

Township High School District 214 Post Concussion Return to Academics Guidelines

A student's best chance of full recovery from a concussion involves two critical components: cognitive rest and physical rest. Continued research has focused on the fact that cognitive rest is essential to the quick resolution of concussion symptoms. Cognitive stimulation includes: driving, video games, computers, text messaging, cell phone use, loud and/or bright environments, television, reading and studying; these must be limited, and in most cases, completely avoided. Physical activity such as physical education, sports activities, and strength or cardiovascular conditioning must be regulated or avoided while recovering from a concussion.

Points of Emphasis:

- *It is important to note that recovery from a concussion is a very individualized process. Caution must be taken not to compare with concussions as they progress through the recovery process. The information below is provided to teachers, parents, and students as a guide to assist with concussion recovery.*
- It is recommended that students who are experiencing concussion-like symptoms be examined by their physician.
- For the academic protocol to be initiated, the injured student must be evaluated by a health care professional. Documentation from a physician must be provided to the school within 1 week to continue accommodations.
- It is important that once the student has returned to school that they report to the school nurse in order to monitor symptoms and follow physician recommendations within the *Return to Academics Guidelines*.
- The student will be granted adequate time to complete missed academic work based on the amount of time needed for complete recovery. For every day the student is within Stages 1-3, they will be granted the same number of days to complete missed academic work.
- The teacher has the option of assigning the student a grade of incomplete (I) for the quarter, final, and/or semester grade.
- *As the student's recovery progresses through Stages 1-3, teachers are encouraged to apply "mastery learning" criteria within their subject matter. This process identifies essential academic work and requires the student only make up this missed work. This aids the student's recovery as it reduces the volume of work that the student is required to complete, thereby reducing the student's stress level as they are medically cleared to resume to a full academic load.*

In order to inform the student's physician about District 214's Academic Concussion Guidelines, it is suggested that this academic progression protocol be shared with the physician during the student's initial injury evaluation.

After consultation with their physician, it is recommended that parents and students discuss with individual teachers which of these recommendations are appropriate for the student.

**Suggested Four Stage Progression for Full Return to
District 214 Academic Activity**

Stage 1: No school attendance, emphasize cognitive and physical rest

- Characteristics
 - Severe symptoms at rest
 - Symptoms may include, but not limited to:
 - Headache, dizziness, nausea, photosensitivity, phonosensitivity
- No tests, quizzes, or homework
- Students may be sensitive to light and noise
- Students may complain of intense and continuous/frequent headaches
- Students may not be able to read for more than 10 minutes without an increase in symptoms.
- Eliminate “screen time” on electronic devices, such as computers, iPads, and mobile phones.
- Provide student with copies of class notes (teacher or student generated)

□Progress to Stage 2 (Return to School) When:

- Decreased sensitivity to light or noise
- Decreased intensity and frequency of headaches
- Ability to complete light reading for 10 minutes without increased symptoms

Note: If the student remains in Stage 1 longer than 2 weeks, it is recommended that he/she be placed on the Early Intervention Team (EIT) to discuss the impact on school performance.

In order to continue academic modifications, students who remain symptomatic for longer than 1 week must be evaluated by a physician.

Stage 2: Option for modified daily class schedule

- Characteristics
 - Mild symptoms at rest, increasing with physical and mental activity

Upon return to school, medical documentation must be provided for academic accommodations to continue.

Accommodations May Include:

- In cooperation with guidance counselor and teachers, begin to create plan for possible modification and the gradual completion of missed tests, quizzes, and homework
- Schedule reduction (partial days): For example, first day may be afternoon classes and the next morning classes; repeat as symptoms warrant.
- Option: Reduce weight of backpack or provide second set of textbooks, if possible; arranged by counselor.
- Option: Obtain a “five minute pass” from the school nurse to avoid noisy, crowded hallways between class periods; arranged by the school nurse.
- Wear sunglasses as needed
- No tests, quizzes, or homework
- Reduce “screen time” on electronic devices, such as computers, iPads, and mobile phones.
- Provide student with copies of class notes (teacher or student generated)
- Excuse from physical education classes and/or sports activities

- Report any change in symptoms to the School Nurse

☐ Progress to Stage 3 When:

- Each of the student's classes have been attended at least once
- School activity does not increase symptoms
- Overall symptoms continue to decrease

Stage 3 Full day of school

• Characteristics

- ☐ Symptom-free at rest
- ☐ Mild to Moderate symptoms with mental and physical activity

- In cooperation with guidance counselor and teachers, create plan for possible modification and the gradual completion of missed tests, quizzes, and homework.
- Limited tests/quizzes with gradual increase, as tolerated by student
- Gradual increase in the use of electronic devices as symptoms permit
- Provide student with copies of class notes (teacher or student generated), upon request
- Option: Reduce weight of backpack or provide a second set of textbooks, if possible: arranged by counselor
- Option: Obtain a "5 minute pass" from the school nurse in order to avoid noisy, crowded hallways between class periods: arranged by school nurse.
- Excused from the Physical Education classes and/or sports activities.
- Report any change in symptoms to the School Nurse

☐ Progress to stage 4 when:

- Symptom-free with mental and physical activity
OR
- Completion of clinical exam conducted by the appropriate health care professional

Note: If the student is not able to progress past stage 3 after an extended period of time, where it is unlikely the student will be able to make up required work, the Early Intervention Team (EIT) will discuss with the student and their parents, possible class withdrawal, class load modification, and/or Section 504 plan.

Stage 4: Return to full Academic Load

- In cooperation with guidance counselor and teachers, create plan for possible modification and the gradual completion of missed tests, quizzes, and homework.
- Resume current academic responsibilities once symptoms have resolved completely as determined by the appropriate health care professional.
- Teacher has the discretion, and is encouraged, to apply "Mastery Learning" criteria for their subject matter
- Students are not required to makeup missed Physical Education classes due to a concussion
- Gradual resumption of physical activity
- Students will return to Physical Education classes and will spend a minimum of 2 days with modified activity.
- District 214 athletes will follow the Return To Play protocol under the direction of the Athletic Trainer.

Follow-Up

- Students are encouraged to meet with his/her counselor or specialist regularly to discuss progress, grades, status of make-up work, and/or emotional concerns.
- The student is encouraged to meet with the School Nurse to review any recurring symptoms.

Concussion Resources

For Parents:

http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/pdf/TBI_factsheets_PARENTS-508-a.pdf

Centers for Disease Control:

http://www.cdc.gov/traumaticbraininjury/get_the_facts.html

For Teachers:

http://www.nassp.org/Content/158/pl_mar14_healthyschool.pdf

<http://www.nationwidechildrens.org/concussions-in-the-classroom>

For School Professionals:

http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/pdf/TBI_Returning_to_School-a.pdf