

Implementation Strategies

Eggers Middle School, School City of Hammond
Hammond, IN

Grade(s): 6 – 8

Scenario: Computers in Classroom

Purpose: At-Risk Students

ALEKS Portion of Curriculum: 75%

Time Spent in ALEKS: 2–3 hours per week, 15–18 hours per term

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

Shawn Nuest, Teacher

I work with students that did not pass the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress (ISTEP). The artificial intelligence within the program evaluates student work faster than I could ever think of. I teach inner-city students that really benefit from this one-on-one technological help. I have a higher percentage of students that pass our state exam than the normal population in our school.

Scenario

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

My student scores started out all over the place. Every student in my room had a different deficiency. ALEKS brought them closer together, so that I could do whole class instruction.

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

4–5 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?

I select students that failed the state test the previous year. I then use ALEKS to give all of my students the RtI Assessment for their grade. Based on this information, I place students accordingly. I pull all lessons for what my students still need to learn based off of ALEKS Assessments. I was not allowed to have a textbook like what the other teachers have, so I had to get creative... and it WORKS.

Do you cover ALEKS concepts in a particular order?

I just look at RtI 6, 7, and 8, and Middle School Math Course 1, 2, and 3 because my students are in those levels. I try to cover the problems that the largest number of students are having trouble with. MY CLASS IS ALL ABOUT GROWTH!!!!

How do you structure your class period with ALEKS?

I have 15 computers in my room and 20 students. I start my class out by doing a problem or two on the board. These problems come from the problems that most students are having trouble with in ALEKS. I will then allow students on the computers, and we rotate to give all students equal time in class. Students need to obtain either two hours and ten items or three hours and 15 items per week in ALEKS. Students are also pushed to increase their assessment score by five points every week.

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

Every day!

How do you cultivate parental involvement and support for ALEKS?

I hold a parent meeting at the beginning of the year. I talk about the benefits of ALEKS and the rigor I place upon my students with my course. I send parent letters home each grading period highlighting top students along with their child's growth and data.

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?

I get to school an hour early every day, and all of my students are encouraged to get all the extra time on ALEKS that they can. I have even contacted our Boys & Girls Club; a partnership was formed for students to use ALEKS there as well.

How do you incorporate ALEKS into your grading system?

I give students ten points for meeting their required time for the week, and another ten points for meeting the required set items for the week. They get another ten points for meeting the required growth on their assessment. ALEKS makes up 80 percent of their grade.

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

Yes. I give an assessment every three hours, and every 15 items, which depends on the week. Students are pushed to get a growth of five points on their assessment.

Learning Outcomes

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

Last year our school had 46 percent of students pass the ISTEP. After ALEKS, my sixth grade class had 72 percent pass, my seventh grade class had 68 percent pass, and my eighth grade class had 80 percent pass. Keep in mind I started out my year with selected students that did not pass the year before. Additionally, the students LOVE ALEKS. It teaches accountability; we have a saying, "practice makes BETTER."

Best Practices

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

I make competitions between classes for the most growth in time spent in ALEKS time and items learned. I give all of my students a certificate when they pass from an Rtl level to the required course level. They get a bag of Skittles as well, and I have free baseball tickets that I give to the students. Contact local businesses....THEY LOVE TO HELP OUT.