

Return-to-Learn Concussion Protocol

Concussion injuries can directly impact a student's learning ability. Conversely, the cognitive learning process can adversely affect a student's recovery from a concussion. Therefore, concussed students may need varying levels of instructional modifications and academic accommodations during their symptom recovery, particularly early on in the acute stage, but can extend several weeks or months.

Current concussion management guidelines recommend concussed students remain at rest, both physically and cognitively to facilitate their recovery from symptoms. Cognitive rest refers to the reduction in mentally taxing activities, i.e. analytical problem solving, mathematical equation work, focused or prolonged reading, computer use, as well as activities involving saccadic eye movements such as using eyes to track objects, read, and smart-board work. Playing video games, texting, watching TV, and listening to music with earphones may also be discouraged during the symptomatic phase.

Just as concussed athletes follow a stepwise progression for "Return To Play," a progression back to the learning environment is equally important. A "Return To Learn" process emphasizes a collaborative team approach between school administration, school nurses, counselors, teachers, parents, and athletic staff (including a school's athletic training staff when student-athletes are involved). Because concussions occurring in athletics are less prevalent than those occurring on playgrounds, during recreational activities such as biking or skateboarding, accidents at home, falls, and motor vehicle accidents, a Concussion Management Team can be beneficial for recovery and returning all concussed students, athletic and non-athletic, to the classroom.

School staff should be familiar with the signs and symptoms of concussions. Additionally, school staff should know how to monitor students knowingly having a concussion, as well as recognize those possibly having a concussion unknowingly. There is greater concern for how long symptoms last, more so than which ones or how many might exist, but all three elements are important to the proper management of the concussed student.

NCDPI Resources

<https://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/disability-resources/traumatic-brain-injury/concussion-Information-resources>

CDC Information

https://www.cdc.gov/headsup/pdfs/schools/tbi_returning_to_school-a.pdf

NC Policy

<https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/ePolicy/policy.aspx?PC=SHLT-001&Sch=10399&S=10399&C=SHLT&RevNo=1.02&T=A&Z=P&St=ADOPTED&PG=6&SN=true>