

Wisportsconcussion.org

Concussion Education for Teachers, School Administrators and Faculty

Concussions are more common in high school athletics than previously thought. Recent studies by the Centers for Disease Control indicate that there are as many as 1.6 to 3.8 million concussions each year in the United States alone. Given there are currently more than seven million participants in high school sports in the United States, teachers, school administrators and nurses should be more aware of the possible complications of this injury for the student-athlete.

Concussions are not only reserved for the student-athlete. Physical Education students as well as the general student population may also experience concussion while participating in physical education class, riding a bicycle, skateboarding or as a passenger in a motor vehicle. Therefore, it becomes important for school faculty to become better educated on concussion, its assessment, effects and treatment. This will assist the student in recovery as well as not cause them to suffer academically for an injury that occurred to them.

What should teachers know about concussion?

One aspect of the management of sports-related concussions often overlooked is that we expect our students to perform at their highest level in the classroom following injury. This is true despite the fact that concussion often results in impaired attention, difficulties with concentrating for prolonged periods of time and memory problems. If a student sprains his or her ankle and it is swollen, would the student be expected to participate in physical education? Most likely not. The same should be true for concussion. If prolonged classroom exposure causes a student's condition to worsen (i.e., increased headache, increased fatigue, decreased ability to concentrate, sensitivity to noise or light), then it would be reasonable to expect that their academic environment and expectations be modified until their condition is resolved.

The following modifications can be made to help a concussed student recover more rapidly while maintaining their academic integrity.

- Realize and acknowledge that the student is not “faking” an injury. While they may look “normal” their brain may not be working properly.
- Understand that the student may initially not be able to tolerate more than half days of school.
- Temporarily assign shorter assignments and lighter workloads.
- Increase the repetition of verbal instructions.
- Provide written instructions to help students that are experiencing memory issues.
- Focus on recognition cues.
- Provide smaller pieces of information to aid in retention and recall of facts and ideas.
- Increase time allotments for homework assignments.
- Slow down verbal instructions.
- Move the student to an area of the classroom that is less prone to bright lights or increased noise. (i.e. away from windows or hallway doors)
- Postpone important tests if possible as to not allow their injury to affect their grades.
- Allow periodic rest breaks.
- Allow the student to wear dark glasses, use computer monitor glare filters and/or earplugs (especially in music classes) to decrease visual and auditory stimulation.

Above information modified and adapted from:

Mihalik, Jason P. MS, CAT(C), ATC, “Managing the Student-athlete Suffering From Concussion: Is it Worth The Headache?”, National Federation of State High School Associations 2006, http://www.nfhs.org/web/2007/10/managing_the_studentathlete_suf.asp