

The Watauga County Board of Education (the “board”) recognizes that concussions and other head injuries may be serious and potentially life threatening and that such injuries may result in serious consequences later in life if managed improperly. The board is committed to practices that reduce the potential for short-term or long-term effects from such injuries. In support of this commitment, the board directs school employees to comply with the concussion safety rules for interscholastic athletic competition adopted by the State Board of Education as required by G.S. 115C-407.57 and initially established in the Gfeller-Waller Concussion Awareness Act of 2011. The superintendent or designee shall develop plans consistent with state requirements and shall implement and monitor compliance with this policy. The superintendent is authorized to investigate the use of baseline testing for student-athletes and require that student-athletes undergo such testing prior to their participation in any interscholastic athletic competition.

A. DEFINITION OF CONCUSSION

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury caused by a direct or indirect impact to the head that results in disruption of normal brain function, which may or may not result in a loss of consciousness.

B. CONCUSSION EDUCATION VIDEO FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETES

All high school student-athletes and parents of high school student-athletes must view the CrashCourse concussion education video prior to each sport season.

C. SCHOOL HEAD INJURY INFORMATION SHEET

Each year, all coaches, school nurses, athletic directors, first responders, volunteers, student-athletes, and parents of student-athletes must be provided with a concussion and head injury information sheet that meets the requirements of the State Board. Before any student, school employee, volunteer, or first responder will be allowed to participate in interscholastic athletic activities, including tryouts, practices, or competitions, he or she must sign the head injury information sheet and return it to the coach. Parents also must sign the sheet and return it to the coach before their children may participate in any interscholastic athletic activity. The principal of each school shall ensure that a complete and accurate record of the returned signed sheets is maintained in accordance with law and State Board policy.

D. REMOVAL FROM AND RETURN TO PLAY

Any student-athlete who is exhibiting signs or symptoms consistent with a concussion must be removed from athletic activity immediately. Further, the student-athlete must not be allowed to return to play or practice that day or on any subsequent day until he or she has been evaluated and has received written clearance for participation that complies with the requirements of G.S. 115C-407.57 and any other applicable law or State Board policy or rule.

E. RETURN TO LEARNING

The superintendent or designee shall develop a plan that meets all the requirements of the State Board of Education for addressing the needs of students in grades pre-K through 12 who suffer concussions. The superintendent or designee shall also arrange for information and professional development to be provided annually to all teachers and other school personnel on return-to-learn issues and other concerns related to concussion and brain injuries. Parents and students must be offered the opportunity annually to provide information related to any head injury or concussion the student may have incurred during the past year on the health history and emergency medical information update form.

F. EMERGENCY ACTION PLANS

Each principal or designee shall develop a venue-specific emergency action plan to respond to serious medical injuries and acute medical conditions in which the condition of the injured student may deteriorate rapidly. All such plans must include a delineation of roles, methods of communication, available emergency equipment, and a plan for emergency transport. The plans must be (1) in writing, (2) reviewed by an athletic trainer who is licensed in North Carolina, (3) approved by the principal if developed by a designee, (4) distributed, posted, reviewed, and rehearsed in accordance with G.S. 115C-407.58, and (5) compliant with any other requirements of state law and State Board policy or rules.

G. ATHLETIC TRAINERS AND FIRST RESPONDERS

Each high school principal shall designate at least one licensed athletic trainer or first responder who meets the requirements of state law and State Board of Education policy. The principal shall monitor each athletic trainer's or first responder's compliance with the duties assigned to the position by the State Board and any additional duties assigned by the superintendent or designee, including, but not limited to, attendance at football games and practices and compliance with all applicable training and certification requirements.

To the extent funding and resources are available, the superintendent shall work toward having a licensed athletic trainer or first responder available for all school practices and games of all high school and middle school sports.

H. RECORD KEEPING

The superintendent shall require each principal to maintain complete and accurate records of actions taken in his or her school to comply with this policy and applicable legal authority. Records shall include accounts of any education or training as may be required by law or State Board of Education policy or rules.

The superintendent's annual report to the board on compliance with laws and policies related to student wellness shall include a report on the system's compliance with laws and policies related to concussions and head injuries. (See subsection F.4 of policy 6140, Student Wellness.)

Legal References: G.S. 90 art 34; 115C-12(23), 407.55, -407.57, -407.58, -407.70; S.L. 2011-147; 16 N.C.A.C. 6E .0205, .0206; State Board of Education Policies ATHL-000, ATHL-003, SHLT-001; N.C. High School Athletic Association Handbook, available at <https://www.nchsaa.org/handbook>

Cross References: Student Wellness (policy 6140)

Other Resources: Matthew Gfeller Sport-Related TBI Research Center at UNC website <https://gfellerwallerlaw.unc.edu/>; *Report to the North Carolina General Assembly: Study of Sports Injuries at Middle School and High School Levels*, N.C. Department of Public Instruction (2011), available at <https://webservices.ncleg.gov/ViewDocSiteFile/16567>

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