

## CASE STUDY

# RCMA Charter Schools Empower Math Students to Reach Higher with *ALEKS*<sup>®</sup>



### PROFILE

**School Name:**

RCMA Wimauma Academy and Leadership Academy

**Location:**

Hillsborough County, Florida

**Grades:**

K–5, 6–8



RCMA is a non-profit that provides early education for children of migrant farm workers and rural, low-income families throughout Florida. RCMA operates three, tuition-free charter schools (public schools of choice) in Florida, including the RCMA Wimauma Academy and Leadership Academy in southeastern Hillsborough County. RCMA Wimauma Academy serves students in grades Kindergarten through 5, and the Leadership Academy serves grades 6–8. Most of the students in these schools speak English as a second language.

To learn more please visit: [mheducation.com](http://mheducation.com)

## Implementation

Kalynn Viramontes is the math teacher at RCMA Leadership Academy. Her classrooms are 1:1, and every student has a Chromebook™. In spring of 2015, a McGraw Hill representative gave Kalynn a few licenses to *ALEKS*® so that she could try it out. *ALEKS* is an adaptive, online learning program that delivers a personalized learning path for math students. *ALEKS* provides teachers with comprehensive data on each student's mathematical knowledge, so they can meet students at their skill levels and provide instruction tailored to their scope of understanding.

"I first tried out *ALEKS* in the spring of 2015, and I absolutely loved it," says Viramontes. "I purchased the program that fall, and now I use it to differentiate instruction for my students."

Viramontes noticed that she had overestimated the number of licenses she would need, and because she was seeing amazing results, she gave her extras to Mandy Johnson, a third-grade math teacher at RCMA Wimauma Academy. Johnson used those licenses to differentiate instruction for her upper-level students so they could work above grade level.

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says Johnson. "*ALEKS* is very hands-off for the teacher and very hands-on for the student."

In 2016/17, *ALEKS* was purchased for the whole elementary school, and Mandy now acts as a teaching coach to help her peers make the most of it.

## Student Engagement

Viramontes completed her first full year using *ALEKS* during the 2015/16 school year, and she immediately asked to get it for every student, third grade and up.

"Everyone who uses *ALEKS* passes," she says. "The kids like it because it gives them choice. I say, 'pick ten skills to work on,' and they choose. If it's too hard, they can choose another skill."

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Johnson agrees that *ALEKS* is a big motivator for her elementary kids. "There's never a time they don't have something to do," she says. "If they finish their assignments, they spend the rest of their time on *ALEKS*."

Both teachers have noticed that *ALEKS* sparks friendly competition that encourages students to keep working at it. They each publicly post the percentage of *ALEKS* each of their students have completed, so everyone can see who is the biggest *ALEKS* mover.

“I post *ALEKS* scores so my students can see the percentage of mastery they have reached in relation to other students,” says Johnson. “If you’re in third grade and you are beating six people in the fourth grade, that’s a huge motivator!”

Johnson adds that *ALEKS* empowers students to take charge of their own learning.

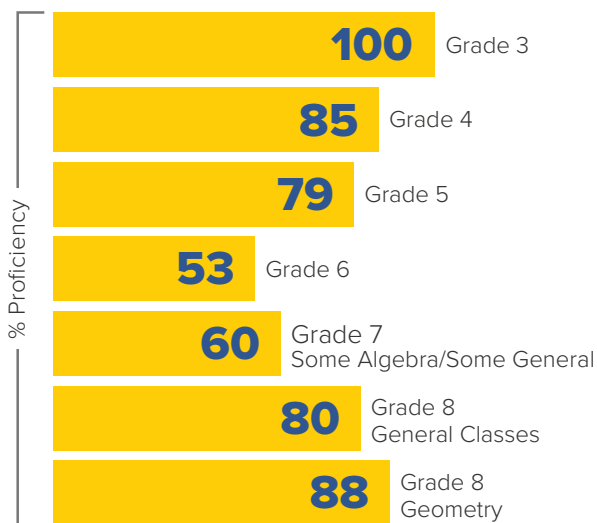
“They get on *ALEKS* and, if they don’t understand it, they can look at an explanation or ask a peer before they ask me,” says Johnson. “I had six third-grade students working on sixth-grade *ALEKS*, and they never asked me a single question. All of the answers are there for them.”

## Results

Heather Hanson, Director of Professional Development and Data Analysis for both schools, is thrilled with the results she has seen from *ALEKS*.

“We use *ALEKS* as a supplement in our classrooms, and the kids love the challenge,” says Hanson. “More importantly, we have had really great results on our state assessments.

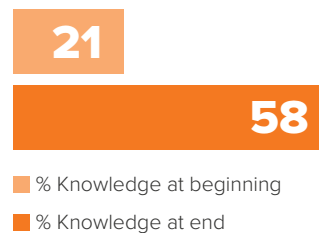
### RCMA Wimauma Academy/Leadership Academy 2016/17 State Assessment Math Scores By Grade



During the 2016/17 school year, we were one of only 12 Florida schools that had third graders score 100% proficient in math on their state exams.”

Viramontes notes that students in her classes who averaged 58.5 hours in *ALEKS* increased their knowledge by an average of 37 percentage points from July 2016 to July 2017.

### *ALEKS* Usage and Performance in Viramontes’s MS 1/LV 6 Math Classes from 7/25/2016 to 7/26/2017



In each of the nine math courses at RCMA Wimauma Academy that used *ALEKS*, students increased their knowledge scores by an average of 32 percentage points over the 12 months from July 2016 to July 2017.

### *ALEKS* Total Usage and Performance Data for RCMA Wimauma Academy from 7/25/2016 to 7/26/2017

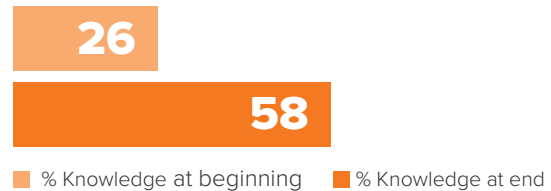
Students with less than 30 hours using *ALEKS*



Students with more than 30 hours using *ALEKS*



Total average using *ALEKS*



“The kids jumped in and worked it like crazy, and it is paying off,” says Viramontes. “I’ve compared their *ALEKS* scores versus Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) and Florida State Assessment scores, and there is a definite correlation between how hard they work in *ALEKS* and how well they perform.”

Johnson sees similar results in her own classroom. “It’s a fantastic program, and I’m sold on it,” she says. “I had a student who was excelling in first grade, so he moved on to second-grade math and then third with *ALEKS*. He completed third-grade math before some of the third graders. That’s an unbelievable accomplishment.”

## The Future

“We will definitely continue to use *ALEKS*,” says Hanson, “And our sister charter school, Immokalee Community School in eastern Collier County, will begin using it this year based on our success.”

Johnson adds, “The program is for 3–8, but we are asking to get it for our second graders next year in case we have students who are excelling.”

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## About *ALEKS*

*ALEKS* is a web-based, artificially intelligent assessment and learning system that uses adaptive questioning to quickly and accurately determine what a student knows and doesn’t know in a course. *ALEKS* then instructs the student on the topics he/she is most ready to learn.

# ALEKS®



To learn more about *ALEKS* or other McGraw Hill products, please visit: [mheonline.com/\[VanityURL\]](https://mheonline.com/[VanityURL])