



Concussion Prevention Strategies



School Boards and Athletic Associations

Prior to the beginning of the interschool sport season/school year Lakehead District School Board and athletic associations:

- *must* use the school board process to receive confirmation that officials participating in school board-sponsored interschool sports have reviewed an appropriate Concussion Awareness resource; and
- *should* consider rule changes to the sport to reduce the head injury incidence or severity, where a clear-cut mechanism is implicated in a particular sport.

Prior to the beginning of the school year; and/or intramural activity, parents/guardians of student under 18 years of age must be informed of the:

- risks and possible mitigations of the activity/sport;
- dangers of participating with a concussion;
- signs and symptoms of a concussion;
- school board's identification, diagnosis and management procedures;
- activity/sport-specific concussion prevention strategies;
- importance of encouraging the ethical values of fair play and respect for opponents; and
- importance of determining that, when students/athletes are permitted to bring their own protective equipment, it is properly fitted (as per manufacturer's guidelines), properly worn, in good working order and suitable for personal use.

Concussion Prevention Strategies

➤ Teachers, Coaches, and Supervisors

Prior to the beginning of the school year/semester; interschool sport season; and/or intramural activity, teachers, coaches and intramural supervisors should:

- be knowledgeable of Lakehead District School Board's 8074 Student Concussion Management policy and procedures for prevention, identification, and Return to School Plan (Return to Learning and Return to Physical Activity);
- be knowledgeable about safe practices in the activity/sport (for example, the rules and regulations and the specific activity/sport pages in the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education);
- be familiar with the risks of a concussion or other potential injuries associated with the activity/sport and how to minimize those risks;
- be up to date and enforce school board/athletic association/referee rule changes associated with minimizing the risks of concussion;
- be up to date with current body contact skills and techniques (for example, safe tackling in tackle football), when coaching/supervising contact activities/sports;
- be knowledgeable (when applicable) with the requirements for wearing helmets. (To date there is no evidence that helmets protect against concussions.) For more information on helmets consult Helmet Information;
- determine that protective equipment is approved by a recognized equipment standards association (for example, Canadian Safety Standards, National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment), is well maintained, and is visually inspected prior to activity; and
- determine (where applicable) that protective equipment is inspected within approved timelines, by a certified re-conditioner as required by manufacturer (for example, football helmet).

During the physical activity unit; interschool sport season; and intramural activity teachers, coaches, and 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 activity/sport during practices and games/competition (particularly those that limit or eliminate body contact, or equipment on body contact);
- reinforce the principles of head-injury prevention (for example, keeping the head up and avoiding collision);

- teach students/athletes involved in body contact activities/sports about:
 - activity/sport-specific rules and regulations of body contact (for example, no hits to the head); and
 - 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 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 using protective equipment (for example, helmets, padding, guards) that is properly fitted (as per manufacturer's guidelines) and properly worn.

Prior to the interschool sports season, coaches must also (as required by Policy/Program Memorandum No. 158: School Board Policies on Concussion):

- be knowledgeable of the *Ontario Government's Concussion Awareness Resources E-Booklet* and/or school board approved concussion resources;
- follow school procedures to confirm their annual review of the resources;
- provide concussion awareness resources to parents/guardians of students under 18 years of age;
- provide concussion awareness resources to team trainers (where applicable) and officials;
- provide age appropriate concussion awareness resources for students;
- follow school procedures to confirm the review of these resources with all of the above individuals;
- be knowledgeable of the Interschool Concussion Code of Conduct for Coaches and follow the Board's procedures to confirm its review every school year;
- provide students with the Interschool Concussion Code of Conduct for Students and follow the Board's procedures to confirm its review prior to participation in sport;
- follow school board procedures in providing parent/guardians of students under 18 years of age with the Interschool Concussion Code of Conduct for Parent/Guardians and confirmation of its review; and
- follow school board procedures in providing team trainers (if applicable) the Concussion Code of Conduct for Interschool Sports for Coaches/Team Trainers and confirmation of its review.

Prior to the interschool sports season parent/guardians of students under 18 years of age must (as required by Policy/Program Memorandum No. 158: School Board Policies on Concussion):

- be knowledgeable of the contents of the appropriate **concussion awareness resource** provided by the school and to follow instructions to confirm review; and
- read the contents of the Parent/Guardian Concussion Code of Conduct provided by the school and to follow instructions to confirm review.

Concussion Prevention Strategies

➤ Students/Athletes

Prior to the beginning of the school year/semester; interschool sport season; and/or intramural activity, students should be informed about:

- concussions:
 - definition;
 - seriousness of concussions;
 - causes;
 - signs and symptoms; and
 - the Board's Identification procedures and Return to School Plan.
- the risks of a concussion associated with the activity/sport and how to minimize those risks including activity/sport-specific prevention strategies;
- the importance of respecting the rules of the game and practicing Fair Play (for example, to follow the rules and ethics of play, to practice good sportsmanship at all times and to respect their opponents and officials);
- the dangers of participating in an activity/sport while experiencing the signs and symptoms of a concussion and potential long-term consequences;
- the importance of:
 - immediately informing the teacher/coach/supervisor of any signs or symptoms of a concussion, and removing themselves from the activity/sport;
 - encouraging a teammate with signs or symptoms to remove themselves from the activity/sport and to inform the teacher/coach/supervisor;
 - informing the teacher/coach/supervisor when a classmate/teammate has signs or symptoms of a concussion; and
 - determining that, when students/athletes are permitted to bring their own protective equipment, it is properly fitted (as per manufacturers guidelines), properly worn, in good working order and suitable for personal use.

- the use of helmet when they are required for an activity/sport:
 - helmets do not prevent concussions. They are designed to protect against skull fractures, major brain injuries (including bleeding into or around the brain), brain contusions and lacerations; and
 - helmets must be properly fitted (as per manufacturer's guidelines) and properly worn.

During the physical activity unit, interschool sport season, and intramural activity, students should be informed about:

- attending safety clinics/information sessions on concussions for the activity/sport;
- be familiar with the seriousness of concussion and the signs and symptoms of concussion;
- demonstrating safe contact skills during controlled practice sessions prior to competition;
- demonstrating respect for the mutual safety of fellow athletes (for example, no hits to the head, follow the rules and regulations of the activity/sport);
- wearing properly fitted protective equipment;
- immediately reporting any sign or symptom of a concussion after a hit, fall or collision to the teacher/coach/supervisor; and
- encouraging teammates/fellow students to report sign(s) or symptom(s) of a concussion and to refrain from pressuring injured students/athletes to play.

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

- hold a pre-season/-activity group/team meeting on concussion education;
- develop and distribute an information checklist for students/athletes about prevention strategies;
- post-concussion information to inform/reinforce symptoms and signs and what to do if a concussion is suspected;
- post information posters on prevention of concussions (for example, encouraging students to report concussion symptoms) in high traffic student areas (for example, change room/locker area/classroom/gymnasium);
- implement concussion classroom learning modules aligned with the curriculum expectations; and
- distribute concussion fact sheets (prevention, signs and symptoms) for each student/athlete on school teams.

Prior to the interschool sports season students must be (as required by Policy/Program Memorandum No. 158: School Board Policies on Concussion):

- familiar with age appropriate **concussion awareness resources** and complete a process that confirms they have reviewed the information; and
- familiar with contents of their Concussion Code of Conduct and complete the process that confirms they have reviewed and will follow the criteria listed.

Students who are absent for safety lessons (for example, information, skills, techniques) must be provided with the information and training prior to the next activity sessions.

Reference: OPHEA 2020 | Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education