

Sample Return to School Strategies and/or Approaches for Cognitive and Emotional/Behavioural Difficulties

Sample Strategies and/or Approaches for Cognitive Difficulties

Post-Concussion Symptoms	Impact on Student's Learning	Potential Strategies and/or Approaches
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Headache and fatigue	Difficulty concentrating, paying attention, or multitasking	• Ensure instructions are clear (for example, simplify directions, have the student repeat directions back to the teacher) • Allow the student to have frequent breaks or return to school gradually (for example, 1-2 hours, half-days, late starts) • Keep distractions to a minimum (for example, move the student away from bright lights or noisy areas) • Limit materials on the student's desk or in their work area to avoid distractions • Provide alternative assessment opportunities (for example, give tests orally, allow the student to dictate responses to tests or assignments, provide access to technology)
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Difficulty remembering or processing speed	Difficulty retaining new information, remembering instructions, and accessing learned information	• Provide a daily organizer and prioritize tasks • Provide visual aids/cues and/or advance organizers (for example, visual cueing, non-verbal signs) • Divide larger assignments/assessments into smaller tasks • Provide the student with a copy of class notes • Provide access to technology • Repeat instructions • Provide alternative methods for the student to demonstrate mastery
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Difficulty paying attention/concentrating	Limited/short-term focus on schoolwork and Difficulty maintaining a regular academic workload or keeping pace with work demands	• Coordinate assignments and projects among all teachers • Use a planner/organizer to manage and record daily/weekly homework and assignments • Reduce and/or prioritize homework, assignments, and projects • Extend deadlines or break down tasks • Facilitate the use of a peer note taker • Provide alternate assignments and/or tests • Check frequently for comprehension • Consider limiting tests to one per day and student may need extra time or a quiet environment
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Adapted from Davis GA, Purcell LK. The evaluation and management of acute concussion differs in young children. Br J Sports Med. Published Online First 23 April 2013 doi:10.1136/bjsports-2012-092132

Sample Strategies and/or Approaches for Emotional/Behavioural Difficulties

Post-Concussion Symptoms	Impact on Student’s Learning	Potential Strategies and/or Approaches

Anxiety	• Decreased attention/concentration • Overexertion to avoid falling behind	• Inform the student of any changes in the daily timetable/schedule • Adjust the student's timetable/schedule as needed to avoid fatigue (for example, 1-2 hours/periods, half-days, full-days) • Build in more frequent breaks during the school day • Provide the student with preparation time to respond to questions
Irritable or frustrated	• Inappropriate or impulsive behaviour during class	• Encourage teachers to use consistent strategies and approaches • Acknowledge and empathize with the student's frustration, anger, or emotional outburst, if and as they occur • Reinforce positive behaviour • Provide structure and consistency on a daily basis • Prepare the student for change and transitions • Set reasonable expectations • Anticipate and remove the student from a problem situation (without characterizing it as punishment)

Light/noise sensitivity	Difficulties working in classroom environment (for example, lights, noise)	- Arrange strategic seating (for example, move the student away from window or talkative peers, proximity to the teacher or peer support, quiet setting) - Where possible provide access to special lighting (for example, task lighting, darker room) - Minimize background noise - Provide alternative settings (for example, alternative work space, study carrel) - Avoid noisy crowded environments such as assemblies and hallways during high traffic times - Allow the student to eat lunch in a quiet area with a few friends - Where possible provide ear plugs/headphones, sunglasses
Depression/withdrawal	Withdrawal from participation in school activities or friends	- Build time into class/school day for socialization with peers - Partner student with a “buddy” for assignments or activities

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Please Note: “Compared to older students, elementary school children are more likely to complain of physical problems or misbehave in response to cognitive overload, fatigue, and other concussion

symptoms." (*Concussion in the Classroom. (n.d.). Upstate University Hospital Concussion Management Program. Retrieved from*

<http://www.upstate.edu/pmr/healthcare/programs/concussion/pdf/classroom.pdf>)