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 EDU 624
 Computer lab Evaluation

I work at a pre-k to 8th grade school with one computer lab. Scheduling a time to use the computer lab is a challenge in itself. A challenge that we in the lower primary grades often do not succeed with. Unfortunately, the mobile laptop cart has been cut from the budget yet again this year. The upper grades are given priority in accessing the lab. They have classes that begin once a week in 3rd grade and increase to twice a week in 6th grade. Plus there is time throughout the day blocked out for 7th and 8th grade students to write and research reports and homework.

Scheduling aside, there are very few programs, most inappropriate, available in the lab for our kindergarteners to use. We did manage to get down to the lab where we were able to play with Microsoft paint (which is very difficult for many kindergarteners) or go to educational sites that we use in our classroom. Here is a side by side comparison of our computer lab for 8th graders, the primary users, and kindergarteners based on the OSHA Ergonomic Solutions: Computer Workstation eTool.

8 th graders	Kindergarteners
Working Postures	
<p>The workstations in the lab are fairly adequate for the average 8th grader. Most students work comfortably in the lab. A few shorter students appear to be shrugging their shoulders to maintain their shoulder and upper arm posture perpendicular to the floor. The biggest problem seems to be with wrist and hand alignment.</p>	<p>The workstations in the lab are not sufficient for kindergarteners. The gross difference in size between 8th graders and kindergarteners cannot be accommodated by fixed position furniture.</p>
Seating	
<p>The seating is not adjustable for</p>	<p>Many of the kindergarteners</p>

<p>height and neither are the workstations. This leaves the students with short torsos shrugging their shoulders to maintain the proper arm posture. Making some type of booster seat available could alleviate this problem.</p> <p>The lumbar support is adjustable front to back, but not up and down, so the placement is not ideal for many students.</p> <p>The top of the stool offers minimal padding and is not wide enough for several obese students. They must use standard school chairs.</p>	<p>cannot reach their feet to the ground until after spring break. At the same time, their upper bodies cannot maintain the correct posture because their upper arms must be out straight to reach the keyboard and the mouse. A combination of booster seats and foot rests are needed to get them in proper position.</p>
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Keyboard/Input Device

<p>The keyboards are "sunken" into the desktops or the workstations. There is a 3/8" ridge that runs around the border of the workstations. I observed a number of the students resting their arms on this ridge, causing their wrists to be bent up while typing. Although the tech teacher did walk around the class and remind students to keep their wrists straight, wrist rests would be more effective in maintaining the proper posture.</p>	<p>The kindergarteners experience the same "sunken" keyboard problems. In addition, in many cases the students' arms are so awkwardly positioned to begin with the "sunken" keyboard is the least of their problems. That being said, wrist rests would be a benefit to the kindergarteners if other posture problems were addressed first.</p>
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Monitor

<p>The monitors are excellent quality and positioned appropriately for all 8th grade students.</p>	<p>The monitors are the most adjustable of the workstations' components and fine for kindergarteners.</p>
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Work Area	
The workstations provide ample space for legs and feet.	There is plenty of space for foot rests for kindergarteners, but none are available.
Accessories	
The document holders that were mounted on the side of the monitors have been removed by the tech teacher. They are available upon request, but no one was observed using one. There are no wrist rests. (See Keyboard/Input Device)	Booster seats and foot rests would help to lessen the posture problems due to non-adjustable workstations. (See Seating) Wrist rests could benefit kindergarteners and 8 th graders.
General	
The workstations are molded plastic and not adjustable. (See Seating) The computers and printers have recently been upgraded and are well maintained. The flow of the computer lab allows for movement and breaks as needed.	(See General for 8 th graders)

In conclusion, our tech staff has worked within the minimal budget provided to them to put together a computer lab suited better for the average upper middle-schooler than the average primary student. Because scheduling dictates that the computer lab is primarily available to the middle school demographic, OSHA's eTool would deem it adequate. The tech staff is now lobbying for a mobile laptop cart to address some of the scheduling and ergonomic issues.

Resource

OSHA Ergonomic Solutions: Computer Workstation eTool.

<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/computerworkstations/index.html>