

No More Classroom Chairs Students Are Sitting On Exercise Balls

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Large, colorful, exercise balls that are used in physical therapy and physical education classes have now replaced traditional chairs in the classroom.

Europe, Canada and United States

Recently, exercise balls have been replacing standard seating in classrooms in Europe and North America. What are the results?

- Students enjoy sitting on them
- Concentration improves
- Excess energy is burned off
- Students become more physically fit
- Builds abs
- Less noise

Mayo Clinic Study

The Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota is known as one of the top medical centers in the world. Mayo Clinic is always looking for ways to decrease [obesity](#) in school children. Bob Nellis of the clinic conducted a study on the benefits of chairless classrooms. "Kids move around. They're supposed to be active." [Heron Marquez Estrada, Star Tribune, [startribune.com](#), Oct. 27, 2007]

The study showed that students with [attention problems](#) could focus better using the exercise balls for chairs. The balls allowed movement without making noise and disturbing others. The children that require extra movement get the opportunity to do so silently.

Zion Lutheran School

A private, parochial school in Carver County, Minnesota, found the exercise balls so successful that the school has replaced all classroom chairs with the balls. Principal Deb Kelzer states, "The kids were really excited to come back to school and sit on those balls. I was hesitant at first but I thought, 'Why not?' There's too much sitting around that goes on." [Heron Marquez Estrada, Star Tribune, [startribune.com](#), Oct. 27, 2007]

Other Minnesota Schools

- Minnewashta Elementary in the Minnetonka Schools District (Minneapolis area) uses the exercise balls in the third grade.
- St. Paul Academy uses the balls in all 7th and 8th grade math classes.
- Summit School has used the stability balls for two years in math classes.

[Heron Marquez Estrada, Star Tribune, [startribune.com](#), Oct. 27, 2007]

Other Chairless Classrooms

This is not the first example of classrooms without chairs. During the 2005-2006 school year, teacher Phil [Rynearson](#) tried an experiment in his 4th grade classroom in Rochester, Minnesota. Working with the Mayo Clinic, Rynearson replaced traditional desks with podium-like furniture in his classroom at Elton Hills Elementary School. Instead of sitting in chairs and working on computers, students stand and move.

Traditional desks are available for students that don't want to stand. However, many just sit on the carpet. The students in this 4th grade classroom wore sensors on their legs to measure how many calories are being burned during a school day. The data was monitored by The Mayo Clinic. [msnbs.msn.com, March 28, 2006]

Recess Time Reduced

Since many schools are reducing [recess time](#) to increase reading and math instructional time, using exercise balls or podium-like desks could make up for some of the activity lost. Small children need to move. Boys, especially, need to be active to learn. Schools could select one classroom and try the stability balls or podium tables for one year and monitor any changes. Children who struggle with concentration and excess energy could very well benefit tremendously.

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