

# Implementation Strategies

**Locust Grove Middle School, Henry County Schools**  
Locust Grove, GA

**Grade(s):** 6 – 8

**Scenario:** Computer Lab, Home Access

**Purpose:** Intervention, Supplement, Special Education

**ALEKS Portion of Curriculum:** 85%

**Time Spent in ALEKS:** 5 hours per week; 90 hours per term

**ALEKS Course:** Middle School Math Course 2, Algebra 1

## **Heather Franks–McCabe, Teacher**

This is my third year working with ALEKS with students with disabilities. Every year as I become more comfortable implementing the program in my classes, I see even larger growth in my students' academic success! The ability to monitor the progress of my students, schedule assessments, create practice/homework, and adjust the program to meet the needs of my students has been extremely helpful to me as a teacher. The interaction of computer-based learning is a nice break from the typical classroom learning environment that students are accustomed to. The kids love having the "review" information to see what they have covered, the dictionary so they work more independently and rely less on me, and the QuickTables games to reinforce basic skills! Not to mention the fact that the program has created healthy competition among my students – they even go home and work on ALEKS – they all want to be the student who has mastered the most concepts each week! This program has allowed me to become a better teacher and differentiate my instruction to meet the needs of the students.

## **Scenario**

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

This is our first year as a school community. We opened this year with a merge between two different middle schools with two different backgrounds. We were not sure what to expect from our students. I knew that ALEKS would work regardless of the background of my students and I begged my principal for the ALEKS program! My students have done so well this year that my principal has ensured that the program will continue at our school again next year!

### **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?**

50 minutes.

## **Implementation**

### **How do you implement ALEKS?**

We are working with a Regional Educational Service Agency grant initiative in our county. Through this grant, we have certain obligations that must be met in order to retain the program at our school. Our students must work on ALEKS at least three days per week for at least 50 minutes each day. We also have to work with manipulatives at least once per month.

### **Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?**

No, we do not cover ALEKS in any order. The students work on what they choose to work on each day.

### **How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?**

The students work on ALEKS four days per week and we work in small groups with manipulatives one day a week. The students work on concepts of their choosing and I monitor their work in class, helping them when they need strategies or instructional help.

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

I supplement my teaching with ALEKS. Whatever I am teaching one day I will preview that information with my students on ALEKS or reinforce what I taught in class through ALEKS.

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

I encourage my students to work on ALEKS at home whenever they have some down-time and especially during breaks.

### **How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?**

I have a blog on my teacher page that my students reflect on daily. The parents of my students have access to this blog to see how their child is doing, how they feel about their success, what I have to say, etc.

## **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, ALEKS is not assigned as homework. Not all of my students have computer access or Internet access at home.

**How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?**

In previous years, I have given grades for the average amount of time students work on ALEKS during class, and then also the number of concepts they master each week. However, the school I am at this year has remediation time built into the school day, which is when I implement ALEKS, and grades are not given for the remediation time. Instead of grades, we chart our progress weekly and I build in incentives for the kids, such as celebratory breakfasts, gift cards, etc.

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

We have a goal of five concepts mastered each week. At the end of the grading period, if students have mastered their goal at least 2/3 of the time, they get to partake in the celebration for that grading period.

## **Learning Outcomes**

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

We just received state scores back so I have not had the chance to review them for my students as of this year. However, last year as a teacher implementing ALEKS with students with disabilities, I had students with unbelievable growth. For example: I taught seventh grade last year. One of my students barely passed the Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) with a minimum score of 800 as a sixth grader. After he used the ALEKS program for one school year, he scored an 850 on the CRCT as a seventh grader. He went from barely meeting state standards to exceeding them! Students love the ALEKS program, partially because of their ability to monitor their own progress. They are eager to tell me how many concepts they master each day in the ALEKS program!

## **Best Practices**

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

Use ALEKS to differentiate your instruction. This is one program that makes differentiated instruction easy to achieve. The program works specifically for individual students – you can't beat that! Also, as a teacher, use your ALEKS Student Account so you are familiar with what the students are working on in ALEKS.