

Online Training + Tools for Teachers

Project ALERT has launched a fully interactive online training program for middle grade substance abuse prevention educators. This new training format will allow teachers, counselors and drug education specialists to access the complete instruction program from the convenience of their own site, where they can learn at their own pace.

Access to the online training tool will be made available free of charge to all educators who have already participated in traditional training workshops. Those of you who share your curriculum materials with colleagues or who have passed on your materials to a successor can now share access to online training. This will help ensure quality implementation of Project ALERT and strong outcomes for students.

An access code for the online training tool will be mailed to each trained teacher during the month of October. If you would like your code sooner, email us at info@projectalert.best.org and we will electronically expedite the process.






Trained teachers will find many new online services within the access-protected portion of the Project ALERT web site. These include:

- Online interactive lesson review and prep
- New resources linked to each lesson
- Project ALERT news online
- Downloadable assessment tools
- Downloadable lesson plans
- Student handouts in pdf format
- Teen Leader Manuals online
- Help when you need it

You are invited to visit our new web site and preview a demonstration of our online training at www.projectalert.com

PROJECTALERT Substance Abuse Prevention that Works!

 HOME
 LOGIN

<p>What's New</p> <p>Online Training This Fall, we've expanded your options to include online training. Many regional workshops are also available to meet your training needs. More info.</p> <p>National Middle School Association Conference Booth 1162 in Portland, Oregon, October 31 - November 2. Come visit with Project ALERT. Our State Coordinators would like to meet you!</p> <p>Teen Leader Manuals Now Online Project ALERT teachers can now download the manuals for our optional Teen Leader component. Login and proceed to Resources.</p>	<p>Overview</p> <p>Training</p> <p>Previews</p> <p>Contact Us</p> <p>FAQs</p>	    
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A Curriculum for the Middle Grades Exemplary Program
 U. S. Department of Education

Online Training for Project ALERT

When we set out to create the online training for Project ALERT, we looked at a number of issues and challenges, and tried to create a design that would address as many as possible. Here are some of our responses:

Challenge: *Provide greater access to Project ALERT teacher training*

Project ALERT teacher training has typically been delivered as a one-day workshop, which can present scheduling difficulties for busy teachers.

Response: *Online training available anytime, anywhere*

Online training is a natural for addressing scheduling difficulties, as it can be available any time. Additionally, we broke the web-based training into eleven separate modules that can be completed individually, so teachers can incorporate it into their regular teacher preparation time. Project ALERT workshop training is also still available if teachers are unable to utilize the online training.

Challenge: *Provide training when teachers need it*

When we talked to teachers attending Project ALERT teacher training workshops, we found out that many of them would not be able to implement the Project ALERT curriculum for another 6-12 months. Even the best training loses efficacy when the learner has to wait a long period to implement it.

Response: *Training designed to be used as part of lesson preparation*

Teachers can access the online training immediately prior to implementing the curriculum. If they have attended an in-person workshop, they can also access the online training as a quick refresher before using the curriculum in their classroom.

Challenge: *Support teacher preparedness*

The primary objective of the Project ALERT online training is to allow teachers to quickly and easily become familiar with the nuts and bolts implementation of the curriculum, so that they feel comfortable and confident implementing it in their own classroom.

Response: *Allow teachers to practice in a “virtual classroom”*

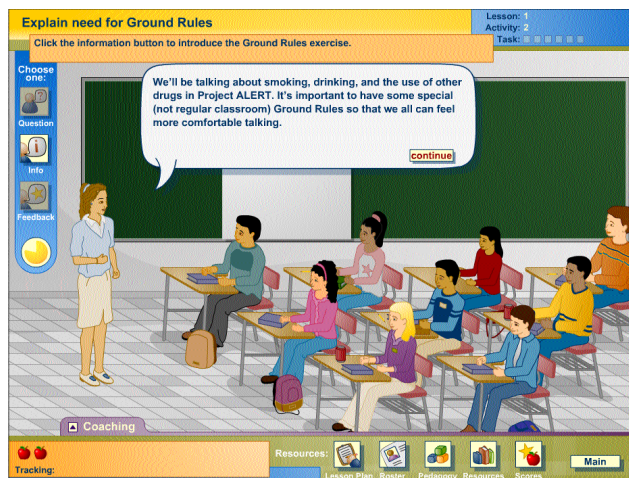
Too much online training is expository text with a “next” button. In designing the Project ALERT online training, we wanted to create a learning environment that would allow the teacher to quickly work through the curriculum, but in an environment as close to the actual one as possible.

To this end, we created the Project ALERT virtual classroom.

The intention of this environment was to allow teachers to have the opportunity to practice implementing the curriculum in a virtual classroom before having to implement it in their own classroom.

The strategies we employed in creating the online training emphasized actual practice over expository text, interactive practice over passive viewing and chunking the material into manageable pieces. The online training isn't a blow-by-blow walkthrough of the entire curriculum, but it does touch on all the activities involved in

each lesson. Teachers can move through it quickly, or in detail, depending on their experience and requirements.

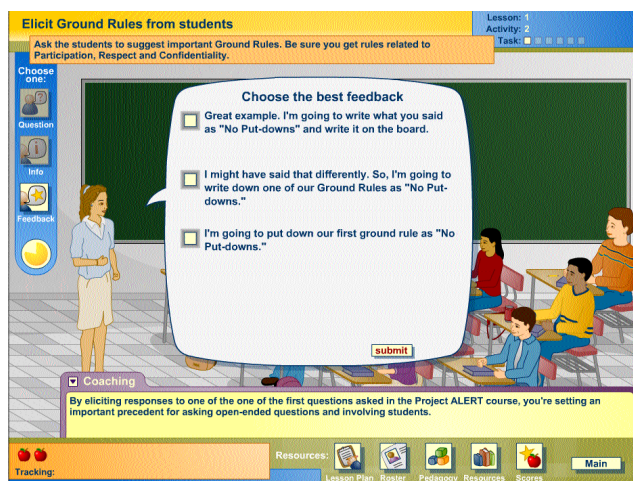


Challenge: *Develop teaching strategies*

How Project ALERT is taught is as important as what is taught. The curriculum is designed to foster active student involvement and the development of drug resistance skills. To accomplish this, Project ALERT emphasizes the use of specific teaching strategies, such as validation and resistance self-efficacy. Many teachers already utilize many of these strategies in their day-to-day teaching, but the Project ALERT curriculum utilizes them in specific ways to support the development of drug resistance skills.

Response: *Provide decision options with coaching feedback*

Teachers get the opportunity to make several decisions about how the virtual teacher implements the curriculum. They control whether or not the teacher gives information, asks questions, or gives feedback. They frequently have different options for what type of question or feedback they would like to give, and they receive coaching feedback from the online program about how well their choice aligns with the Project ALERT teaching strategies.



Not every move that the teacher makes in the online training requires this type of decisionmaking. Some of the teacher actions do not involve choices, in order to keep the online program moving quickly.





Challenge: *Fidelity*

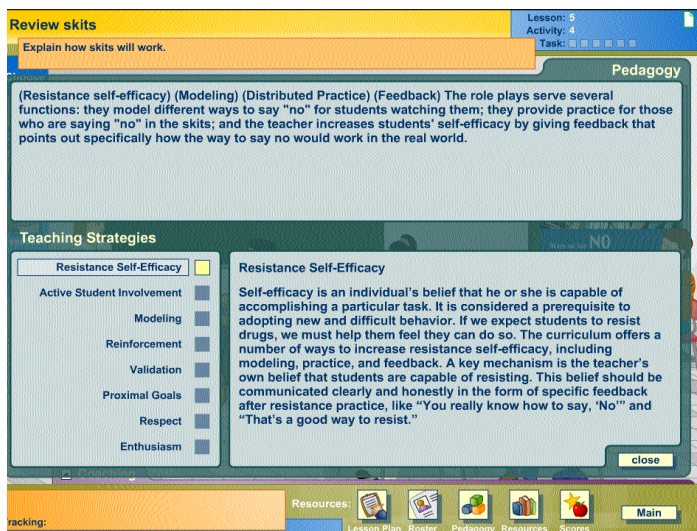
Project ALERT is a curriculum that has been extensively researched and proven to be effective in reducing substance use. To obtain these results, the curriculum needs to be implemented as it's written, with fidelity.

Response: *Provide access to the underlying pedagogy*

Teachers have a challenging task in implementing the Project ALERT curriculum effectively, and we have tried to provide as much assistance as possible. Teachers need to be able to understand when it's appropriate to incorporate their own style into the curriculum, and how to deal with issues like running short of time without shortchanging vital elements of the curriculum.

Good decisions about implementing the curriculum are supported by understanding the pedagogy underlying the curriculum design. We decided to make that information available at any time during the online training.

By clicking the pedagogy button at the bottom of the screen, teachers can access a short explanation of the pedagogy and philosophies used to design that portion of the Project ALERT curriculum, as well as a brief definition of the teaching strategies used throughout.



Challenge: *Teachers are busy people*

Teachers face busy schedules, and the online training needed to not be a burdensome time commitment.

Response: *Create the program to fit within normal preparation time*

We didn't want the Project ALERT online training to be just an added responsibility. In doing the analysis for the design of the online training, we talked to teachers about how much time they would expect to prepare for an individual lesson, and worked within that time constraint. The intention is that the online training is not only a learning experience, but also a preparation tool. Teachers can print the lesson plans, and then follow along as they go through the training. The training should replace some of teachers' preparation time, not add to it. Also, we wanted the online training to be a resource for teachers who had already been through Project ALERT

training - a way for teachers to quickly refresh themselves on the curriculum before implementing it in the classroom.

Challenge: *Technical constraints*

Technical constraints (software and hardware versions, download times) are a big challenge in designing any web-based training. There is a fine balance between making the most of the technology, and excluding end-users with older equipment or software.

Response: *Balance of technical needs and constraints*

The decision was made early on that we would not try to reach 100% of the online audience with the training. To do so meant making significant compromises in what was possible to do with the training. Training will continue to be available through the in-person workshops to accommodate those with limited technical access to the Internet.

That said, we did try to strike a balance between creating the most interactive and interesting learning environment possible, and having the training be available to the widest range of groups possible. Some of the decisions we made included:

- **Use of the Macromedia Flash plug-in.** Developing the program using Macromedia Flash allowed us to build in a level of interactivity that would not have been possible using any other technology. Flash utilizes the vector-based images to drastically reduce file size. Additionally, the Flash plug-in is freely available and automatically included in most newer web browsers. Flash also produces the most consistent environment between browsers and operating systems.
- **Multimedia.** We decided to use moderate amounts of audio (sound effects, primarily), and screen shots of the videotapes used in the classroom to suggest the essence of what each tape was about. We decided not to use extensive voiceover narration or streaming video, as these elements generate large file sizes and long download times.
- **Download time.** During any web development, download time is a constant concern. In order to include all the media necessary to make the classroom a rich, complete environment, the file sizes became larger than we ideally would have liked. Not a problem over a broadband connection, but somewhat challenging over 56K modem connection. To help mitigate this, we designed the program to have one initial download, after which it will run without delay. So if you are viewing it over a modem connection, we recommend that you start the download, go get a cup of coffee or a snack, and then come back in a few minutes. After the download is complete, a person with a modem connection will experience the same performance as someone on a high-speed connection.

We hope that you will find the Project ALERT online training to be a useful tool. The design intent was to create something that was both useful and easy to use. We'd like your feedback. Please send your comments to info@projectalert.best.org or give us a call at (800) ALERT-10.

Have a great school year!

Upcoming Workshops

October 2002

8	Cincinnati OH
9	Cedar Rapids IA
10	Indianola MS
10	Irving TX
16	Corpus Christi TX
16	Mt. Vernon WA
17	Albemarle NC
17	New Castle PA
18	Amarillo TX
22	Anderson SC
23	Decatur GA
23	Florence SC
23	Aberdeen SD
24	Albany NY
29	San Jose CA
30	Midland MI
30	San Angelo TX

November 2002

5	Pine Bluff AR
6	El Monte CA
6	Austin TX
7	Springfield IL
7	Bloomington IN
7	Albuquerque NM
12	Riverside CA
12	Lancaster PA
14	Chicago IL
14	So. Lyon MI
14	Houston TX
18	Pelham GA
18	Livingston NJ

December 2002

3	Bedford MA
5	San Diego CA
5	Portland OR
5	Falls Church VA
11	Santa Rosa CA
11	Wichita Falls TX

Workshops forming in 2003 include Hattiesburg, Mississippi and Brownsville, Texas in February, and Centerville, Utah in April. If you have an interest in any of the workshops shown, or would like to talk about scheduling a workshop in your area, call (800) ALERT-10.
