

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

## Sample Strategies and/or Approaches for Cognitive Difficulties

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| Post-Concussion Symptoms | Impact on Student's Learning | Potential Strategies and/or Approaches |  
| ----- | ----- | ----- | | 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)

| | 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

| | 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**

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| Post-Concussion Symptoms | Impact on Student's Learning | Potential Strategies and/or Approaches |  
 | ----- | ----- | ----- | | Anxiety |

- Decreased attention/concentration
- Overexertion to avoid falling behind

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- 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

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- 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)

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- 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

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- 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>*)