

Pupils ditch chairs to stand at desks for healthier learning option

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A Melbourne school is taking a stand against childhood obesity and idleness by offering the world's first standing classroom, which may also improve learning.

A grade six class at Mont Albert Primary School has been fitted with height-adjustable desks to allow the pupils to sit or stand, as part of an experiment by Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute researchers.

Since the desks were introduced two months ago, most students have taken the opportunity to stand. For the first eight months next year, the standing students will be monitored by a team of scientists keen to know if being upright can improve their health, fitness, learning and memory.

Students will also be fitted with devices to measure how long they spend [sitting](#), with lesson plans overhauled to cut down the time students are idle.

The institute's head of physical activity research, Prof David Dunstan, said the long hours sitting at school were a hazard for children he hoped to overcome.

"It is a twofold process: changing the environment and also training the teacher in how to administer this in a new and innovative way," Prof Dunstan said.

"When they stand up they are engaging more muscles that are likely to

be of great benefit for keeping the blood flowing throughout their body and reducing the level of fatigue.

"If we can ingrain good health behaviours in early age we know they track into adulthood."

Previous studies have shown students spent two-thirds of a [school](#) day sitting, and prolonged childhood sitting can contribute to the onset of such diseases such as Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and obesity.

Mont Albert Primary School principal Sharon Saitlik said students, parents and teachers had embraced the project

"Those boys that can tend to fidget and get distracted easily have been more engaged," Ms Saitlik said. "Even though they are only standing in preference to sitting it gives them the space they sometimes require."

If comparisons show benefits for the cardiovascular health, learning and memory of the standing [students](#) over a traditional class, Baker researchers hope to progress the pilot study into a much larger trial to see if can have an impact on lessons across Australia.

Provided by Baker IDI

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