**Desk Posture and Seating\***

Be sure the student’s chair and desk fit appropriately. Posture should be a comfortable upright sitting position as described below.

* The student’s feet should be able to rest flat on the floor, with the thighs parallel to the floor. A phone book can be placed under the student’s feet as a footrest.
* The chair depth should be about an inch shorter than the student’s thighs. The student’s back should touch the back of the chair, and the knees and hips should be at a 90 degree angle.
* The desk height should be about two inches above the level of the elbows when the student is in a sitting position. The arms should be able to rest comfortably on the desktop without hiking of the shoulders.

Many students sit in chairs and at desks that are too big for them. This puts them at a mechanical disadvantage and makes writing more difficult and tiring. If students are sitting on their feet or kneeling in their chairs, check to see if their chairs are the right height.

If there are ***spatial difficulties or problems with copying***, position the desk so the student is facing the chalkboard during handwriting lessons.

For students who have ***difficulty maintaining a good sitting posture*** because they are frequently slouching, or because they are constantly moving, the following interventions are suggested.

* Allow for frequent movement around the room. For instance, have supplies at various retrieval points so the student has opportunities throughout the day to get up and move.
* Offer frequent movement breaks or stretch breaks between sitting and writing activities.
* Allow the student to change positions frequently. This could include lying or sitting on the floor during some activities and using wedges, pillows, and bean bag chairs to make this more appealing. Using a clipboard can help to stabilize the paper when in these alternative positions.
* Allow the student to work in different locations in the room such as at a counter where she/he can stand.
* To give the student’s chair a little more freedom of movement, get 2-3 tennis balls, slit them open, and stick them on the bottom of the chair legs. This will make the chair slightly uneven and allow the student to rock back and forth slightly without the danger of tipping the chair over.
* “Move ‘N Sit cushions” or “wiggle seats” are inflatable, wedge-shaped cushions that can be placed on the seat of the student’s chair or on the floor. They allow for movement and also position a student in a forward-inclined position, if the narrow part of the wedge is at the front of the chair, which discourages slouching.
* “Sit balls” are large balls that students can sit on at their desks while doing writing tasks. The balls allow for constant shifts in position and encourage an upright posture. *However, set up classroom rules for the use of the balls before introducing them.* Try creating the rules by having a class discussion to help with student buy-in for the rules.
* Make sure that your lesson plans allow for periodic movement. Hands-on activities and small group discussions or projects provide more freedom of movement than lectures and seat work. Also, incorporate movement into the lesson plan. For example, when talking about patterns, have the students clap their hands or tap their heads or shoulders to a rhythm that matches the pattern.

If you suspect that ***problems with*** ***visual perception or visual acuity*** might be contributing to behaviors such as bringing the head very close to the paper, providing a slanted surface might be helpful. A “slantboard” can be made by taping or clipping 2-3 binders together and using duct tape to secure a clipboard to the top. Non-skid plastic material, such as material used to line drawers, can be placed on the bottom to keep it from slipping on the desktop. Often slantboards for special needs students can be provided by your school occupational therapist.

**\*** Information on desk posture adapted from Eileen Vreeland, OTR