

Return to Learn – Accommodations and Strategies for the Classroom Teacher

Note: Compared with older students, elementary-aged students may be more likely to report physical symptoms or show changes in behaviour when experiencing cognitive overload, fatigue, or other concussion symptoms.

Cognitive difficulties

Post-concussion symptoms	Impact on learning	Possible strategies and approaches
Headache and fatigue	Difficulty concentrating, sustaining attention, or multitasking	- Give clear, brief instructions (e.g., simplify directions; have the student repeat directions back). - Build in frequent breaks and/or a gradual return (e.g., 1–2 hours, half-days, late starts). - Reduce distractions (e.g., seat away from bright lights or noisy areas). - Limit materials on the student's desk or work area. - Offer alternative assessment options (e.g., oral responses; dictation; access to technology).
Memory difficulties or slower processing speed	Difficulty retaining new information, remembering instructions, or accessing previously learned information	- Use a daily organizer and help prioritize tasks. - Provide visual cues and/or advance organizers (e.g., visual cueing, non-verbal signs). - Break larger assignments and assessments into smaller steps. - Provide a copy of class notes. - Provide access to technology as needed. - Repeat and re-check instructions for understanding. - Offer alternative ways for the student to demonstrate mastery.
Attention or concentration difficulties	Shorter attention span for schoolwork Difficulty keeping pace with regular	Coordinate assignments and projects across teachers.

Limestone District School Board

The Limestone District School Board is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabek and Haudenosaunee.

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	workload or work demands	• Use a planner/organizer to record daily and weekly homework and assignments. • Reduce and/or prioritize homework, assignments, and projects. • Extend deadlines and/or break tasks into smaller steps. • Support note-taking (e.g., provide a peer note-taker). • Provide alternate assignments and/or tests, when appropriate. • Check frequently for understanding. • Limit tests (e.g., one per day), when possible. • Allow extra time and/or a quiet environment.
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Emotional and behavioural difficulties

Post-concussion symptoms	Impact on learning	Possible strategies and approaches
Anxiety	Decreased attention and concentration Overexertion to avoid falling behind	• Inform the student of any changes to the daily timetable/schedule. • Adjust the student's schedule as needed to avoid fatigue (e.g., 1–2 hours/periods, half-days, full days). • Build in more frequent breaks during the school day. • Provide additional time to respond to questions.
Irritability or frustration	Impulsive or inappropriate behaviour during class	• Use consistent strategies and approaches across staff. • Acknowledge and empathize with frustration, anger, or emotional outbursts as they occur. • Reinforce positive behaviour. • Provide daily structure and predictability. • Prepare the student for changes and transitions.

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		• Set reasonable expectations. • Proactively remove the student from a problem situation when needed (without presenting this as punishment).
Light and noise sensitivity	Difficulty working in the classroom environment (e.g., bright lights, noise)	• Arrange strategic seating (e.g., away from windows or talkative peers; close to the teacher or peer support; in a quieter area). • Provide lighting options when possible (e.g., task lighting, dimmer room). • Minimize background noise. • Offer alternative work settings (e.g., alternate workspace, study carrel). • Avoid noisy, crowded environments (e.g., assemblies; hallways during high-traffic times). • Allow lunch in a quieter area with a few friends. • Provide earplugs/headphones and/or sunglasses when appropriate.
Depression or withdrawal	Withdrawal from participation in school activities or with friends	• Build time into the class/school day for socialization with peers. • Pair the student with a “buddy” for assignments or activities.