
PPM 158 (Policy/Program Memorandum #158: School Board Policies on Concussion) recognizes the importance of prevention and states that every board policy should include strategies to prevent concussions (and other head injuries) at school and at off-site school events.

This document organizes concussion prevention strategies into two sections based on when they should be used:

- **before physical activity begins** (e.g., at the start of the school year and/or before a sport season such as interschool teams or intramurals);
- **during a physical activity unit, sport season, and/or intramural activity.**

Before physical activity begins (start of the school year and/or before a sport season):

1. Teachers/coaches/supervisors should:

- know the school board's concussion policy and procedures for prevention, identification, and management (return to learn and return to physical activity);
- know and follow safe practices for the sport/activity (e.g., rules and regulations and the sport-specific pages in the Ontario Physical Education Safety Guidelines);
- understand the concussion and injury risks associated with the sport/activity and how to minimize those risks;
- stay up to date on, and enforce, school board/Athletic Association/Referee rule changes intended to reduce the risk of concussion;
- use and teach current body-contact skills and techniques (e.g., safe tackling in tackle football) when coaching/supervising contact activities;
- know (when applicable) the requirements for wearing helmets (there is currently no evidence that helmets prevent concussions).
- ensure protective equipment is approved by a recognized equipment standards association (e.g., CSA, NOCSAE), is well maintained, and is visually inspected before use; and

- ensure (where applicable) that protective equipment is inspected within approved timelines by a certified re-conditioner, as required by the manufacturer (e.g., football helmets).

2. Boards, Athletic Associations, and Referee Associations should:

- consider rule changes to reduce the number or severity of head injuries where a clear injury mechanism is identified in a sport; and
- ensure rules are enforced to minimize the risk of head injuries.

It is important that students/athletes and their parents/guardians receive information about concussion prevention. This information should be as sport/activity-specific as possible.

If students/athletes are permitted to bring their own protective equipment (e.g., helmets), students/athletes and parents/guardians should be reminded to ensure it is properly fitted, in good working order, and appropriate for personal use.

3. Parents/guardians should be informed about:

- the risks associated with the activity/sport and how to reduce those risks;
- the dangers of participating while experiencing concussion signs or symptoms;
- the signs and symptoms of a concussion;
- the board's identification, diagnosis, and management procedures; and
- the importance of promoting the ethical values of fair play and respect for opponents.

4. Students/athletes should be informed about:

- concussions:
 - definition,
 - seriousness,
 - causes,
 - signs and symptoms, and
 - the board's identification and management procedure.
- the risks of a concussion associated with the activity/sport and how to minimize those risks;

- the importance of respecting the rules of the game and practicing Fair Play (e.g., to follow the rules and ethics of play, to always practice good sportsmanship and to respect their opponents and officials);
- the dangers of participating while experiencing concussion signs or symptoms and the potential long-term consequences;
- the importance of:
 - immediately telling the teacher/coach about any concussion signs or symptoms and removing themselves from the activity;
 - encouraging a teammate with concussion signs or symptoms to stop participating and to tell the teacher/coach; and
 - telling the teacher/coach if a classmate/teammate shows concussion signs or symptoms.
- helmet use when required for a sport/activity:
 - helmets do not prevent concussions. They are designed to protect against skull fractures and major brain injuries (including bleeding into or around the brain), as well as brain contusions and lacerations; and
 - helmets must be properly fitted and worn correctly (e.g., only one finger should fit between the strap and the chin when the strap is fastened).

Sample strategies/tools to educate students/athletes about concussion prevention information:

- hold a pre-season/activity group or team meeting on concussion education;
- develop and distribute an information checklist for students/athletes on prevention strategies;
- post concussion information (signs, symptoms, and what to do if a concussion is suspected);
- post concussion prevention posters (e.g., encouraging students to report symptoms) in high-traffic student areas (e.g., change rooms/locker areas, classrooms, gymnasiums);
- implement concussion classroom learning modules aligned with curriculum expectations;
- distribute concussion fact sheets (prevention, signs, and symptoms) to students/athletes on school teams; and

- distribute and collect a completed student concussion contract or pledge (signed by the student/athlete and parent/guardian).

During a physical activity unit, sport season, or intramural activity:

1. Teachers/coaches/supervisors should:

- teach skills and techniques in the proper progression;
- provide activity/sport-specific concussion information when possible;
- teach and enforce the rules and regulations of the sport/activity during practices and games/competitions (particularly those that limit or eliminate body contact, or equipment-on-body contact);
- reinforce the principles of head-injury prevention (e.g., keeping the head up and avoiding collision);
- teach students/athletes involved in body contact activities:
 - sport-specific rules and regulations of body contact e.g., no hits to the head.
 - body contact skills and techniques and require the successful demonstration of these skills in practice prior to competition.
- discourage others from pressuring injured students/athletes to play/participate;
- demonstrate and role model the ethical values of fair play and respect for opponents;
- encourage students/athletes to follow the rules of play, and to practice fair play;
- use game/match officials in higher-risk interschool sports that are knowledgeable, certified and/or experienced in officiating the sport; and
- inform students about the importance of protective equipment fitting correctly (e.g., helmets, padding, guards).

2. During the physical activity unit/sport season/intramural activity students/athletes should:

- attend safety clinics/information sessions on concussions for the activity/sport,
- be familiar with the seriousness of a concussion and the signs and symptoms of concussion,
- demonstrate safe contact skills during controlled practice sessions prior to competition,
- demonstrate respect for the mutual safety of fellow athletes (e.g., no hits to the head, follow the rules and regulations of the activity),

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- wear properly fitted protective equipment as required;
 - report any concussion sign or symptom immediately to the teacher/coach after a hit, fall, or collision; and
 - encourage teammates/fellow students to report concussion signs or symptoms and avoid pressuring an injured student/athlete to play or participate.

Resources

- Ontario portal: [Ontario.ca/Concussions](https://ontario.ca/concussions)