

Implementation Strategies

Anderson W. Clark Magnet High School, Glendale Unified School District
La Crescenta, CA

Grade(s): 9 – 12

Scenario: Computer Lab

Purpose: Intervention

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 80%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 3–4.5 hours per week, 135–202.5 hours per term

ALEKS Course: Pre–Algebra, Algebra 2

Verjinia Karnik, Mathematics Teacher

I've had a great experience with ALEKS. It's a very easy program to get started with at a school. It's a very user–friendly program.

Scenario

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

We didn't have a way to address the needs of students who had been unsuccessful in math during previous years. These students also developed phobias or prejudices against the subject.

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?

90 minutes.

Implementation

How do you implement ALEKS?

We looked at students' math grades and California Standardized Test (CST) math scores from the previous year to determine who might score Below or Far Below Basic in future CST years.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

We emphasize working on areas of the pie that are lower than 50 percent.

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

Teachers' Aids (mostly senior high school students) are assigned to a group of ALEKS students for individualized guidance in problem–solving. Students work for the entire 90 minute period on ALEKS.

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

I developed a type of organizer that I give to students to write important rules and vocabulary that they encounter in their ALEKS problems. Most of the ALEKS students have trouble remembering rules when it counts (i.e., on tests or quizzes). So I allow them to refer to their organizer during assessments to help promote their math memory.

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

Frequently.

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

We explain to parents how valuable ALEKS is during back–to–school nights and open houses. I also make phone calls to parents if I feel that a student isn't really making optimal use of 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?

ALEKS is part of their homework responsibilities.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

Every student gets a grade for their percentage completed in their ALEKS pie.

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

During a 90-minute class, they are expected to make 5–7 percent progress.

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

We have seen students do better on homework and tests in their core math classes, and we have also seen students who were in danger of scoring Below or Far Below Basic make significant gains on their California Standardized Tests. Additionally, we have improved student morale in math. Students exposed to ALEKS have more enthusiasm about doing better in math, and are really happy and proud of them.

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

The note-taking organizer I give students to write down rules and vocabulary, which has a page for every section of their pie, has increased student accountability for remembering what they are practicing before an assessment.