



Lead, Serve, Support

January 29, 2019

Ergonomics... for Teachers and Paraeducators

There's more to it than how to position your computer monitor and adjust your chair!

Throughout the day, teachers and paraeducators perform a variety of tasks which can place stress on the back shoulders, arms, hands, and wrists and result in a repetitive stress injury (RSI).

Remember to THINK ERGONOMICS when:

Teaching/working with students -

- ✓ **Be aware of your posture** - good posture maintains the natural curve of your spine. Remember mom's warning... "Don't slouch - stand up straight!"
- ✓ **Alternate between sitting and standing** when possible.
- ✓ **Lean when and where you can** on a solid support to reduce fatigue when standing for prolonged periods.
- ✓ **Use a podium or standing height desk for reading books/documents to class.**
- ✓ **Use an adult sized chair which properly supports your back and legs** whenever possible as opposed to using furniture designed for small children.
- ✓ **Avoid awkward postures -**
 - **Don't bend over a child's desk** to help them.
 - Use a portable stool or pull up a chair to sit beside students instead of bending, squatting or kneeling for prolonged periods.
 - **Avoid overreaching or stretching above shoulder level** to write on and clean white boards. Position yourself directly in front of the area you are working on, stepping sideways as needed.



Lifting/carrying books and other items -

Carrying heavy books and other supplies to and from your room can take a toll on shoulders and back.

- ✓ **Use a backpack which distributes the weight equally to both shoulders** rather than bags which put all the weight onto one shoulder.
- ✓ Better yet... **invest in a rolling book bag, tote, or small cart.**
- ✓ **Make a habit of ASKING FOR HELP** when lifting students, heavy objects or moving equipment.
- ✓ **Always use good body mechanics**, especially when lifting or helping a student up off the ground.



Throughout the day -

- ✓ **Take frequent micro-pauses** to stretch your back, increase blood flow, and relax your muscles.
- ✓ Consider adding 1-2 minute movement breaks every 30 minutes to your lesson plans.
- ✓ **Keep a water bottle on your desk** to help you stay hydrated and encourage walking in order to fill it up.
- ✓ **Take time to get to know your students, their behaviors, and your surroundings.**
- ✓ Whenever possible, **don't turn your back to students**, especially those who like to run, grab, hit or strike.

Selecting shoes to wear -

Choose **comfortable, sensible and low-heeled shoes** that will support your archs, cushion, and protect your feet.

Organizing cupboards/supply rooms:

- ✓ Store **lighter items on top shelves.**
- ✓ **Avoid lifting/stacking heavy items above shoulder height** whenever possible.

Ergonomics... It's about WORKING SMARTER, not harder, and staying in your COMFORT ZONE!

Email safety@ncesd.org to request a free ergonomic assessment with a NCESD Loss Control Specialist.

SAFETY MATTERS



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