

Classroom Makeover Improves Student Outcomes



Tamara Anderson and Breanna Halvorson show off the new classroom furniture.

Standing tables and wobble chairs arrive at Lake Agassiz Coop

If you were an educator that wanted to make your classroom more conducive to movement but had limited resources, what would you do? Studies show that students who are active during the day do better academically and have fewer behavioral issues, but limited funding and classroom space can make positive change difficult.

For Scott Masten, Director of Special Education for the Lake Agassiz Special Education Cooperative in Hawley, the answer was to reach out to PartnerSHIP 4 Health's Karen Nitzkowski for advice. With Karen's help, Masten secured funding for two adjustable standing tables and a set of four specialized chairs that allow students to move during class time. He also spearheaded other positive classroom changes, including repainting the walls with more positive colors and discarding unused supplies that made a small classroom feel even smaller and more restricting.

Lake Agassiz Special Education Cooperative is an interagency collaboration that brings together

students with mental health needs and behavioral concerns from the districts of Hawley, Barnesville, Lake Park-Audubon, and Ulen-Hitterdal. They are hosted at Hawley High School, where teachers and social workers address their needs and help them transition back to a traditional classroom.

Early results reveal promising student outcomes

Masten reports that students are eager to use the new furniture. "We've had to establish a bit of a protocol as to who gets the chairs." Working with PS4H also enabled Lake Agassiz to connect with University of Minnesota Extension, which will give students the opportunity to participate in a "Healthy Cooking for Teens" training. The team effort to improve all aspects of the students' wellness is already paying off. "We're off to an excellent year in the interagency program. We've seen a significant reduction in suspensions, attendance is way up, we're not running into the issues we historically have with those types of things," said Masten.

Lake Agassiz's experience shows how simple, conscious changes to the places around us can help make movement a fun and easy part of our day, whether in the classroom, at work, or in the community.

Learn more about PartnerSHIP 4 Health's work in Becker, Clay, Otter Tail and Wilkin counties at <http://partnership4health.org>

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