

Implementation Strategies

Greenway Middle School, Paradise Valley Unified School District
Phoenix, AZ

Grade(s): 7 – 8

Scenario: Computer Lab

Purpose: Intervention, Supplement, Improve State Test Scores, At-Risk Students

Time Spent in ALEKS: 1–2 hours per week, 18–20 hours per term

ALEKS Course: Mathematics – LV 4 (with QuickTables), Mathematics – LV 5 (with QuickTables), Middle School Math Course 2, Middle School Math Course 3, Algebra 1

Sandee Levine, Teacher

I love ALEKS. I have been using it for three years and have seen significant growth in my students. We use it for two purposes: to fill in gaps for students who are struggling in math, and to help students improve their state test scores. ALEKS is a wonderful program that gives the students ownership and choice in what they learn, and it really works!

Scenario

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

We are a Title I school and many of our students have moved around a lot. Some of them have significant gaps in their learning. The students were getting further and further behind in their math skills and understanding. In addition, we were an under-performing school with very low math scores on our state test.

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?

20–30 minutes

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

ALEKS is taken in place of an elective. Students are chosen based on test scores and teacher recommendations.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

No. The students choose what they want to work on.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

We begin with a warm-up and then students spend 20–30 minutes working in ALEKS. They take an ALEKS Progress Assessment once a week.

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

I do not teach the core math class. ALEKS is used in addition to it, as its own separate class.

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

I let students know that ALEKS is available at home, but many of our students do not have Internet access at home.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

We have open houses and parent/teacher conferences.

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 not used as homework, and I do not assign homework.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

We use the following grading scale: negative growth is zero points out of four, zero percent growth is one point, one to three percent growth is two points, four to five percent growth is three points, and six percent or more growth is four points. Students get two grades per week: one for their progress in Learning Mode, and one for the difference between the previous assessment and the current assessment.

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

I do not require a particular amount, but they are graded weekly based on the previously mentioned grading scale.

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

Students like to see their pie grow. I have had many students tell me that it is helping them in their regular math class. They like when their teachers are teaching a topic they have already covered themselves; it is a big confidence booster. And, lack of confidence in math can be a major barrier to student success in math. I see tremendous growth with some of my students. Many are on grade level by the end of the year, or are approaching grade level. As with any class, some make a lot of progress and others make a little. Nevertheless, everyone makes some sort of progress. It is really tied to their efforts.

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

The students like to be able to choose what they work on. I use games as warm-ups to give them some variety in what we do. I have the students check their reports daily so that they can see their progress throughout the week. It is a great visual for them.