

# Sample Return to School Strategies and/or Approaches for Cognitive and Emotional/Behavioural Difficulties

## Sample Strategies and/or Approaches for Cognitive Difficulties

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<b>Post-Concussion Symptoms</b>	<b>Impact on Student's Learning</b>	<b>Potential Strategies and/or Approaches</b>
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<p>Headache and fatigue</p>	<p>Difficulty concentrating, paying attention, or multitasking</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure instructions are clear (for example, simplify directions, have the student repeat directions back to the teacher)</li><li>• Allow the student to have frequent breaks or return to school gradually (for example, 1-2 hours, half-days, late starts)</li><li>• Keep distractions to a minimum (for example, move the student away from bright lights or noisy areas)</li><li>• Limit materials on the student's desk or in their work area to avoid distractions</li><li>• Provide alternative assessment opportunities (for example, give tests orally, allow the student to dictate responses to tests or assignments, provide access to technology)</li></ul>
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<p>Difficulty remembering or processing speed</p>	<p>Difficulty retaining new information, remembering instructions, and accessing learned information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide a daily organizer and prioritize tasks</li><li>• Provide visual aids/cues and/or advance organizers (for example, visual cueing, non-verbal signs)</li><li>• Divide larger assignments/assessments into smaller tasks</li><li>• Provide the student with a copy of class notes</li><li>• Provide access to technology</li><li>• Repeat instructions</li><li>• Provide alternative methods for the student to demonstrate mastery</li></ul>
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<p>Difficulty paying attention/concentrating</p>	<p>Limited/short-term focus on schoolwork and Difficulty maintaining a regular academic workload or keeping pace with work demands</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate assignments and projects among all teachers</li> <li>• Use a planner/organizer to manage and record daily/weekly homework and assignments</li> <li>• Reduce and/or prioritize homework, assignments, and projects</li> <li>• Extend deadlines or break down tasks</li> <li>• Facilitate the use of a peer note taker</li> <li>• Provide alternate assignments and/or tests</li> <li>• Check frequently for comprehension</li> <li>• Consider limiting tests to one per day and student may need extra time or a quiet environment</li> </ul>
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*Adapted from Davis GA, Purcell LK. The evaluation and management of acute concussion differs in young children. Br J Sports Med. Published Online First 23 April 2013 doi:10.1136/bjsports-2012-092132*

## Sample Strategies and/or Approaches for Emotional/Behavioural Difficulties

<p><b>Post-Concussion Symptoms</b></p>	<p><b>Impact on Student's Learning</b></p>	<p><b>Potential Strategies and/or Approaches</b></p>
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<p>Anxiety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decreased attention/concentration</li> <li>• Overexertion to avoid falling behind</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform the student of any changes in the daily timetable/schedule</li> <li>• Adjust the student’s timetable/schedule as needed to avoid fatigue (for example, 1-2 hours/periods, half-days, full-days)</li> <li>• Build in more frequent breaks during the school day</li> <li>• Provide the student with preparation time to respond to questions</li> </ul>
<p>Irritable or frustrated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inappropriate or impulsive behaviour during class</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage teachers to use consistent strategies and approaches</li> <li>• Acknowledge and empathize with the student’s frustration, anger, or emotional outburst, if and as they occur</li> <li>• Reinforce positive behaviour</li> <li>• Provide structure and consistency on a daily basis</li> <li>• Prepare the student for change and transitions</li> <li>• Set reasonable expectations</li> <li>• Anticipate and remove the student from a problem situation (without characterizing it as punishment)</li> </ul>

<p>Light/noise sensitivity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties working in classroom environment (for example, lights, noise)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange strategic seating (for example, move the student away from window or talkative peers, proximity to the teacher or peer support, quiet setting)</li> <li>• Where possible provide access to special lighting (for example, task lighting, darker room)</li> <li>• Minimize background noise</li> <li>• Provide alternative settings (for example, alternative work space, study carrel)</li> <li>• Avoid noisy crowded environments such as assemblies and hallways during high traffic times</li> <li>• Allow the student to eat lunch in a quiet area with a few friends</li> <li>• Where possible provide ear plugs/headphones, sunglasses</li> </ul>
<p>Depression/ withdrawal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Withdrawal from participation in school activities or friends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build time into class/school day for socialization with peers</li> <li>• Partner student with a “buddy” for assignments or activities</li> </ul>

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**Please Note:** “Compared to older students, elementary school children are more likely to complain of physical problems or misbehave in response to cognitive overload, fatigue, and other concussion

symptoms." (*Concussion in the Classroom. (n.d.). Upstate University Hospital Concussion Management Program. Retrieved from*

<http://www.upstate.edu/pmr/healthcare/programs/concussion/pdf/classroom.pdf>)