. I love the fact that ALEKS is individualized. I love the fact that most kids can work in the program at home, even if an adult is not there to help. I like the data I get from ALEKS, as I can use it to plan Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). It makes a great RtI program.

Scenario

What challenges did the class or school face in math prior to using ALEKS?
It was always challenging to find a GOOD, scientifically proven math intervention. Individualized instruction is time consuming and difficult but a must! Motivating struggling learners was also a challenge.

How many days per week is class time dedicated to ALEKS?
3–5 days per week.

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

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?
I started using ALEKS as an RtI tool in my resource room on a daily basis midway through the year. After spending some time teaching my students how to fully utilize ALEKS, I would occasionally assign an area in which I wanted the students to work. Eventually, I had kids begging me to work in a different area so they could earn that piece of pie.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?
I concentrate on computation as much as possible.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?
The first part of class is spent on a remedial lesson. The second part of class is spent working on ALEKS. Sometimes an area is assigned. Sometimes, they may choose where they would like to work.

How did you modify your regular teaching approach as a result of ALEKS?
I shortened my remedial lessons in order to spend time on ALEKS during resource.

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

They are encouraged to do so every night.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?
ALEKS is discussed at each annual IEP meeting and at parent–teacher conferences. At parent–teacher conferences, laptop computers are set out so the kids can show their parents the program, how to use it, and the progress they have made.

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.

Learning Outcomes

Since using ALEKS, please describe the learning outcomes or progress you have seen.
I had two students with learning disabilities who worked very hard. When analyzing some end of the year NWEA data, I found that those two students grew more than any other student on our entire team of approximately 200 students. One went from a score that was "at grade level" to a score that was "high achieving" on the NWEA. The other student started out "two or more levels below grade level" and finished just "one level below" where he should be. Out of the seven Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) students, five grew at least one Rausch Unit (RIT) band in the area of computation on the NWEA test from fall to spring. A couple of students grew even more than that. Those five also improved their overall RIT score in math. The students I work with struggle academically. Math is difficult for them, especially now that they are learning less concrete mathematical concepts. They struggle at first to see the value of working on ALEKS. However, the more they see their pie fill in, the more motivated they become to work to fill in more pieces! Some even set goals independently on how many pieces of their pie they want to have completed by the end of the school year. Every day I hear someone say, "I completed another piece of my pie!"