Taking Care of Yourself As Well as Your Tablet PC

Some excellent ergonomic advice with regard to packing and carrying schoolbags effectively and safely has been provided by Yeong Lee, a physiotherapist with Occupational Injury Management, and Melanie Bonifacio, an occupational therapist with Aon Hewitt.

According to a recently published report, as many as 90% of Australasian school children may be at risk of spinal injury because of the way they carry, and the amount they carry, in their school bags. The observational survey of 346 school children in Adelaide found 80% of them were wearing overfull, bulging bags and 75% of the children were not using any of their bag’s ergonomic features. Putting too much stress on a child’s back at such an important stage of growth and development may cause them injury or negatively affect their physical growth later on in life.

The following are some tips for schoolbag ergonomics safety as both the school and parents work together to support every student’s health and safety:

1. Pack the heaviest, flattest items at the back. Also pack heaviest items at the bottom of the pack and the lightest items up the top as the heavier items can receive better support from your child’s back. Make good use of all the compartments on the pack to distribute things more evenly. Compartmentalisation of the bag helps to keep things more orderly.

2. Adjust and wear both shoulder straps when carrying the schoolbag. While it may be fashionable to sling the backpack on one shoulder, it makes the load harder to bear and increases the risk of injury. Many children also tend to wear their school bag “low”, resting against the lower lumbar region. Tighten the straps to bring the top of the school bag up to the mid or upper back just below the shoulders, and ideally let the bottom rest on the hips/pelvis. Remember – the closer their backpack is to their body, the less strain they’ll feel. Using the waist belt also assists in this regard.

3. Bend using both knees when lifting and carrying the backpack. Encourage students to use their legs to lift and place their bag on their backs. Remind them never to bend over at the waist whilst wearing or lifting a heavy school bag as this easily causes injury.

4. Minimise the amount carried to only what is need for that day. Remind or assist your child to organise their subject materials regularly. Keep only what is required in the bag rather than what can fit into the bag. Eliminating old papers, notices and unnecessary material can also cut down on clutter and unnecessary weight. Educate children that keeping random scraps of paper in the bottom of their bag, broken pencils and other redundant items in their bags can add more weight. Clean them out!

While laptops create new learning opportunities and possibilities, it is important to integrate them safely. Creating and maintaining good habits takes practice and time. Take a moment to reflect with your child about how their schoolbag is packed and carried to adopt a few changes to optimise a safe and healthy approach.

Tablet PCs in the Primary Classroom

Individual Tablet PCs in Years 5 and 6, as well as class sets in Years 1 to 4, are being used in many lessons for a wide variety of tasks. Katelyn Cavaliere, our Primary ICT Co-Ordinator, outlines some of the exciting ways in which access to this technology has enhanced the primary curriculum.

The Year 6 HSIE unit on ‘Global Connections’ culminated with the girls researching an Australian organisation that provides aid to developing countries. Using Windows Movie Maker on their Tablet PCs, the girls presented their learning by creating an information video that gave an overview of the organisation’s mission, objectives and role. A combination of voice overs, short videos and still images were utilised to create a short clip that represented the work of the organisation. The girls developed their skills in researching, synthesising and editing appropriate information to produce an engaging, informative video.

Using Wikispaces on their laptops, girls in Year 2 created a virtual museum. As part of the Integrated Studies unit ‘Time and Change’ they collected, described and sequenced various artefacts from their families. They also visited the SCEGGS Archives to learn how SCEGGS girls from the past worked and dressed, as well as how important information about the history of our school community is recorded and stored. Using a timeline to link to various pages within the wiki, they added photos and information about their artefact and visit to the Archives.
Through the use of IT Year 2 were able to collaborate and share their work in a meaningful and interactive way.

In Science and Technology the Year 3 girls explored the unit ‘Moving Pictures’. They had the opportunity to design and make digital animations using a variety of software including Pivot, Kidpix and Flash. Starting in Kidpix the girls created a background by drawing and importing images. They then loaded their backgrounds into Pivot where they could add and animate their figures, in this way using the two programs to create one animation. The new Tablet PCs were fabulous for this unit as the girls were able to use the stylus to draw detailed pictures and add interesting features to their work. With much excitement they also participated in an Animation Day, a highlight of the unit where the girls worked together in groups to film and edit their claymations.

In Year 5 this term the Tablet PCs have been used to support their Drama unit. Using the information gathered when researching Antarctica in HSIE, the girls created their own podcasts using a program called Audacity. They were required to record their audio, import music, add effects and edit the final project. Throughout this unit, the girls developed their script writing and vocal presentation skills.

YEAR 10 PERSPECTIVE

This is Year 10 students’ second semester with their Tablet PCs. Here are some further reflections on what the 1:1 Tablet program has contributed to their school day.

Finding the transition to the Tablet PCs quite seamless, Bridget Holloway shares some valuable advice.

“As the first year group to get Tablets we were all very excited to see how different it would be to use them in comparison to what we have done since we started school. It was all very quick and I didn’t have any problems with my Tablet, despite a lot of people complaining that they were too heavy and just added to the load of books we already had. The transition was easy for me, I love using my Tablet, but I know for some people it was harder. Before I used to always lose work, because I’d have it on a USB and it just made it so easy for me to lose things like assignments. With the Tablets, everything is in the same place so it eliminates the chance of losing work. I have really enjoyed using the program OneNote because it certainly made me more organised and also allowed me to communicate better with teachers when it comes to feedback from work. My main problem was that my battery always ran out before the end of the day, but with simple things like adjusting the battery settings and screen lighting it now rarely runs out. I think the biggest question people would ask is whether writing on the tablet is the same as writing with pen and paper. I think that it is virtually the same, but for some subjects, in particular Maths and languages, you need to write on paper, and like some of my teachers say, until the HSC is online you still need to be writing.”

Nicola Blackburn has also discovered various benefits to having her own Tablet PC in the classroom and at home.

“Since we first received them in the middle of last year, I have had a positive experience using the new Tablet PCs. It took a while to get used to, as there were software updates to install and setting up to do, however now that I have been using them for a while, I have found that they are a very useful learning tool. I think the function that we benefit the most from is being able to carry all of our textbooks, workbooks and other learning equipment all in one device. Not only is this convenient, but it means we don’t have to carry a large amount of books to and from school every day, making our backpacks much lighter! One of their other benefits is that the Tablets allow one to write and type. It is important that we do not lose the skill of handwriting, because we will need to use it throughout the rest of our lives, and definitely in the upcoming HSC in two years! I find that typing is also a much faster and less tedious way to do activities such as note-taking and writing, however, in subjects such as Mathematics, we write our notes and are able to draw diagrams with the attached pen.”

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