Dual Enrollment Success Story

Talkington School for Young Women Leaders
Lubbock ISD | UT Austin OnRamps



Supporting Every Student While Maintaining College-Level Rigor with ALEKS

Challenge

Closing Learning Gaps Without Slowing the Pace of a College-Level Course

Solution

McGraw Hill ALEKS

Result

Improving Student Confidence, College Credit Attainment, and Independent Learning

> **I view ALEKS as a co-teacher in my classroom. While I am focused on the curriculum, ALEKS is filling the gaps for low-performing students and providing enrichment for high achievers.**



Tarah Williams

Talkington School for Young Women Leaders (Lubbock ISD)

University of Texas at Austin OnRamps Program

Challenge

Teaching a dual enrollment College Algebra course requires balancing the expectations of a college classroom with the realities of teaching high school students. As the facilitator for OnRamps College Algebra, Tarah Williams guides students through an inquiry-based curriculum that emphasizes collaboration, critical thinking, and independent learning while ensuring they remain on pace with the university's course requirements.

Unlike a traditional high school course, OnRamps follows a fixed college schedule, leaving little opportunity to reteach concepts or extend deadlines when students struggle. At the same time, many students enter the course with different levels of mathematical preparation. Some have significant learning gaps, while others are ready for additional challenges.

"The biggest challenge is maturity and learning gaps," Williams explained. "It is a challenge to stay at the college's pace while also addressing students' needs and learning gaps along the way."

Before implementing ALEKS, Williams created tutorial videos and searched for online practice problems to support students outside of class. While these resources helped, they required significant preparation time and could not provide students with immediate feedback or individualized instruction when they encountered difficulties.

She needed a solution that could personalize instruction, reinforce prerequisite skills, and provide meaningful practice without taking away valuable classroom time.

Solution

Williams implemented ALEKS to provide adaptive, individualized support that complemented the OnRamps curriculum rather than replacing it.

Homework assignments were aligned with each unit of study, giving students additional opportunities to strengthen concepts introduced during class. Students struggling with prerequisite skills received targeted intervention, while advanced learners used ALEKS for enrichment and additional practice.

One of the platform's greatest strengths was its ability to meet students at their current level of understanding while continually adapting as they progressed.

"I needed something students could do outside the classroom that would help fill their learning gaps. I also needed something that met students at their current level of learning and built on their skills. The instant feedback and walkthrough of the problems allowed students to see their mistakes in real time."

Because every student receives individualized questions and feedback, collaboration remained meaningful. Students worked together to discuss mathematical concepts while still completing personalized assignments that required genuine understanding.

ALEKS also became an important instructional partner during Williams' maternity leave. The adaptive learning, real-time feedback, and step-by-step explanations enabled students to continue progressing independently while maintaining the rigor of the college course.



Results

Since implementing ALEKS consistently throughout the school year, Williams has seen measurable improvements in both student outcomes and classroom culture.

During the 2023–2024 school year, when ALEKS was used only periodically, **43%** of students earned a C or higher on the college side of the course. After making ALEKS an integral part of instruction during the 2024–2025 school year, that figure increased to **69.8%**, despite Williams being on maternity leave for two months during the school year (Figure 1).

Williams has also observed sustained improvements in students earning college credit, with both the 2024–2025 and 2025–2026 cohorts showing gains of more than 20 percentage points over previous years.

Beyond measurable performance gains, ALEKS has helped transform students' confidence in mathematics.

"Students' confidence in math has grown. They are able to verbalize to one another how to solve specific problems. Hearing students explain how to solve problems and how they arrived at the answer has always been such a win for me in class."

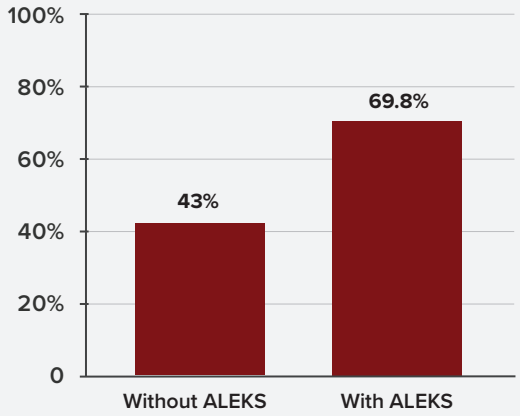
Williams also credits ALEKS with helping students prepare for the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA 2.0). One student, after narrowly missing the passing score multiple times, used targeted ALEKS assignments based on diagnostic results to strengthen specific skill gaps before successfully passing the assessment.

"It was such a touching moment and one that truly represented the impact ALEKS has on students who utilize it."

Perhaps most telling is the shift in student attitudes. What initially felt like "extra work" soon became a resource students actively requested.

"In the beginning they are not excited about having to do it, but by the second nine weeks they were asking for additional practice and help."

Figure 1.
Percentage of Students Earning a C or Higher in the College Course





Conclusion

For Williams, ALEKS has become an essential part of delivering a rigorous dual enrollment experience while ensuring every student receives the individualized support they need to succeed.

Rather than requiring instructors to choose between supporting struggling students and challenging advanced learners, ALEKS enables both simultaneously through adaptive learning, personalized practice, and immediate feedback.

The platform has also allowed Williams to spend more time facilitating higher-level discussions and collaborative learning while ALEKS reinforces foundational skills outside of class.

When asked what she would tell another instructor considering ALEKS, her recommendation is unequivocal.

"ALEKS does what every passionate teacher wishes they could do without burning out. This is a program that adapts to students' learning in real time while providing quality feedback and practice. Both high- and low-performing students benefit from it."

Featured Educator

Tarah Williams has been an educator for 12 years and teaches OnRamps College Algebra at Talkington School for Young Women Leaders in Lubbock ISD. Throughout her career, she has taught a wide range of mathematics courses, including 7th and 8th grade intervention, Algebra I, Algebra II Honors, Financial Math, and College Algebra, as well as INCubator and Senior Seminar. Her teaching philosophy centers on creating a supportive classroom where students feel safe to take risks, learn from mistakes, and build confidence in their mathematical abilities. She is passionate about helping students replace the belief that they are "bad at math" with the realization that they simply have untapped potential.

Program Profile

The University of Texas OnRamps program partners with more than 450 high schools across Texas to provide more than 248,000 students with access to rigorous college-level courses while they are still in high school. Designed to increase college readiness and expand access to higher education, OnRamps combines university-developed curriculum with professional learning and instructional support for teachers. Students have the opportunity to earn college credit by meeting university standards, gaining valuable experience with the expectations and rigor of postsecondary coursework before graduating from high school.

