

### Dynamic seating for students with Disabilities in school settings

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#### Support Needed

Some children with disability may have difficulty with maintaining attention and engagement during instruction.

#### Proposed Intervention

The use of dynamic seating such as therapy or stability balls, wobble stools, or other forms of seating that provide the opportunity for movement has been suggested as a way to increase engagement.

#### Theoretical Rationale

Some children, for example those on the autism spectrum or with attention problems may have difficulty staying on-task. It has been suggested that these children may use movement to regulate their sensory systems and maintain optimal arousal. Dynamic seating allows for movement without children being out of seat. Others have suggested that the movement alternatives available from dynamic seating are a reinforcer for in seat behaviour.

#### Research Evidence

Two reviews (Gochenor & Poskey, 2017; Rollo et al., 2019) report mixed results. There is some evidence that in-seat behaviour, academic engagement and attention may be improved for some students, but there were no clear effects on on-task behaviour, disruptive behaviour or academic achievement. Rollo et al. (2019) assessed study quality as low to moderate. More recent research has also reported mixed results.

#### Conclusion

Given the mixed results and the lack of high-quality research, dynamic seating cannot be recommended for general use. If teachers wish to try dynamic seating as an antecedent intervention for individual students, they should consider carefully what improved behaviours they expect and monitor their occurrence. There is some evidence that if only some students use dynamic seating, it may be a distraction for students using chairs. Therapy balls may be best used in a base that prevents movement of the ball but still permits bouncing by the child. Stability stools are also an option that allows the child to move while the stool remains in one place.

#### Verdict

Dynamic seating may benefit some individuals through improving in-seat behaviour and engagement, but cannot be recommended as an intervention for whole class use.

#### Relevant References

Gochenour, B., & Poskey, G. A. (2017). Determining the effectiveness of alternative seating systems for students with attention difficulties: A systematic review. *Journal of Occupational Therapy, Schools, & Early Intervention*, 10(3), 284-299. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19411243.2017.1325817>

Rollo, S., Crutchlow, L., Nagpal, T. S., Sui, W., & Prapavessis, H. (2019). The effects of classroom-based dynamic seating interventions on academic outcomes in youth: A systematic review. *Learning Environments Research*, 22, 153-171. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10984-018-9271-3>