

# 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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Post-Concussion Symptoms	Impact on Student's Learning	Potential Strategies and/or Approaches
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Headache and fatigue	Difficulty concentrating, paying attention, or multitasking	<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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Difficulty paying attention/concentrating	Limited/short-term focus on schoolwork and Difficulty maintaining a regular academic workload or keeping pace with work demands	<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

Post-Concussion Symptoms	Impact on Student’s Learning	Potential Strategies and/or Approaches

Anxiety	<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>
Irritable or frustrated	<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>

Light/noise sensitivity	<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>
Depression/withdrawal	<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>)