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## Effectiveness of the ALERT Program for School-Aged Children

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# Effectiveness of the ALERT Program for School-Aged Children

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## Case:

A 9-year-old boy has been described by his teachers as impulsive, loud, unable to sit still, and a disruption to the class. An OT examines the case and believes that the ALERT Program is a possible solution to improve the student's ability to self-regulate in the classroom. The OT prefers to use of Evidence-Based Practice and wants to determine whether the ALERT Program is a viable option to improve the student's ability to self-regulate in the classroom.



## 1 Ask: Research Question

What is the effectiveness of the ALERT Program for improving self-regulation in School-aged children (K-8)?

## 2a Acquire: Search

Databases: Scopus, CINAHL, & ProQuest

**Patient/Client Group:** School-aged children; K-8

**Intervention:** ALERT Program

**Comparison:** N/A

**Outcome(s):** Ability to self-regulate

## 2b Acquire: Selected Articles

**Gill, Thompson-Hodgetts, & Rasmussen (2018):** A critical review of the ALERT program evaluating its effectiveness in a classroom setting.

**Barnes, Vogel, Beck, Schoenfeld, & Owen (2008):** A quasi-experimental design with a control group and pretest/posttest examined the effectiveness of the ALERT program in children with emotional disturbances in the classroom.

**Soler, Hardwick, Perkes, Dossetor, Bray, & Russell (2018):** A one group non-randomized experiment without control group. Explored whether an adapted approach to the ALERT program, that uses sensorimotor strategies to assist in self-regulation, might assist with management of tic disorders in children.

## 3a Appraise: Study Quality

**Gill, Thompson-Hodgetts, & Rasmussen (2018):** Level 1 n= 288 participants across 6 studies Strengths: systematic review, rigid inclusion criteria Limitations: Low number of applicable articles available for use, and peer-reviewed academic literature, several studies did not include reliability and validity measures.

**Barnes, Vogel, Beck, Schoenfeld, & Owen (2008):** Level 2, n= 12. Strengths: Control group, conducted in classroom setting, pre-/posttest measures taken, quantitative. Limitations: lack of randomization, small sample size, mostly boys.

**Soler, Hardwick, Perkes, Dossetor, Bray, & Russell (2018):** Level 3, n= 10. Strengths: Statistical comparison with pre- and postscores, Limitations: Small sample size, weaker level of research, no control group, no randomization, mostly male,

## 3b Appraise: Study Results

**Gill, Thompson-Hodgetts, & Rasmussen (2018):** In all studies included, the Alert Program® was reported to be an effective, feasible, and appropriate intervention for improving self-regulation in children. However, given the weak to moderate rigor of the existing research and lack of replication of studies across various clinical contexts, further research is needed.

**Barnes, Vogel, Beck, Schoenfeld, & Owen (2008):** The mean sensory profile scores for the children in the intervention group indicate little change between pretest and posttest measures. Six children in the intervention group demonstrated improvement on posttest scores while 1 child showed a decrease on Devereux Behavior Rating Scales (DBRS) scores. Of those who showed improvements, 2 of them were considered significant ( $p=.10$ ).

**Soler, Hardwick, Perkes, Dossetor, Bray, & Russell (2018):** The results show an adapted approach to the ALERT program may be effective in reducing severity and impairment. Total Yale Global Tic Severity Scale pre-intervention mean score of 46.5 improved to 17.7 post-therapy. All participants showed reduced tic severity after therapy. Five participants reported absence of any impairment after therapy. Parent Tic Questionnaire scores reduced post-therapy in nine participants however, the group change was not significant ( $p=0.16$ ), and one participant showed an increased post therapy tic.

## 4 Apply: Conclusions for Practice

The ALERT program appears to be a feasible intervention for improving self regulation. The lack of research on the ALERT program within larger populations raises doubts on whether it can be considered an evidence-based practice.

## References

References available upon request.

Rigorous research is needed to demonstrate that the ALERT program is an effective intervention for improving self-regulation in school-aged children.

