

**Title of Intervention:** Project ALERT

**Website:** [www.projectalert.com](http://www.projectalert.com)

**Intervention Strategies:** Group Education, Supportive Relationships

**Purpose of the Intervention:** To prevent the start of tobacco and drug use among middle school students

**Population:** Middle school students

**Setting:** Middle school in South Dakota; school-based, home-based

**Partners:** School administrators

**Intervention Description:**

- **Group Education:** The Project ALERT two-year curriculum consisted of 11 lessons taught once a week during the first year and three booster lessons delivered the following year. Students watched interactive videos on how to say no to tobacco, drugs and alcohol. Students participated in role playing activities and guided discussions. There was a smoking cessation lesson, which was designed to appeal especially to the more committed and alienated smokers. It sought to build motivation and skills for quitting. It included a video of former teenage smokers talking about why and how they quit and group activities.
- **Supportive Relationships:** The parental involvement activities included adolescent interviews with parents about their experiences with and responses to peer pressure. The parents and children took IQ tests that assessed knowledge about drugs and social influences to use them. Students gave an oral report on drug use consequences to their family.

**Theory:** Health Belief Model, Self-efficacy Theory of Behavior Change, Social Influence Theory

**Resources Required:**

- **Staff/Volunteers:** Teachers
- **Training:** Teachers received a one-day workshop on the curriculum
- **Technology:** Equipment to watch videos
- **Space:** Classrooms
- **Budget:** Not mentioned
- **Intervention:** Project ALERT curriculum, teacher's manuals, videos, homework assignments, substance use IQ test
- **Evaluation:** Surveys

**Evaluation:**

- **Design:** Pre- and post-test with a control
- **Methods and Measures:**
  - Students completed surveys to assess knowledge, awareness, substance use and social influences.
  - Saliva samples and saliva cotinine concentrations were collected from students and assessed for substances.

**Outcomes:**

- **Short Term Impact:** Students had a higher awareness of actual substance use. They modified their beliefs that refusing alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana can bring greater respect from friends.
- **Long Term Impact:** Project ALERT curbed cigarette initiation, which reduced the proportion of new smokers. The curriculum also lessened current and regular smoking among the students.

**Maintenance:** A high school component called ALERT Plus included 5 booster lessons in the 9th and 10th grades.

**Lessons Learned:** Interventions that address several risk factors are likely to have a greater impact on substance use and on youths at different levels of risk. Project ALERT compliments other curricula and can be implemented with lessons from sex education, health, physical education, science and social studies.

**Citation(s):**

Ellickson, P. L., D. F. McCaffrey, et al. (2003). "New inroads in preventing adolescent drug use: results from a large-scale trial of project ALERT in middle schools." *Am J Public Health* 93(11): 1830-6.

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