

## **Return to Learn**

### **Judge Memorial Catholic High School**

If a student experiences a concussion, their performance in the classroom may be affected. In most cases, academic performance will not be altered. However, in some instances students may experience a lack in ability to participate, learn, and perform well in school. Adversely, the experience of learning and engaging in academic activities that require concentration can actually cause a student's concussion symptoms to reappear if they are not fully healed.

A student that may have experienced a concussion should see a licensed healthcare professional that has experience dealing with concussion management. A healthcare professional can determine the severity of symptoms and determine specific accommodations in the classroom, if necessary.

Current concussion management recommendations state that if a concussion is suspected, you should stay at rest both physically and cognitively until symptoms reduce to a manageable state. Before athletes can participate in athletics they are required to progress through a "Return to Play" protocol. In some instances, if concussive symptoms are severe enough or a person experiences prolonged symptoms- a "Return to Learn" protocol is necessary to ease someone back into full cognitive activity and thus, full classroom participation.

It is important that school staff know the signs and symptoms of concussion and how to manage them in the classroom. If a teacher suspects that a student may have experienced a concussion please refer the student to the school nurse, athletic trainer, or contact their parent/guardian with your concerns.

### **Signs and Symptoms of Concussion**

- Headache
- "Pressure in Head"
- Neck pain
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Blurred Vision
- Balance Problems
- Light Sensitivity
- Noise Sensitivity
- Feeling Slowed Down
- Feeling "Foggy"
- "Don't Feel Right"
- Difficulty Concentrating
- Difficulty Remembering
- Fatigue or Low Energy
- Drowsiness
- Confusion
- Trouble Falling Asleep
- More Emotional
- Irritability
- Sadness
- Nervous or Anxious

**When a student returns to school following a concussion school professionals should watch for:**

- Increased problems paying attention or concentrating
- Increased problems remembering or learning new information
- Taking longer to complete organized tasks or assignments
- Difficulty organizing or shifting between tasks
- Inappropriate or impulsive behavior during class
- Greater irritability
- Less ability to cope with stress
- More emotional than usual
- Fatigue or drowsiness
- Difficulties handling a stimulating school environment (noise, bright lights, etc)
- Physical symptoms (headache, nausea, dizziness)

Source: CDC Heads Up to Schools. "[Returning to School After a Concussion: A Fact Sheet for School Professionals.](#)"

## **School Accommodations Based on Symptom Type**

**Headache:** Allow frequent breaks. If persistent or worsening headaches allow student to put head down on desk to rest.

**Noise Sensitivity:** No classes with loud noises (PE, band, chorus, shop, etc.) Have them meet in library for noisy classes. Allow the student to leave class 5 minutes early to avoid loud, crowded hallways. Student should avoid lunchroom- eat in quiet location. Student should avoid attending athletic events.

**Light Sensitivity:** Allow student to wear sunglasses in class. Avoid/limit time on bright projectors or computer screens.

**Visual Problems (ie blurred vision, visual focus problems):** Limit computer use, reading assignments, record lectures, increase font size on computers (still limiting time), limit television time.

**Concentration and/or Memory Ailments:** Place main focus on essential academic content. Postpone major exams and standardized testing. Allow extra time for assignments, tests and quizzes. Reduce homework size to focus only on essential content.

**Sleep Difficulties:** Allow late start to school. Allow frequent rest breaks.

Source: Nebraska Sports Concussion Network. "[Returning to the Classroom.](#)"

## **Return to Learn Progression**

### **Step 1: No School- Cognitive Rest**

Student should stay home from school for cognitive rest for 24-48 hours and no more than 5 days.

### **Step 2: Half Day Attendance- Full Accommodations**

Symptoms have begun to improve and student can tolerate up to 30 min of mental exertion. Student may attend half day classes. Avoid loud and/or physically active classes (shop, PE, band, chorus, etc.). Limit and modify work. Allow extra time for quizzes and avoid major testing.

### **Step 3: Full Day Attendance- Moderate Accommodations**

Symptoms are continuing to improve and student can tolerate up to 45 min of mental exertion. Refrain from attending PE. Modify testing where appropriate. Allow extra time for class work/homework.

### **Step 4: Full Day Attendance- Minimal Accommodations**

Student has few symptoms present. No PE participation. Begin working on missed work/makeup assignments and develop timeline for completion. Take missed exams/quizzes.

### **Step 5: Full Academics- No Accommodations**

Student may still have minimal to no symptoms. No PE participation until "Return to Play" criteria has been met.

*Source: Nebraska Sports Concussion Network. "[Returning to the Classroom.](#)"*



Each concussion will present differently and may require tailored accommodations. The time it takes for a concussion to heal and symptoms to reduce will alter from person to person and injury to injury. There is no specific "Return to Learn" criteria that is used universally. This specific outline is just a recommendation and can be changed to see fit for the current student you may be working with. If you have questions please consult your school athletic trainer or school nurse for guidance.

Dr. David Petron with University of Utah Health is available as a referral for students that have sustained a concussion or you suspect may have a concussion. Please pass his information along to parents of students in questions of potential head injuries.

**Dr. David Petron**

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