Rittenhouse PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATES

Tips for Teachers

SUPPORTING STUDENTS AFTER A CONCUSSION

A concussion is a real brain injury, even though the student may look fine and scans are usually normal. Thinking, reading, screens, and noise all make the brain work harder, so **symptoms during the school day are expected** and are not a sign of laziness or a setback. Short-term supports help most students recover within a few weeks. Their provider will send a **Return to Learn** form listing the current stage and recommended supports.

What you may see, and how you can help

Thinking & Memory

Loses focus, forgets directions, slow to answer or finish work, seems “foggy.”

- Cut assignments to essential tasks and allow extra time.
- Give directions in writing and repeat key information.
- Check in privately to confirm understanding.

Headache, Fatigue & Dizziness

Head down on desk, rubbing eyes or head, symptoms build as the day goes on.

- Allow scheduled rest breaks in a separate, quiet space.
- Permit a water bottle or nurse visit as needed.
- Don’t replace PE with reading. Thinking is work for the brain too.

Light, Noise & Screens

Squinting, covering ears, trouble with the board or a device.

- Limit screen time and lower brightness; offer printed notes.
- Seat away from windows, speakers, and busy areas.
- Let the student leave a few minutes early to avoid crowded halls.

Mood & Emotions

Irritable, tearful, anxious about grades, pulling away from friends.

- Offer a short break in a calm place when frustration rises.
- Name a trusted adult the student can go to.
- Reassure them that falling behind is temporary.

Your role in the Return to Learn plan

- **Follow the current stage**, even on good days. Supports step down as symptoms improve.
- **Plan make-up work together** with the student and family, on a realistic schedule.
- **Share what you notice** with the family, school nurse, or counselor, such as symptoms that worsen through the day or frequent nurse visits. This helps the provider adjust the plan.
- **Keep the student included** in class and in activities their provider has approved. Follow the form for PE and recess, if applicable.
- **If recovery drags on** for several weeks, ask about formal supports (e.g., 504 plan, IEP).

Testing & grading tips

- **Ease back into testing.** No tests in early stages, then no more than one per day.
- **Test in a quiet room** with extra time and breaks; read questions aloud if helpful.
- **Shorten tests** to fewer items that cover key concepts.
- **Be flexible with grading** on high-symptom days, and waive late penalties.
- **Avoid timed or high-stakes tests** until the student reaches the later stages.

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