Why can’t a left-handed student find a desk in the classroom?

By James Underwood

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This paper addresses is issue that faces the Left-handed student community of not being able to find a left handed desk within the classroom. Through economic reasoning and analysis I search for the answer to, why can’t a left-handed student find a desk in the classroom.

About ten percent of the American population is left-handed. Then why is it so hard for us to find a left-handed desk while in the classroom? Studies have shown that left-handers have to twist their bodies around in order to write at a right-handed desk, this awkward writing position can cause slower handwriting and put lefties at a disadvantage on timed exams. Also contorting the body in order to write for hours at a time several days a week could contribute to chronic neck, back, and shoulder pains. Anything that interferes with a student’s ability to learn deserves attention. So where are the left-handed desks?

Perhaps the reason for the lack of left-handed desks is the prejudices held against left-handers throughout almost all of history. Left-handers have been considered inferior. Centuries ago the Catholics declared left-handed people to be servants of the Devil. For generations, left-handers who attended Catholic schools were forced to become right handed. Only a few decades ago in Japan having a left-handed wife were sufficient grounds for divorce. We place our wedding rings on our left hands in order to drive away evil sprits that may haunt our marriages.

1 Economics Student at the University of Akron
In Arab nations the right hand is used to touch parts of the body above the waist, while the left hand is used for below the navel.\(^3\) Are these prejudices being subconsciously acted upon by administrations by ignoring or not acting upon the needs of the left-handers in our community? The prices of left-handed desks are no more expensive or hard to come by than right-handed desks.

Are lefties just not looking hard enough for a left-handed desk? I randomly selected three University Of Akron buildings and from these buildings randomly selected four classrooms that were occupied by desks (in opposition of tables). One out of twelve had 10% left-handed desks the rest all fell short as low as 3%, no classroom was with out at least one left-handed desk. However, in these rooms I noticed not only the lack of left-handed desk but also their poor location in the classrooms. The left-handed desks were often pushed off to the sides or in the back of the room, locations often not sought by attentive students.

I went to the Vice President of Planning and Development Ted Curtis to find out what considerations are being given to left-

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\(^2\) information obtained at http://handedness.org/action/fairdesks.html
handed students and who is stocking these classrooms full of mostly right-handed desks. An F.F.E. or furniture, fixtures, and equipment order comes from the Dean Representatives from the various departments. Recently more consideration is being given to the left-hander, as evident in my sampling from the A&S building. One way they are trying to satisfy the situation is by using more and more tables in the classroom opposed to desks, which is beneficiary to both left and right-handed students.

Why can’t left-handed students find left-handed desks? It seems to be the neglect of the situation in the University’s past and the shuffling of desks form room to room and within the room that creates the evasive left-handed desk. At least the future does not look so bleak for the left-handed University of Akron student.

![Graph showing the distribution of left-handed and right-handed desks in A&S rooms.]

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