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A New Way to Sit in the Classroom

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A Duluth elementary school is moving away from the concept of learning behind an ordinary desk.

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As Joel Runck tells us, teachers at Piedmont really have the ball rolling.

"They help me sit up straight so I don't have an arched back," said Piedmont Second Grader Brady Bastyer, referencing the stability balls.

Think of it as a medicine ball for your brain.

It's called a Wit-Fit stability ball.

At first glance, it's quite a change from old fashioned desks.

Four classrooms at Piedmont were outfitted with the Wit-Fit balls earlier this year.

They have little legs on the bottom to help keep users balanced, and school officials say it took about a month to get used to.

"At first they did a lot of this and had a lot of exaggerated and big movements and now they've learned that they really don't need all those big movements to stay focused," said Amy Bodin, Piedmont second grade teacher.

"Teachers here at Piedmont Elementary say these Wit-Fit balls not only improve posture and classroom performance, but they're also kind of fun," said Joel Runck of the Northlands News Center.

"I do think that they like them because it keeps them focused longer, when they're allowed to move a little bit," said Bodin. "It keeps their blood flow going which improves their thinking and it's shown to increase test scores."

But be wary.

Students say if you start bouncing off the walls, its back to the table and chair.

"If you mess around, and the teacher takes it away, she takes it away for two weeks," said second grader, Ryan Lemker. If you mess around with a substitute, she takes it away for three weeks."

While the rules of use are strict that doesn't mean that the balls are used only for academics.

"They're really fun because you can bounce and you can move side to side and back and forth and we do lots of stretches on them," said second grader Molly Johnson.

More than 80 balls were purchased with a grant of about 25-hundred dollars from the Duluth School District's Parent-Teacher Association.

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