

# Brick Township Board of Education District Policy

**Instructional Program**

**Series 6000**

**Sports-Related Concussions & Head Injuries**

**Policy 6145.4**

Date Adopted: November 20, 2014

Date Revised:

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The Board of Education recognizes that head injuries pose a serious health risk to the students of this district and in particular to student athletes who participate in Interscholastic Athletics.

## General Statements

A concussion is caused by a blow or motion to the head or body that disrupts the normal functioning of the brain and can cause significant and sustained neuropsychological impairment, including, but not limited to, problem solving planning, memory and behavioral problems.

In order to ensure the safety of student athletes, it is imperative that athletes, coaches and parents/guardians are educated about the nature and treatment of concussions and other sports-related brain injuries and that all measures are taken to prevent a student athlete from experiencing second-impact syndrome.

In response to this serious health and safety issue, the Commissioner of Education shall annually distribute a brain injury fact sheet to this school district and copies of this fact sheet shall be distributed annually by this district to all student athletes, parents/guardians of student athletes, coaches, athletic directors, school nurses and athletic trainers. The student athlete and his/her parents/guardians both must sign an acknowledgement form indicating the receipt of this fact sheet and that they have read and understood the information provided in it. The district shall keep all such acknowledgements on file for future reference.

Failure to return the signed fact sheet shall disqualify the student athlete from any participation until such time as the signed acknowledgement has been received by the administration.

Any student athlete who sustains or is suspected of having sustained, a concussion or other brain injury while engaged in a sports competition or practice shall be immediately removed from the sports competition or practice. A student athlete who is removed from competition or practice shall not participate in further sports activity until he/she is evaluated by a physician trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and received written clearance from the physician to return to competition or practice and provides a written copy of the physician's clearance to the district administration.

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### Regulations / Procedures

Any student athlete who sustains or is suspected of having sustained a concussion or other brain injury while engaged in a sports competition or practice shall be immediately removed from the sports competition or practice. A student athlete who is removed from competition or practice shall not participate in further sports activity until he/she is evaluated by a physician trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and received written clearance from the physician to return to competition or practice and provides a written copy of the physician's clearance to the district administration. All coaches, assistant coaches, school nurses, school / team physicians, athletic directors and licensed athletic trainers must complete an Interscholastic Head Injury Training Program.

The Athletic Head Injury Training Program must include, but not be limited to:

- The recognition of the symptoms of head and neck injuries, concussions, risk of secondary injury, including the risk of second impact syndrome; and,
- Description of the appropriate criteria to delay the return to sports competition or practice of a student –athlete who has sustained a concussion or other head injury.

An Athletic Head Injury Training program such as the National Federation of State High Schools Association online “Concussion in Sports” training program or a comparable program that meets mandated criteria shall be completed by the above named staff. Additional head injury training programs that meet the mandated criteria may be completed by professionals of different levels of medical knowledge and training.

### General Information Regarding Sports-Related Concussions & Head Injuries

#### Prevention

1. Pre-season baseline testing of student athletes;
2. Review of educational information for student athletes on prevention of concussions;
3. Reinforcement of the importance of early identification and treatment of concussions to improve recovery.

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Student athletes who are exhibiting the signs or symptoms of a sports-related concussion or other head injuries during practice or competition shall be immediately removed from play and may not return to play that day.

### Possible Signs of Concussion

- Appears dazed, stunned, or disoriented;
- Forgets plays, or demonstrates short-term memory difficulty;
- Exhibits difficulties with balance or coordination;
- Answers questions slowly or inaccurately;
- Loses consciousness.

### Possible Symptoms of Concussion

- Headache;
- Nausea/Vomiting;
- Balance problems or dizziness;
- Double vision or changes in vision;
- Sensitivity to light or sound/noise;
- Feeling sluggish or foggy;
- Difficulty with concentration and short term memory;
- Sleep disturbance;
- Irritability.

Student athletes must be evaluated by a physician or licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussion to determine the presence or absence of a sports-related concussion or head injuries.

To return to practice and competition the student athlete must follow the protocol:

1. Immediate removal from competition or practice. 911 should be called if there is a deterioration of symptoms, loss of consciousness, or direct neck pain associated with the injury.
2. When available the student athlete should be evaluated by the school's licensed healthcare provider who is trained in the evaluation and management of concussions.

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3. School personnel (Athletic Director/Building Administrator, Licensed Athletic Trainer, School Nurse, Coach, etc.) should make contact with the student athlete's parent/guardian and inform him/her of the suspected sports-related concussion or head injury.
4. School personnel (coaches, assistant coaches, school nurses, school / team physicians, athletic directors and licensed athletic trainers, building administrators etc.) shall provide the student athlete with Board of Education approved suggestions for a management/medical checklist to provide their parent/guardian and physician or other licensed healthcare professional trained in the evaluation and management of sports related concussions and other head injuries.
5. The student athlete must receive written clearance from a physician, trained in the evaluation and management of concussions, that states the student athlete is asymptomatic at rest and may begin the local districts' graduated return-to-play protocol. Medical clearance that is inconsistent with district policy may not be accepted and such matters will be referred to the school/team physician.

### Graduated Return to Competition & Practice Protocol

1. Complete physical, cognitive, emotional, and social rest is advised while the student athlete is experiencing symptoms and signs of a sports-related concussion or other head injury. (Minimize mental exertion, limiting overstimulation, multi-tasking etc.)
2. After written medical clearance is given by a physician trained in the evaluation and management of concussions stating that the student athlete is asymptomatic at rest, the student athlete may begin a graduated individualized return-to-play protocol supervised by a licensed athletic trainer, school/team physician or, in cases where the aforementioned are not available, a physician or licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of sports-related concussions. The following steps should be followed:
  - A. Completion of a full day of normal cognitive activities (school day, studying for tests, watching practice, interacting with peers) without re-emergence of any signs or symptoms. If no return of symptoms, next day advance to:

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- B. Light aerobic exercise, which includes walking, swimming, or stationary cycling, keeping the intensity < 70% maximum percentage heart rate: no resistance training. The objective of this step is increased heart rate. If no return of symptoms, next day advance to:
- C. Sport-specific exercise including skating, and/or running; no head impact activities. The objective of this step is to add movement and continue to increase heart rate. If no return of symptoms, next day advance to:
- D. Non-contact training drills (e.g., passing drills). The student athlete may initiate progressive resistance training. If no return of symptoms, next day advance to:
- E. Following medical clearance (consultation between school health care personnel, i.e., licensed athletic trainer, school / team physician, school nurse and student athlete's physician), participation in normal training activities. The objective of this step is to restore confidence and to assess functional skills by the coaching staff. If no return of symptoms, next day advance to the return to play involving normal exertion or game activity.
  - In the absence of daily testing by knowledgeable school district staff (i.e. licensed athletic trainer, school / team physician) to clear a student athlete to begin the graduated return-to-play protocol a student –athlete should observe a 7 day rest/recovery period before commencing the protocol. Younger students (K-8) should observe the 7-day rest/recovery period (after they are symptom free at rest) prior to initiating the graduated-return-to play protocol. A physician trained in the evaluation and management of concussion as well as the parents/guardians of the student athlete shall monitor the student athlete in the absence of knowledgeable school district staff (i.e., athletic trainer, school / team physician). School nurses may serve as an advocate for student athletes in communicating signs and symptoms to physicians and parents/guardians.
  - Utilization of available tools such as symptom checklists, baseline and balance testing are suggested.

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- If the student athlete exhibits a re-emergence of any concussion signs or symptoms once they return to physical activity, he/she will be removed from further exertional activities and returned to his/her school/team physician or primary care physician.
- If concussion symptoms reoccur during the graduated return-to-play protocol, the student athlete will return to the previous level of activity that caused no symptoms.

### Temporary Accommodations for Student athletes with Sports-Related Head Injuries

1. Rest is the best “medicine” for healing concussions or other head injuries. The concussed brain is affected in many functional aspects as a result of the injury. Memory, attention span, concentration and speed of processing significantly impacts learning. Further, exposing the concussed student athlete to the stimulating school environment may delay the resolution of symptoms needed for recovery.
2. Accordingly, consideration of the cognitive effects in returning to the classroom is also an important part of the treatment of sports-related concussions and head injuries.
3. Mental exertion increases the symptoms from concussions and affects recovery. To recover, cognitive rest is just as important as physical rest. Reading, studying, computer usage, testing, texting – even watching movies if a student is sensitive to light/sound – can slow a student's recovery. In accordance with the Centers for Disease Control's toolkit on managing concussions boards of education may look to address the student's cognitive needs in the following ways.
4. Students who return to school after a concussion may need to:
  - Take rest breaks as needed;
  - Spend fewer hours at school;
  - Be given more time to take tests or complete assignments. (All courses should be considered);
  - Receive help with schoolwork;
  - Reduce time spent on the computer, reading, and writing;
  - Be granted early dismissal to avoid crowded hallways.

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### Legal References

- NJSA** 18A:11-3 Voluntary associations regulating conduct of student activities; membership; rules and regulations; appeals  
18A:19-14 Funds derived from student activities  
18A:35-20 Participation in courses in which verbalization unessential to understanding of subject matter; location of and children in bilingual programs  
18A: 40-41.2 et seq Student Athlete brain injuries  
18A:42-5, -6 Certain student organizations declared harmful  
34:13A-1 et seq. New Jersey Employer-Employee Relations
- NJAC** 6A:7-1.1 et seq. Managing for Equality and Equity in Education  
6A:8-3.2 Career education and counseling  
6A:9-5.19 Athletics personnel  
6A:16-2.2 Required health services  
6A:30-1.1 et seq. Evaluation of the Performance of School Districts  
6A:32-9.1 et seq. Athletics Procedures  
6A:32-14.1 Review of mandated programs and services
- 20 U.S.C.A. 4071-4074 - Equal Access Act  
20 U.S.C.A. 1681 et seq. - Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972  
Krupp v. Bd. of Ed. of Union County Reg. H.S. Dist. #1, 278 N.J. Super. 31 (App. Div. 1994)  
Good News Club v. Milford Central School, 121 U.S. 2093 (2001)  
NJSIAA Constitution, Bylaws, Rules and Regulations