

The Standing Desk Conversion Kit and The FootFidget® Foot Rest

Students Stand Tall for Education: Standing Desks Poised to Revolutionize Classrooms of the Future

The Situation:

Fifth graders who can't sit still in Tom Auld's Naperville classroom can choose an adjustable-height desk that allows them to decide how they want to learn: They can stand, sit on a stool, or balance and move their feet on an innovative new product called The Standing Desk Conversion Kit and The FootFidget® Foot Rest.

Auld, a teacher at Naper Elementary School, is among the fast-growing ranks of educators and scientists across the country who are embracing this surprising fidget-friendly mindset that invites energy-bursting students to seek freedom from the confines of sitting. The result: Students are taking a stand for their education, literally. The idea is that movement, when channeled properly, can enhance learning. Standing students stay dutifully and beautifully on task.

"Giving kids who have a lot of energy the freedom to stand up has made a huge difference in my classroom," said Auld.

A champion for **The Standing Desk Conversion Kit and The FootFidget® Foot Rest** when she discovered them during the last several years of her 18-year tenure as an occupational therapist for Community Consolidated School District 15 in Palatine, IL, Linda Gilles- Zirbes especially remembers the dramatic impact they had on one student. He was a first grade boy who was autistic who had serious learning challenges.

"I tried everything for this boy who was always slumped over on his desk, very fidgety and who just couldn't stay upright," she recalls. "When he finally got the standing desk and foot fidget, there was a significant transformation. One day I was in the hallway and he came running up to me thanking me for his new desk and saying 'it helps me so much.' My heart just jumped for joy for this little boy who wanted to learn so much."

At the same time, with mounting evidence that sitting all day at work is bad for you, there's a movement underway in corporate America for "worker-friendly" offices, letting workers stand, replacing ill-fitting chairs with seat parts that move,

and marketing flexibility -- not to mention fidgetability – as standards for the next generation of workplace.

There's a science to this now-exploding classroom and workplace transformation and it is called ergonomics. In simple terms, it is the science of making the school and the workplace, healthy, comfy and efficient.

The Science behind the Standing Desk Conversion Kit with FootFidget® Foot Rest:

In classroom settings, researchers are studying how this focused movement can enhance learning. At the University of Puget Sound, researchers studied the impact of The Standing Desk Conversion Kit with FootFidget® Foot Rest on a classroom of fourth graders. Their new study on this patented Standing Desk Conversion Kit and FootFidget® Foot Rest found this standing desk with foot fidgets “significantly increased the student’s engagement in their school work,” according to Sarah Lewis, OTR/L, a registered and licensed Occupational Therapist, and co-author of the study. In the study, “The Effect of Dynamic Seating on Classroom Behavior for Students in a General Education Classroom,” only two of the 13 fourth graders were special needs students, Lewis said. The results of the study were presented at the American Occupational Therapy Association Annual Conference in 2013.

In a separate study, scientists also are discovering standing desks help kids burn more calories, which is important at a time when experts are seeking creative ways to combat the fast-growing incidence of childhood obesity, which has more than doubled in the last 30 years, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

To that effort, **The Standing Desk Conversion Kit and The FootFidget® Foot Rest** has proven to be powerful tools for students with Sensory Processing Disorders (SPDs), said Lewis. According to the Sensory Processing Disorder Foundation, an estimated five to 15 percent of Americans are affected by a SPD, which may cause children in the classroom to fidget, be inattentive and easily distracted, she added.

Clearly the results support what school-based occupational and physical therapists have known for some time. They have embraced these creative classroom environmental changes as a way to incorporate special needs students into general classrooms. This push for integration came with the enactment of the No Child Left Behind legislation, which placed increasing demands on schools nationwide to improve the academic performance of students and to place students with special needs in the least restrictive learning environments.

Together this growing body of evidence, along with the powerful real-life cases going on in classrooms like Auld's and Gilles- Zirbes' across the country, are significant because they point to moving away from standard seating in American classrooms, Lewis and other experts agree.

Simultaneously in the corporate setting, standing desks and foot fidgets also are changing the environmental landscape inspired by studies pointing to their health and efficiency benefits.

Behind-the-Scenes: Who is Driving this Classroom and Workplace Ergonomic Transformation?

Inspired by their work with special needs students, **The Standing Desk Conversion Kit and The FootFidget® Foot Rest** was created and patented by Kathy Spinabella and Robin Singer, two physical therapists who worked in Barrington, IL Dist. 220. They were constantly on the lookout for creative classroom environmental solutions for special needs students who couldn't seem to sit still. That's when they witnessed the profound impact simply letting kids stand and have a foot fidget to release their extra energy had on their learning.

But there was a drawback. The potential problem: the cost. Standing desks for schools typically range between \$300 and \$500, which Spinabella and Singer believed, would make them too pricey for many school districts. That's when they got the idea to create a conversion kit. The Kit recycles a regular school desk and turns it into a standing desk. The Standing Desk Conversion Kit and The FootFidget® Foot Rest costs a fraction of the price of a new desk at \$104.99.

In 2010, Spinabella and Singer launched Classroom Seating Solutions, www.classroomseatingsolutions.com, with the mission to provide innovative, cost effective seating solutions for students that are ergonomically correct and that will allow for peak task performance. They also wanted to bring increased awareness to the importance of customized seating for improved productivity.

"It is so powerful to watch the transformation of students who really want to learn, but who just couldn't focus confined to sitting in a desk," said Singer. "Suddenly they are focused and so happy learning."

Co-founder Spinabella, a Palatine resident, agrees: "With all the benefits from increased focus to enhanced learning, the standing desk is a wonderful new solution that has the potential to become a fixture in the classroom."

Conclusion: These days Auld and teachers across the country are rethinking the mantra, "students please be seated." He has three standing desks in the back of his Naperville classroom that are rotated between his "more active" students.

“I’ll find four or five students standing and leaning on the desks with all that bottled up energy they need to get rid of transferred to their heads. They are focused and they are concentrating on their school work. The kids love the desks and they are in constant demand.”

Researchers agree.

“From our standpoint the standing desks and foot fidgets can be the tools of the future for not only special needs students, but in all classrooms,” said University of Puget Sound’s Lewis, who also uses the foot fidget in her occupational therapy work with the elderly at a skilled nursing facility. “It’s helping the seniors get more exercise,” she said.

About The Standing Desk Conversion Kit and The FootFidget® Foot Rest

The Standing Desk Conversion Kit and The FootFidget® Foot Rest was created by Kathy Spinabella, Palatine, IL and Robin Singer, Newburyport, MA, school physical therapists who discovered the therapeutic impact of standing and fidgeting while working with students in the Barrington District 220 School District. Together they founded Classroom Seating Solutions (<http://classroomseatingsolutions.com/>) because they saw firsthand how important attention, focus and physical comfort are for creating a learning environment for students, especially for those with special needs. Their experience has shown that when a student is in an ergonomically correct position, the student's performance will improve in the classroom and their whole school experience will be enhanced