

School Furniture

Unfortunately we are still raising children into "crooked" men and "crooked" women.
To what extent are parents able to help prevent these poor postural developments
which so many children have today?

F. Josephine Wagner, 1938

"Body mechanics" is the application of physical laws to the human body. The bones of the body act as levers or simple machines, with the muscles supplying the force to move them.. therefore, mechanical laws can be applied to body use to aid in performing more and better work with less energy while avoiding strain or injury

We must consider body mechanics in even subtle activities like sitting or standing. Good body management skills in these static postures will enhance efficiency in the dynamic postures we use in more apparent activities.

One of the most tragic oversights made in education today is our failure to properly mold the child. Ill-fitting furniture, poor body mechanics education, and poor modeling from adults causes our children much unnecessary suffering and impairs learning.

Look at your youngsters tonight as they sit reading or studying. Are their backs straight? If they're leaning over work on desk or table, do they lean from the hips? Or does the spine seem to collapse at a point just below the shoulders, giving the child, whom you know to be perfectly normal, a slightly hunchbacked appearance?

Gladys Denny Shultz, 1937

Posture can be defined as "Any position in which the body resides." As we are always in motion, even when we appear to be perfectly still, posture is actually a fluid concept. Good posture is a series of shifts in position that make it possible for us to operate with no useless expenditure of energy, permitting optimal function of the entire body including the organs.

From a social perspective, a person with good posture and who moves gracefully projects poise, confidence, and dignity. From a mechanical standpoint, in good posture the bones and joints are in position to take the stress of weight and movement, and the musculature is firmly balanced to hold the boy organs in place. In poor posture the bones are out of line and muscles and ligaments take more strain than nature intended. Besides being unattractive, faulty posture may cause fatigue, muscular strain, postural deformities, and pain. In some cases, poor posture affects the position and functioning of vital organs, particularly those of the abdominal region.

If steps are taken to correct malalignment or structural deviation,
the individual involved will not only be protected against injury,
but the efficiency of his performance will improve up to maximum capacity.

Charles Lowman, 1958



Today's school and home desks may be contributing to the common postural deformities we see today in our children and eventually adults. The increased number of websites dealing with furniture and performance leaves no doubt that learning is certainly impacted by body position. Sites such as <http://www.zackback.com/healthy.htm> which deals with the specific postural needs of women, are becoming more common every day. Historical literature clearly suggests that body mechanics influence emotion and cognition.

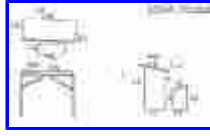


Children will instinctively tilt their chairs forward into a knees-downward position to relieve back stress, and a flat desk creates even further problems. Early in life, they are able to comfortably kneel and sit cross legged for extended periods of time, but poor body management skills eventually make them too inflexible to do so. Postural deformities, poor body mechanics and clumsiness are the prices our children pay when we do not attend to their physical development.



Here are a few furniture concepts that address the ergonomics issue. For source information, contact [Dr. Thomas](#) at IHPRA. The seiza bench below is also an interesting and low-tech idea worth exploring.





[Click here for seiza bench measurements
medium adult size
\(Use landscape setting when printing\)](#)

The seiza bench may be made more comfortable by adding a cushion on the seat. You might also consider a wide based desk if it will be used by small children. Contact vendors online with questions concerning proper height. You might want to talk to more than one company.



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Workers with school children have long been impressed with the wretched posture of the average school child. This constitutes one of the commonest of the physical defects noted in every physical examination--in fact, it is almost universal.

Frank Howard Richardson, 1930

A renewed interest in and understanding of posture and body mechanics in education in the late-1920's and throughout the 1930's led to a number of significant publications. Although difficult to find, they are as relevant today as they were then. Here are a few:

- The Pre-School Child and His Posture, Frank Howard Richardson, 1930
- Body Mechanics: Education and Practice, White House Conference on Child Health and Protection, 1932
- School Posture and Seating, Henry Eastman Bennett, 1928

The habitual sitting posture of most people is distinctly bad. A chair conducive to good posture is a rarity. Much of the seating in public buildings and conveyances makes wholesome sitting impossible. School seats, even those designated as hygienic or posture seats, often violate the fundamentals of posture hygiene.

Henry Eastman Bennett, 1928



[Here's a site with another school furniture idea](#)

In light of the prevalence of poor body mechanics amongst the population of the United States and the evidence of the close association between body mechanics and the health and well-being of children, the Subcommittee on Orthopedics and Body Mechanics begs leave

to make the following general recommendations:

1. That steps be taken to inform and persuade the public of the importance of good body mechanics to the health and well-being of children.
2. That steps be taken to make it not only possible but compulsory for all the children of the United States to receive instruction in good body mechanics.
3. That steps be taken to provide opportunity for all the children of the United States exhibiting poor body mechanics to receive instruction in methods of attaining good body mechanics.

***Report of the Subcommittee on Orthopedics and Body Mechanics--
White House Conference on Child Health and Protection, 1932***

[HOME](#)