

Four Years and Counting

Students have been sitting on stability balls in my classroom for the past four years. I can honestly say that implementing the use of stability balls has been one of the best educational decisions that I have ever made. I can't imagine students sitting only on chairs for the entire year. I have a blatant reminder of the negative behaviors that children exhibit while sitting on chairs at the beginning of each school year. I start the school year with children sitting on chairs. Even though many of my students have had the opportunity of sitting on stability balls in previous grades, I feel it is important for students to go through the training and "earn" the privilege of being able to sit on the ball. Standing in front of my classroom during the training weeks is the only affirmation I need to continue using stability balls. Students are leaning back on their chairs, sitting on their knees, slouching in their chairs, and placing their heads on their desks. I can't complete the training quick enough! It is a joyful day when I am able to stack the chairs and push them out in the hallway to be taken away and put into storage.

I have witnessed numerous benefits of students sitting on stability balls. Students are more focused, are able to attend longer and are less distracted because they are able to quietly bounce and move during instruction. I am able to observe the behavioral differences that occur when students have to deflate their stability ball because of breaking a rule. Sitting on stability balls in my classroom is a privilege. We write the rules and consequences as a class, students sign a contract and the contract is sent home. Communication is very clear about what is permitted and what is not permitted. There are no warnings. If students break a rule, the stability ball is deflated for 2 weeks. One year I had a little boy who was very "energetic" and clearly benefited from sitting on a stability ball. His parents were extremely supportive of the program and inquired about purchasing a ball to use at home. One day he broke a rule and had to deflate his stability ball. I knew it was going to be a very LONG 2 weeks for him and me. The change in his behavior was unbelievable. He couldn't complete his work, distracted others and talked nonstop. I received reports from the specialists about his disruptive behavior in gym, music and art. I even received a note from his parents about his difficulties completing homework. After 2 weeks of torture for all of us, he was able to inflate his stability ball and the negative behaviors disappeared. He needed the stability ball as

an outlet for his "energy". It truly made a difference for him and does for many other students.

Sitting on stability balls not only improves students focus and concentration, it also strengthens core muscles and improves posture. It is a wonderful sight to see students sitting around the classroom with such perfect posture! I can also note the difference in my posture and core during the school year. I use a stability ball chair with wheels and can feel the difference when the school year starts after not sitting on the ball all summer.

Stability balls have changed the way students in my classroom attend, behave, and think. They are integral part of increased student motivation and success. I can't imagine a school year without them!