

### **“Help! I have a 45-student PE class. What should I do?”**

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Teachers are sometimes confronted with the undesirable situation of having more than the usual number of students in their Project ALERT classroom. Sometimes it's not even a traditional classroom; it may be a study hall or gym, for example. An ounce of prevention works best. When possible, make sure those in charge of scheduling understand that Project ALERT was developed and tested in regular-sized (25-35 students), contained classrooms. Results are unknown for other classroom configurations.

If possible, train others to team-teach with you. Examples of staff who might be involved are: school nurses, resource officers, counselors, non-certified personnel and student teachers. Consider using the Teen Leader version of Project ALERT; two teen leaders would be available in each class to help facilitate groups.

Class scheduling and teaching configurations are often beyond a teacher's control and he or she is asked to be “creative.” Here are some specific suggestions:

#### Convert large group to small group activities.

Assign students to “permanent” small groups for all Project ALERT activities. Activities meant for the entire class will need to be modified for small groups.

#### Make students your allies.

- Pre-assign groups so that potentially disruptive students are distributed throughout the class.
- Assign each group a student leader who is responsible for facilitating group activities.
- Rotate group leadership, if appropriate.

#### Use incentives.

Give points to groups that are on task. Keep a cumulative tally of points earned throughout Project ALERT and award prizes to groups that reach a pre-determined target number of points.

#### Summarize/Check for understanding.

With larger groups, you may need to summarize key points more emphatically to ensure that all students are “on board.” Because it is more difficult for students to focus in larger groups, stop periodically and check for understanding. Back up your key points with visuals.

#### Save your voice.

If room acoustics or student chattiness makes speaking difficult, conserve your voice by using handouts or overheads for instructions. Ask students who read well to review small group-produced lists for the rest of the class. Save your voice for giving feedback to small groups and reviewing their responses.

### Use appropriate video monitors.

A larger teaching space requires some adaptation for video viewing. Use two monitors or a single large screen monitor so all students can see the videotapes.

### Lesson 1, Activity 4. Compare Marijuana and Alcohol

As written, this activity relies on class responses to questions about the similarities between reasons for using and not using marijuana (from student small group lists), and reasons for using and not using alcohol. This may be difficult to do in a very large class, especially if the acoustics are poor.

#### **Suggested modification:**

- At the beginning of Activity 3, provide each group leader with a set of instructions for making their reasons lists. Include instructions for Activities 3 and 4 at this point.
- Instruct student leaders of the two groups making lists of Reasons to Use Marijuana and Reasons Not to Use Marijuana to place check marks next to reasons to use and not use alcohol on the lists.

### Lesson 5, Activity 4. Act Out Skits

This can be quite a time challenge where there are more than 5-6 groups (the typical number in a 30-student class). If acoustics are poor, the challenge of being heard can cause audience attention to wane quickly.

#### **Suggested modification:**

- Randomly choose 5-6 groups to perform their skits.
- Have a student videotape the skits, if possible, to add an element of importance to the activity thereby encouraging students to be quiet (“Quiet on the set!”) and attentive during the performance. Asking performers to speak up so that they can be heard on videotape might be a more salient reason than simply speaking up so that their classmates can hear.
- For those groups who didn’t get to perform, ask their director to briefly outline (25 words or less) how their solutions compared to those that were performed.