ABSTRACT
Rationale: Elementary school teachers face the challenge of meeting the myriad needs of their classroom students who exhibit challenging behaviours due to different diagnosis. Students with attention deficit disorder, autism spectrum disorder, and intellectual delays may exhibit dysfunctional sensory processing difficulties and poor self-regulation which contributes to maladaptive behaviours in the classroom. These behaviours impact on a teachers’ stress level. Increased stress can lead to reduced performance, dissatisfaction of performance, and lower self-efficacy. Only 13% of surveyed Canadian teachers felt they could manage challenging classroom behaviours. Preliminary studies of the Alert Program® (teaches ways to attain and maintain an appropriate level of arousal for learning) and sensorimotor strategies have been found effective in impacting students’ self-regulation. While most school-based occupational therapy studies have focused on helping the students, none have focused on helping the teacher. In 2011, teachers and administrators from the Eastern Townships School Board (ETSB) identified the need to address challenging behaviours in the classroom. This study uses Graham’s Knowledge to Action Process as a conceptual framework to explore the use of occupational performance coaching to enable teachers’ use of the Alert Program® and self-regulation strategies in their students.

Objective: In teachers faced with students with challenging classroom behaviours, what is the extent to which their perceived performance, satisfaction of performance, and self-efficacy change following participation in a one-day training and weekly occupational performance coaching on the use of sensory-motor strategies over a thirteen week period?

Subjects and Methods: Twelve elementary school teachers will be recruited from the ETSB. They will participate in a one day workshop on self-regulation and classroom strategies. Participants will then meet individually with the occupational therapist once a week for eight weeks; occupational performance coaching will be used to support the participants in understanding and applying the new knowledge. The design of this pilot study is a one group pre-post-post intervention, with the second post evaluation at five weeks to gather information on the sustainability of change. The key outcome measures are the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM) and Goal Attainment Scaling to assess regular education elementary school teachers’ perceived performance and satisfaction performance to support self-regulation of their students. The Teachers’ Self-Efficacy Scale will be used to measure teacher’s self-efficacy in classroom behaviour management and the PERFECT will be used to assess knowledge translation. A sample size of 12 is needed in
order to identify meaningful response rates to be used to design and justify a larger study. Because this study will be done on a small sample size, the traditional approach of statistical analysis will not yield interpretable results. As there are three outcomes, the differentiated response patterns are of interest; thus a “person-based” approach will be used.

*Contribution:* This pilot study will generate knowledge about occupational performance coaching as a supplement to professional development to support teachers in their occupational roles when faced with the demands of teaching special needs students.