

Halifax school uses stability balls to calm kids



CTV.ca News Staff

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Students at a Halifax school can't sit still this year and that's just the way their teacher wants it.

Staff have come up with a unique solution to a common classroom problem: fidgety, distracted and inattentive kids. They've traded in the plastic desk chairs for something that might surprise you -- rubber balls.

Students at a Halifax school have traded in their plastic desk chairs for something that might surprise you -- rubber balls.

And what may sound like a recipe for disaster has been a big bouncy success.

For nine-year old Moira Clark, school work has never been so fun. "It's comfortable," she said. "Really comfortable."

Stability balls have long been popular in fitness clubs. But, they made their way into the classroom when Grade 4 teacher Cyrille Deveau was trying to solve a problem that has plagued many a classroom.

"I found during the winter when it's too cold to go outside the kids were really hyper," he said.

With nowhere to channel their pent up energy, Deveau found focusing on school work was a challenge for some children. So he approached gym teacher Regis Belanger, who remembered hearing about a program in Quebec where stability balls were used to help kids with autism.

"Because the ball is round they have to keep the balance, so they put some energy on the ball instead of moving all the time and looking everywhere," Belanger said.

While outfitting an entire class with balls cost nearly \$1,000, it appears to be paying off.

"Sitting on a ball is more relaxing," one student said. "And it kind of makes me concentrate more on work than a chair does."

"I think getting better grades because of it. And I listen better," another said.

The balls also promote better posture and, at a time when many kids are battling obesity, there is another bouncy benefit -- the kids can burn off some calories.

"We're trying more and more to get them active, so that's great."

If all goes well the school hopes to buy more balls, expanding the experiment.

With a report by CTV's John Vennavally-Rao in Halifax

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