

WittFitt Program of Enhanced Learning



Requested Funding: \$817.00

Grade Level: 1st-5th Grade

1. Project Overview

My proposed project is for the WittFitt Program of enhanced learning. It rethinks the traditional classroom seating using ergonomically correct stability balls as chairs instead. WittFitt will transform a regular class of fidgety students having difficulty concentrating into one with students actively listening, concentrating, and learning more, thanks to the increased blood flow to the brain. WittFitt will enhance the entire school curriculum through “active sitting” with little to no disturbance in the classroom as it provides a child’s need for movement (accomplished by physically balancing on the ball).

Brain research has shown that there is a link between movement and academic performance. Sitting on the ball makes one sit up straighter, increases blood flow to both sides of the brain making learning easier and helping students retain what is learned longer. The use of ball seating has and can be used as a motivational factor for children, as well as making learning fun. These benefits compound into an over all increase in self esteem as motivation becomes intrinsic and student’s efforts in the classroom begin to pay off. Teachers integrate the stability ball into the classroom and school environment to enhance learning, in combination with offering an effective tool for the physical education setting. Teachers receive the WittFitt “Having a Ball” Manuel (PE Reference Guide provided for the physical educator) containing lessons to prepare students to sit on the ball as a chair. The comprehensive program leads the teacher through preparatory stages and effective implementation, with lifetime support/consultation. Students receive a series of lessons including: benefits of sitting on the stability ball, the importance of posture as it relates to the spine, classroom ergonomics, as well as, proper safety, use and care of the stability ball. The WittFitt program will be integrated into the language arts curriculum through journaling and letter writing (Pen Pals from another school who use the program). It will also be easily integrated into the sciences by using them as a hands on tool in learning anatomy-basic bones and muscles. The students will be able to name what bones and supporting tissues are used in each exercise with the ball. We can also teach brain structures and Central Nervous System CNS – how it works and the effects of using the stability balls on the brain & CNS. In doing so, students are engaged and

empowered with a sense of ownership and a greater understanding of anatomy, language arts and lifelong wellness. The system will be further integrated into science by teaching scientific processes and experiment techniques. We will have students complete a pre-self evaluation and chart the classroom responses. Later, after WittFitt has been implemented for a while, we will ask them to take a post-self evaluation and chart their responses. This will teach students how to collect, analyze, and report scientific data. Once students are sitting on the ball on a daily basis, brief movements, stretches, and exercise breaks will be incorporated to allow students a mental and physical break which will in turn help them focus and learn in a more effective manner. Teachers will also be able to use that time to ask a few anatomy facts and assess what is being learned. John J. Ratey M.D., associate clinical professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School specializes in ADHD and minor mood disorder research. In his books he describes exercise as the brains natural Ritalin and Zoloft and states that the positive effects of exercise can last up to 12 hours.

2. Benefit to Students

We will be able to purchase 25 balance balls that can be used with all 400 students in 1st-5th grades. It is an innovative learning strategy that we hope to eventually bring wellness into all classrooms/school as a whole. WittFitt is one of the newest most innovative ideas/activities providing a multi-purpose tool that integrates and enhances classroom learning and Physical Education. Research shows that the cerebellum (controls balance and movement) and the prefrontal cortex (controls memory, language, emotions, social skills, and attention) are connected. If the cerebellum is off, then cognitive function suffers. The WittFitt system will activate the students cerebellum cross the midline of the brain and enlist more parts of the brain thus enhancing and developing students attention systems while increasing memory, blood flow, and learning. In addition, teachers love it due to the enormous positive impact it can have on student behavior and learning. WittFitt takes what we know about the brain and learning and makes it happen in the classroom. For example, short movement breaks, exercises, and stretch sessions are conducted during the day giving all students the ‘physical break needed to refocus and reenergize for the task at hand, impacting them in the cognitive, psychomotor, and learning domains. Live long learning benefits to students include:

- Helps learn scientific methods
- Enhances language arts through journaling and Pen Pal program
- Enhances the learning of basic anatomy
- Helps students understand the brain and the CNS
- Assists in improving posture
- Enhances attention and concentration
- Improves learning through movement
- Incorporates wellness into the school day
- Promotes “active sitting” – with little to no disturbance
- Improves blood flow to all parts of the body, especially the brain
- Strengthens core (postural) and back muscle groups
- Improves balance and coordination
- Adjusts of customized fit to the individual student

3. Goals and Objectives

There are numerous possibilities of lessons and objectives that could be accomplished while using WittFitt. The main goals are as follows:

- Improve language arts performance through Journaling and writing letters
Students will connect with a classroom in another state, who is using the WittFitt program, as pen pals. Students will also be presented many opportunities to journal about their use and the effects the WittFitt program has had on them.
- Improve & enhance student's ability to learn basic anatomy by using the stability balls as hands on tools.
Students will be able to do a stretch or exercise with the ball and be able to name the skeletal and supportive tissues involved in the movement.
- Students will learn scientific process-specifically on gathering and reporting data. Students will complete pre-surveys and chart the classes' responses in graph form using a smart board. After the WittFitt program is implemented for some time, the students will take a post-survey and chart the classes' responses again. Students will then be taught how to compare the pre and post data.
- Enhance knowledge of basic neurological structures.
Students will learn about the different parts of the brain and how it interacts with the Central Nervous System CNS as a whole. They will be able to state what is happening in the brain and CNS as they use the balls.
- Enhance and improve the learning environment in the classroom.
Students will demonstrate the ability to stay focused and energized during writing exercises throughout the day by being given the opportunity to move and stretch during class on their stability ball in a controlled and structured manner.
- Provide ergonomically correct seating that promotes better posture and comfort allowing them to stay on task longer with more learning taking place.
Students will be measured to fit the appropriate size stability ball based on their height and other body dimensions such that the knees are slightly lower than the hips. Student desks will then be adjusted as needed to provide the student with a working surface that is height appropriate for optimal use (elbows are to rest in a relaxed position at 90 degrees and parallel to the floor).
- Promote wellness in all areas of students' academic day.
Students will gain a greater understanding of why their personal health and well-being is essential to learning and growing. The concepts learned through the lesson will promote lifelong wellness.

Objectives in the Core Curriculum:

Scientific Vocabulary- anatomy (naming human body parts), bones, muscles and their groups, scientific method, CNS
Language Arts- writing journals and letters, evaluations, and learning different writing styles
Reading- AR, group or partner reading with the stability balls

Math- length, proportions, estimating

Physical and Motor Skill Objectives:

Balance
Flexibility
Posture
Muscle Strength

Health Enhancing Activity Objectives:

Promote physical activity among students
Promote lifetime health enhancing activities
Core muscle strength
Increased blood flow to body and brain

Objectives in the Personal/Social and Academic Domains:

Trust
Autonomy
Cooperation
Teamwork
Decrease in classroom disturbances
Willpower
Concentration
Perseverance
Self-esteem
Confidence

The following are general objectives that could be part of any lesson using the WittFitt system. The students will be able to:

- Discuss the meaning of cooperation.
- Write in a journal about their experience using WittFitt stability balls.
- Name muscle groups involved and used when integrating the ball in lessons and Physical Education.
- Name basic bones making up the skeletal structures.
- Write a report about the use of the balls while learning basic paragraph structures and research techniques.
- Explain basic neurological structures, how the central nervous system works, & how using the balls effects that.
- Learn basic health and exercise techniques that will last a lifetime, including nutrition and reading labels.
- Show the teacher correct portion sizes and basic measurement nutrition.

The students will also be able to:

- Increase core muscle strength over a period of 2 months.
- Discuss with the class the challenges and benefits of WittFitt.
- Compare and Contrast various types of course implications on body strength and posture.
- Perform various skills in conjunction with learning and moving.

- Demonstrate acceptance of individual differences.
- Utilize personal and general space appropriately.
- Draw or illustrate a personal experience on WittFitt
- Improve on storing and recalling academic information worked on in class.



4. Procedures

The WittFitt program of learning will be a mobile tool for the classroom. Students will learn to use their stability balls in the Physical Education class for further use and learning teachers will integrate the use of the balls into core curriculum. The only materials needed for implementation will be the initial cost of stability balls and air pumps. Teachers receive the WittFitt “Having a Ball” Manuel (PE Reference Guide provided for the physical educator) containing lessons to prepare students to sit on the ball as a chair. The comprehensive program leads the teacher through preparatory stages and effective implementation, with lifetime support/consultation. Teachers will be able to instruct students on proper maintenance of the balls for maximum length of use. This program is easy to implement with minimal on going costs. Though the balls are extremely durable our school’s PTA is very supportive of this program and have agreed to provide funding if any of the balls become damaged & need to be replaced. The use and impact of the WittFitt program will be enormous and invaluable to the school and it’s students. The program will be implemented upon notification of the grant award and will continue to the end of the school year. We will be able to implement it again using the same materials at the beginning of each year. It will be an ongoing project throughout each school year.

5. Evaluation

Methods of judging success:

- Students will complete pre/post surveys prior to implementation then again after sitting on the balls for the school year, they will learn to chart that data, compare it, and report it.

- Teacher observations and note taking will be used throughout the school year. For example, rating the students ‘time on task’ before and after use of the stability balls...
- Pre and post testing of the students in the areas of: language arts, anatomy, scientific processes, & CNS knowledge. Evaluation of team teaching experiences with the integration of other subject areas. Also in the areas of attention, posture, classroom environment.

The PE teacher, classroom teacher, and the school counselor will complete or guide the evaluations. WittFitt also provides additional materials to conduct pre and post testing.

6. Budget

Quantity	Item	Supplier	Unit Cost	Total
25	Burst resistant, latex free stability balls with legs	WittFitt LLC	\$29.28	\$732.00
1	Double action pump inflate/deflate	WittFitt LLC	\$20.00	\$20.00
1	Shipping Cost	WittFitt LLC	\$65.00	\$65.00

Grand Total: \$817.00

We hope this grant sample was helpful for your school. Please contact WittFitt anytime if you need assistance from our team to write YOUR grant!

~ Lisa Witt