R 5341 CONCUSSIONS AND HEAD INJURIES

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury caused by a direct or indirect blow to the head or body. A physician or licensed health care professional must make a determination on a student's readiness to return to school based on the number, type, and severity of symptoms experienced by the student. Allowing a student to return to school before recovering from a concussion increases the chance of a more serious brain injury that can result in severe disability and/or death. The following procedures shall be followed to implement Policy 5341.

A. Signs or Symptoms of Concussion or Other Head Injury

1. Possible signs of concussions can be observed by any school staff member. Possible signs of a concussion may be, but are not limited to, the student:

   a. Appears dazed, stunned, or disoriented;

   b. Demonstrates short-term memory difficulty;

   c. Exhibits difficulties with balance or coordination;

   d. Answers questions slowly or inaccurately; and/or

   e. Loses consciousness.

2. Possible symptoms of concussion shall be reported by the student, school nurse, and/or parent. Possible symptoms of a concussion are, but not limited to:

   a. Headache;

   b. Nausea/vomiting;

   c. Balance problems or dizziness;

   d. Double vision or changes in vision;

   e. Sensitivity to light or sound/noise;

   f. Feeling sluggish or foggy;

   g. Difficulty with concentration and short-term memory;

   h. Sleep disturbance; or

   i. Irritability.

B. Emergency Medical Attention for Concussion or Other Head Injury

1. Any student who indicates they have sustained a concussion or is exhibiting signs or symptoms of a concussion or other head injury during school or a school activity shall be immediately removed from school or the activity.

2. The Principal or designee, school nurse, or school staff member who observes a student exhibiting signs or symptoms of a concussion or other head injury, shall immediately contact emergency medical assistance when symptoms get worse, when loss of consciousness occurs, when there is direct neck pain associated with the injury, or any other sign the supervising school staff member determines emergency medical attention is needed.

3. The school staff member supervising the student when the student is exhibiting signs or symptoms of a concussion or head injury shall report the occurrence to the Principal or designee or the school nurse. The Principal or designee or school nurse shall contact the student's parent and inform the parent of the suspected concussion or other head injury.

C. Sustained Concussion or Other Head Injury

1. A student who indicates they have sustained a concussion or is suspected of sustaining a concussion or other head injury while in school or at a school activity shall immediately be removed from school or the activity and shall be required to have a medical examination conducted by their physician or licensed health care provider.

2. The parent of the student that has sustained a concussion or is suspected of sustaining a concussion or other head injury shall be provided a copy of the Board of Education Policy and Regulation 5341 and a copy of the New Jersey Department of Education Concussion and Head Injury Fact Sheet to provide to their physician or licensed health care professional.

3. The student's physician or licensed health care provider must provide to the school district, upon the completion of a medical examination, a written medical release/clearance when the student is able to return to the school and school activities. The release/clearance must indicate:

   a. The medical examination determined the student's injury was not a concussion or other head injury, the student is asymptomatic at rest, and the student may return to the activity with no restriction; or

   b. The medical examination determined the injury was a concussion or other head injury, the student is asymptomatic at rest, and the student can begin the graduated return to learn protocol outlined in D. below.



A medical release/clearance not in compliance with this requirement will not be accepted. The student may not return to school or a school activity or begin the graduated return to learn protocol until he/she receives a medical evaluation and provides a medical clearance/release from their physician or licensed health care provider that has been reviewed and approved by the school physician.

4. Complete physical, cognitive, emotional, and social rest is advised while the student is experiencing symptoms and signs of a concussion or other head injury. (Minimize mental exertion, limit over-stimulation and multi-tasking, etc.)

D. Graduated Return to Learn Protocol

1. Upon submission of written medical release/clearance by the student's licensed healthcare provider, the student may begin a graduated return to learn protocol in accordance with the healthcare provider's written instruction, supervised by a school nurse trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and other head injuries. The school physician may be asked to review the medical documentation. The following steps shall be followed provided the physician or licensed health care professional has determined the student is asymptomatic at rest:

   a. Step 1 Activities – The student may begin light cognitive activity and shall complete activities that do not cause any symptoms. The light activities may include, but are not limited to: part-time return to school; rest time or rest breaks as needed during the school day; overall homework or class work load adjustments; limited or no use of computers; deferral of quizzes, tests or assessments; no or very limited physical exertion; or any other accommodations from the student's regular schedule of activities that may assist the student. The Step 1 activities and the duration of each activity shall be recommended by the student's physician or licensed health care provider and shall monitored by the Principal or designee, school nurse, and school physician.

      If there is no return of signs or symptoms of a concussion with the student completing the Step 1 activities, the student may advance to Step 2 activities. If a re-emergence of any signs or symptoms of a concussion occur during Step 1 activities, the student shall be required to have a re-evaluation by their physician or licensed healthcare provider. The student shall not be permitted to continue any Step 1 activity until the student receives a medical evaluation and an updated medical clearance/release

from their physician or licensed healthcare provider to be approved by the school physician. This medical clearance/release must include updated Step 1 activities and the duration of each activity.

b. Step 2 Activities - If the student is not experiencing the return of any signs or symptoms of a concussion after completing Step 1 activities, with input from the teachers, the nurse and the physician's approval the student may advance to Step 2 activities.

If there is no return of signs or symptoms of a concussion with the student completing the Step 2 activities, the student may advance to Step 3 activities. If a re-emergence of any signs or symptoms of a concussion occur during any of the Step 2 activities, the student shall return to the level of the activity outlined in Step 1.

c. Step 3 Activities - If the student is not experiencing the return of any signs or symptoms of a concussion after completing Step 2 activities, the student may advance to Step 3 activities, with input from the teachers, the nurse and the physician's approval.

If there is no return of signs or symptoms of a concussion with the student completing the Step 3 activities, the student may advance to Step 4 activities. If a re-emergence of any signs or symptoms of a concussion occur during any of the Step 3 activities, the student shall return to the level of the activity outlined in Step 2.

d. Step 4 - If the student is not experiencing the return of any signs or symptoms of a concussion after completing Step 3 activities, the student may advance to a complete return to school and school activities. The student must be able to complete all Step 3 activities as required by the approved by student's physician or licensed health care professional with input from the teachers and school nurse. The student may not make a complete return to school and school activities experiencing any signs or symptoms of a concussion. In addition, before the student returns to a complete return to school and school activities, the student shall receive an updated medical examination from their physician or licensed health care professional and must submit a new medical clearance/release to the Principal or designee indicating the student is able to make a complete return to school and school activities. The medical clearance/release must also indicate when the school nurse shall examine the student after the

student has made a complete return to school and school activities to determine if there are any recurring signs or symptoms of a concussion or head injury. This medical clearance/release shall be reviewed by the school nurse and the school physician if medically necessary.

E. Students with Concussions and Head Injuries

1. Any student who has experienced a concussion or head injury that has been required to work through a graduated return to learn protocols as outlined in this Regulation shall be examined by the school nurse as recommended by the student's physician or licensed health care professional. If the student is experiencing any symptoms after a complete return to school and school activities, the school nurse shall report such results to the Principal or designee, who may require the student to obtain an updated medical examination from their physician or licensed health care professional.

2. In the event the examination by the student's physician or licensed health care professional indicates the student is experiencing the return of any signs or symptoms of a concussion, the student will be required to go through an updated return to learn protocol as outlined in D. above.

3. In the event the examination by the student's physician indicates the student is not experiencing the return of any signs or symptoms of a concussion, the student will be permitted to continue the complete return to school and school activities.

4. Any examinations and medical clearance/release submitted by the student's physician or licensed health care professional shall be reviewed by the school nurse and approved by the school physician if medically necessary.