

**THE PROTESTANT SEPARATE SCHOOL BOARD
OF THE TOWN OF PENETANGUISHENE**

POLICY MANUAL

POLICY TITLE:

Student Concussion Protocol

SECTION/CODE:

School Operations D – 26

APPROVAL DATE:

March 9, 2015

SUPERSEDES:

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POLICY STATEMENT

The Ministry of Education expects all school boards in Ontario to develop and maintain a policy on concussion as outlined in *Policy/Program Memorandum No. 158: School Board Policies on Concussion*. PPM 158 recognizes the Ontario Physical Education Safety Guidelines Concussion Protocol outlined in this document to be the minimum standard.

The Protestant Separate School Board of the Town of Penetanguishene (PSSBP) draws from the *Ontario Physical Education Safety Guidelines Concussion Protocol* to establish its own policy on Student Concussion Protocol. The Chart 1, on Pages 20 and 21, Steps and Responsibilities in Suspected and Diagnosed Concussions, provides information on concussion prevention, identification of a suspected concussion and management procedures for a diagnosed concussion, including a plan to help a student return to learning and to physical activity. Appendices C, D, E and F are those referenced as Samples included in the Ontario Physical Education Safety Guidelines, Elementary – Curricular, September 2014. The PSSBP will use these Samples for the purposes of its Concussion Protocol. All Appendix references are noted in **Dark Red** for ease of location within the body of the Protocol.

The Protestant Separate School Board of the Town of Penetanguishene is committed to reviewing this Protocol annually to remain current with the newest information and procedures as reviewed, revised and published in the Ontario Physical Education Safety Guidelines Concussion Protocol.

CONTEXT

A concussion can have a significant impact on a student’s cognitive and physical abilities. Research shows that activities that require concentration can actually cause a student’s concussion symptoms to reappear or worsen. It is equally important to develop strategies to assist students as they “return to learn” as well as to develop strategies to assist them to “return to physical activity”.

Research also suggests that a child or youth who suffers a second concussion before he or she is symptom free from the first concussion is susceptible to a prolonged period of recovery, and possibly Second Impact Syndrome – a rare condition that causes rapid and severe brain swelling and often catastrophic results.

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CONTEXT (Continued)

The PSSBP accepts that the principal, educators (including occasional teachers), school staff, students, parents and school volunteers play an important role in the prevention of concussion, identification of a suspected concussion, as well as the ongoing monitoring and management of a student with a concussion.

CONCUSSION DEFINITION

A concussion:

- Is a brain injury that causes changes in how the brain functions, leading to symptoms that can be physical (e.g., headache, dizziness), cognitive (e.g., difficulty concentrating or remembering), emotional/behavioural (e.g., depression, irritability) and/or related to sleep (e.g., drowsiness, difficulty falling asleep);
- May be caused either by a direct blow to the head, face or neck, or a blow to the body that transmits a force to the head that causes the brain to move rapidly within the skull;
- Can occur even if there has been no loss of consciousness (in fact most concussions occur without a loss of consciousness); and,
- Cannot normally be seen on X-rays, standard CT scans or MRIs.

CONCUSSION DIAGNOSIS

A concussion is a clinical diagnosis made by a medical doctor or nurse practitioner. It is critical that a student with a suspected concussion be examined by a medical doctor or nurse practitioner.

1. PREVENTION COMPONENT

Any time a student/athlete is involved in physical activity there is a chance of sustaining concussion. The PSSBP advocates a preventative approach encouraging a culture of safety mindedness when students are physically active.

Appendix F outlines [Sample Concussion Prevention Strategies](#)

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2. IDENTIFICATION COMPONENT

“The identification component provides strategies for the following:

- a) A teacher/coaches initial response for safe removal from the activity of a student injured as a result of a blow to the head, face or neck or a blow to the body that transmits a force to the head (e.g., student is conscious, student is unconscious)
- b) Initial suspected concussion – assessment strategies (e.g., use of common symptoms and signs of a concussion)
- c) Steps to take following an initial assessment

a) INITIAL RESPONSE

If a student receives a blow to the head, face or neck, or a blow to the body that transmits a force to the head that causes the brain to move rapidly within the skull, and as follows:

Unconscious Student (or where there was any loss of consciousness)

- Stop the activity immediately – assume there is a concussion.
- Initiate Emergency Action Plan and call 911. Do not move the student.
- Assume there is a possible neck injury and, only if trained, immobilize the student before emergency medical services arrive.
 - Do not remove athletic equipment (e.g., helmet) unless there is difficulty breathing.
- Stay with the student until emergency medical services arrive.
- Contact the student’s parent/guardian (or emergency contact) to inform them of the incident and that emergency medical services have been contacted.

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Unconscious Student (or where there was any loss of consciousness) (continued)

- Document the incident noting the details, nature and description of the incident. Refer to *Appendix B – Ontario School Boards' Insurance Exchange, Incident Report Form*
- If the student regains consciousness, encourage him/her to remain calm and to lie still. Do not administer medication (unless the student requires medication for other conditions – e.g., insulin for a student with diabetes).

Conscious Student

- Stop the activity immediately.
- Initiate Emergency Action Plan.
- When the student can be safely moved, remove him/her from the current activity or game.
- Conduct an initial concussion assessment of the student using *Appendix C – Tool to Identify a Suspected Concussion*.

b) INITIAL CONCUSSION ASSESSMENT

Following a blow to the head, face or neck, or a blow to the body that transmits a force to the head, a concussion should be suspected in the presence of any one or more of the following signs or symptoms:

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TABLE 1: Common Signs and Symptoms of a Concussion

Possible Signs Observed <i>A sign is something that will be observed by another person (e.g., parent/guardian, teacher, coach, supervisory, peer).</i>	Possible Symptoms Reported <i>A symptom is something the student will feel/report.</i>
<p>Physical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vomiting • slurred speech • slowed reaction time • poor coordination or balance • blank stare/glassy-eyed/dazed or vacant look • decreased playing ability • loss of consciousness or lack of responsiveness • lying motionless on the ground or slow to get up • amnesia • seizure or convulsion • grabbing or clutching of head <p>Cognitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • difficulty concentrating • easily distracted • general confusion • cannot remember things that happened before and after the injury • does not know time, date, place, class, type of activity in which he/she was participating • slowed reaction time (e.g., answering questions or following directions) <p>Emotional/Behavioural</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strange or inappropriate emotions (e.g., laughing, crying, getting angry easily) <p>Sleep Disturbance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drowsiness • insomnia 	<p>Physical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • headache • pressure in head • neck pain • feeling off/not right • ringing in the ears • seeing double or blurry/loss of vision • seeing stars, flashing lights • pain at physical site of injury • nausea/stomach ache/pain • balance problems or dizziness • fatigue or feeling tired • sensitivity to light or noise <p>Cognitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • difficulty concentrating or remembering • slowed down, fatigue or low energy • dazed or in a fog <p>Emotional/Behavioural</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • irritable, sad, more emotional than usual • nervous, anxious, depressed <p>Sleep Disturbance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drowsy • sleeping more/less than usual • difficulty falling asleep

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Note:

- Signs and symptoms can appear immediately after the injury or may take hours or days to emerge.
- Signs and symptoms may be different for everyone.
- A student may be reluctant to report symptoms because of a fear that he/she will be removed from the activity, his/her status on a team or in a game could be jeopardized or academics could be impacted.
- It may be difficult for younger students (under the age of 10), students with special needs or students for whom English/French is not their first language to communicate how they are feeling.
- Signs for younger students (under the age of 10) may not be as obvious as in older students.

c) STEPS TO TAKE FOLLOWING AN INITIAL ASSESSMENT

- i. ***If sign(s) are observed and/or symptom(s) are reported and/or the student fails the Quick Memory Function Assessment (see Appendix C):***

Teacher Response

- A concussion should be suspected – do not allow the student to return to play in the activity, game or practice that day even if the student states that he/she is feeling better.
- Contact the student’s parent/guardian (or emergency contact) to inform them:
 - of the incident
 - that they need to come and pick up the student; and,
 - that the student needs to be examined by a medical doctor or nurse practitioner as soon as possible that day.

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Teacher Response (continued)

- Complete incident report (see [Appendix B – Ontario School Boards' Insurance Exchange, Incident Report Form](#))
- Monitor and document any changes (i.e., physical, cognitive, emotional/behavioural) in the student. If any signs or symptoms worsen, call 911.
- Do not administer medication (unless the student requires medication for other conditions – e.g., insulin for a student with diabetes).
- Stay with the student until her/his parent/guardian (or emergency contact) arrives.
 - The student must not leave the premises without parent/guardian (or emergency contact) supervision.

Information to be Provided to Parent/Guardian:

- Parent/Guardian must be:
 - informed that the student needs to be examined by a medical doctor or nurse practitioner as soon as possible that day; and, provided with a copy of the tool used to identify the suspected concussion, [Appendix C - Tool to Identify a Suspected Concussion](#)
 - informed that they need to communicate to the school principal the results of the medical examination (i.e., the student does not have a diagnosed concussion or the student has a diagnosed concussion) prior to the student returning to school (may use the sample reporting form, [Appendix D – Documentation of Medical Examination](#)).
 - If **no** concussion is diagnosed: the student may resume regular learning and physical activities.
 - If a concussion is diagnosed: the student follows a medically supervised, individualized and gradual Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan.

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- ii. *If signs are NOT observed, symptoms are NOT reported AND the student passes the Quick Memory Function Assessment (see Appendix C):*

Teacher response:

- A concussion is not suspected - the student may return to physical activity.
- However the student's parent/guardian (or emergency contact) must be contacted and informed of the incident.

Information to be Provided to Parent/Guardian:

- Parent/Guardian must be:
 - informed that:
 - signs and symptoms may not appear immediately and may take hours or days to emerge;
 - the student should be monitored for 24-48 hours following the incident; and,
 - if any signs or symptoms emerge, the student needs to be examined by a medical doctor or nurse practitioner as soon as possible that day.
- School will use [Appendix C – Tool to Identify a Suspected Concussion](#) to communicate this information.

Responsibilities of the School Principal

Once a student has been identified as having a suspected concussion, the school principal must:

- inform all school staff (e.g., classroom teachers, intramural supervisors, coaches) and volunteers who work with the student with the suspected concussion. Prior to communicating with volunteers, [Appendix A - Volunteer Code of Conduct](#) will be completed.

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Responsibilities of the School Principal (continued)

- indicate that the student shall not participate in any learning or physical activities until the parent/guardian communicates the results of the medical examination (i.e., the student does not have a diagnosed concussion or the student has a diagnosed concussion) to the school principal (by completing [Appendix D – Documentation of Medical Examination](#) or by returning a note signed and dated by the parent/guardian).

DOCUMENTATION OF MEDICAL EXAMINATION:

Prior to a student with a suspected concussion returning to school, the parent/guardian must communicate the results of the medical examination (i.e., student does not have a diagnosed concussion or the student has a diagnosed concussion) to the school principal (may use the sample reporting form, [Appendix D – Documentation of Medical Examination](#)).

- If no concussion is diagnosed: the student may resume regular learning and physical activities.
- If a concussion is diagnosed: the student follows a medically supervised, individualized and gradual Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan (see section below: Management Procedures for a Diagnosed Concussion).

Responsibilities of the School Principal

Once the parent/guardian has informed the school principal of the results of the medical examination, the school principal must:

- inform all school staff (e.g., classroom teachers, physical education teachers, intramural supervisors, coaches) and volunteers who work with the student of the diagnosis. . Prior to communicating with volunteers, [Appendix A - Volunteer Code of Conduct](#) will be completed.
- file written documentation (e.g., [Appendix D – Documentation of Medical Examination](#) or medical practitioner’s note) of the results of the medical examination in the Documentation File of the student’s OSR.

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Responsibilities of the School Principal (continued)

- Principal provides parent/guardian with a form to record documentation of the student's progress through the Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan, [Appendix E – Documentation for a Diagnosed Concussion – Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan](#).

3. MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES FOR A DIAGNOSED CONCUSSION

Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan

Ongoing communication and monitoring by all members of a collaborative team is essential for the successful recovery of the student.

This collaborative team is led by the Principal and should include the concussed student, his/her parent(s)/guardian(s), school staff and volunteers who work with the students, and the medical doctor or nurse practitioner.

Completion of the Steps within the Plan:

The steps of the Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan may occur at home or at school. The members of the collaborative team must factor in special circumstances which may affect the setting in which the steps may occur (i.e., at home and/or school), for example:

- the student has a diagnosed concussion just prior to winter break, spring break or summer vacation; or,
- the student is neither enrolled in Health and Physical Education class nor participating on a school team.

The collaborative team must ensure that steps 1-4 of the Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan are completed. As such, written documentation from a medical doctor or nurse practitioner (e.g., [Appendix E – Documentation for a Diagnosed Concussion – Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan](#)) that indicates the student is symptom free and able to return to full participation in physical activity must be provided by the student's parent/guardian to the school principal and kept on file in the Documentation File of the student's OSR.

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It is important to note:

- Cognitive or physical activities can cause a student's symptoms to reappear.
- Steps are not days – each step must take a minimum of 24 hours and the length of time needed to complete each step will vary based on the severity of the concussion and the student.
- The signs and symptoms of a concussion often last for 7 – 10 days, but may last longer in children and adolescents.

Step 1 – Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity

The student does not attend school during Step 1.

The most important treatment for concussion is rest (i.e., cognitive and physical).

- Cognitive rest includes limiting activities that require concentration and attention (e.g., reading, texting, television, computer, video/electronic games).
- Physical rest includes restricting recreational/leisure and competitive physical activities.

Step 1 continues for a minimum of 24 hours and until:

- the student's symptoms begin to improve; OR,
- the student is symptom free;

as determined by the parents/guardians and the concussed student.

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Parent/Guardian:

Before the student can return to school, the parent/guardian must communicate to the school principal using [Appendix E – Documentation for a Diagnosed Concussion – Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan](#) either that:

- the student’s **symptoms are improving** (and the student will proceed to Step 2a – Return to Learn); **OR**,
- the student is **symptom free** (and the student will proceed directly to Step 2b – Return to Learn and Step 2 – Return to Physical Activity).

Return to Learn – Designated School Staff Lead:

Once the student has completed Step 1 (as communicated to the school principal by the parent/guardian) and is therefore able to return to school (and begins either Step 2a – Return to Learn **or** Step 2b – Return to Learn, as appropriate), one school staff (i.e. a member of the collaborative team, either the school principal or another staff person designated by the school principal) will serve as the main point of contact for the student, the parents/guardians, other school staff and volunteers who work with the student, and the medical doctor or nurse practitioner.

The designated school staff lead will monitor the student’s progress through the Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan. This may include identification of the student’s symptoms and how he/she responds to various activities in order to develop and/or modify appropriate strategies and approaches that meet the changing needs of the student.

Step 2a – Return to Learn

A student with symptoms that are improving, but who is not yet symptom free, may return to school and begin Step 2a – Return to Learn.

During this step, the student requires individualized classroom strategies and/or approaches to return to learning activities - these will need to be adjusted as recovery occurs (see Table 2 - Return to Learn Strategies/Approaches). At this step, the student’s cognitive activity should be increased slowly (both at school and at home), since the concussion may still affect his/her academic performance. Cognitive activities can cause a student’s concussion symptoms to reappear or worsen.

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Step 2a – Return to Learn (continued)

It is important for the designated school staff lead, in consultation with other members of the collaborative team, to identify the student's symptoms and how he/she responds to various learning activities in order to develop appropriate strategies and/or approaches that meet the needs of the student. School staff and volunteers who work with the student need to be aware of the possible difficulties (i.e., cognitive, emotional/behavioural) a student may encounter when returning to learning activities following a concussion. These difficulties may be subtle and temporary, but may significantly impact a student's performance.

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TABLE 2: Return to Learn Strategies/Approaches

COGNITIVE DIFFICULTIES		
Post Concussion Symptoms	Impact on Student's Learning	Potential Strategies and/or Approaches
Headache and Fatigue	Difficulty concentrating, paying attention of multitasking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · ensure instructions are clear (e.g., simplify directions, have the student repeat directions back to the teacher) · allow the student to have frequent breaks, or return to school gradually (e.g., 1-2 hours, half-days, late starts) · keep distractions to a minimum (e.g., move the student away from bright lights or noisy areas) · limit materials on the student's desk or in their work area to avoid distractions · provide alternative assessment opportunities (e.g., give tests orally, allow the student to dictate responses to tests or assignments, provide access to technology)
Difficulty remembering or processing speed	Difficulty retaining new information, remembering instructions, accessing learned information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · provide a daily organizer and prioritize tasks · provide visual aids/cues and/or advance organizers (e.g., visual cueing, non-verbal signs) · divide larger assignments/assessments into smaller tasks · provide the student with a copy of class notes · provide access to technology · repeat instructions · provide alternative methods for the student to demonstrate mastery
Difficulty paying attention/concentrating	<p>Limited/short-term focus on schoolwork</p> <p>Difficulty maintaining a regular academic workload or keeping pace with work demands</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · coordinate assignments and projects among all teachers · use a planner/organizer to manage and record daily/weekly homework and assignments · reduce and/or prioritize homework, assignments and projects · extend deadlines or break down tasks · facilitate the use of a peer note taker · provide alternate assignments and/or tests · check frequently for comprehension · consider limiting tests to one per day and student may need extra time or a quiet environment

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EMOTIONAL/BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES		
Post Concussion Symptoms	Impact on Student's Learning	Potential Strategies and/or Approaches
Anxiety	Decreased attention/concentration Overexertion to avoid falling behind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · inform the student of any changes in the daily timetable/schedule · adjust the student's timetable/schedule as needed to avoid fatigue (e.g., 1-2 hours/periods, half-days, full-days) · build in more frequent breaks during the school day · provide the student with preparation time to respond to Questions
Irritable or Frustrated	Inappropriate or impulsive behavior during class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · encourage teachers to use consistent strategies and approaches · acknowledge and empathize with the student's frustration, anger or emotional outburst if and as they occur · reinforce positive behaviour · provide structure and consistency on a daily basis · prepare the student for change and transitions · set reasonable expectations · anticipate and remove the student from a problem situation (without characterizing it as punishment)
Light/Noise Sensitivity	Difficulties working in classroom environment (e.g., lights, noise, ets.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · arrange strategic seating (e.g., move the student away from window or talkative peers, proximity to the teacher or peer support, quiet setting) · where possible provide access to special lighting (e.g., task lighting, darker room) · minimize background noise · provide alternative settings (e.g., alternative work space, study carrel) · avoid noisy crowded environments such as assemblies and hallways during high traffic times · allow the student to eat lunch in a quiet area with a few friends · where possible provide ear plugs/headphones, sunglasses
Depression/Withdrawal	Withdrawal from participation in school activities or friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · build time into class/school day for socialization with peers · partner student with a "buddy" for assignments or activities

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Parent/Guardian:

Must communicate to the school principal using [Appendix E – Documentation for a Diagnosed Concussion – Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan](#) that the student is symptom free before the student can proceed to Step 2b – Return to Learn and Step 2 – Return to Physical Activity.

Step 2b – Return to Learn (occurs concurrently with Step 2 – Return to Physical Activity)

A student who:

- has progressed through Step 2a – Return to Learn and is now symptom free may proceed to Step 2b – Return to Learn; or,
- becomes symptom free soon after the concussion may begin at Step 2b – Return to Learn (and may return to school if previously at Step 1).

At this step, the student begins regular learning activities without any individualized classroom strategies and/or approaches.

- This step occurs concurrently with Step 2 – Return to Physical Activity.

Note: Since concussion symptoms can reoccur during cognitive and physical activities, students at Step 2b – Return to Learn or any of the following return to physical activity steps must continue to be closely monitored by the designated school staff lead and collaborative team for the return of any concussion symptoms and/or a deterioration of work habits and performance.

- If, at any time, concussion signs and/or symptoms return and/or deterioration of work habits or performance occur, the student must be examined by a medical doctor or nurse practitioner.

The parent/guardian must communicate the results and the appropriate step to resume the Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan to the school principal by completing [Appendix E – Documentation for a Diagnosed Concussion – Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan](#) before the student can return to school.

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Step 2 – Return to Physical Activity

Activity: Individual light aerobic physical activity only (e.g., walking, swimming or stationary cycling keeping intensity below 70% of maximum permitted heart rate)

Restrictions: No resistance or weight training. No competition (including practices, scrimmages). No participation with equipment or with other students. No drills. No body contact.

Objective: To increase heart rate

Parent/Guardian:

Must report back to the school principal by completing [Appendix E – Documentation for a Diagnosed Concussion – Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan](#) that the student continues to be symptom free in order for the student to proceed to Step 3.

Step 3 – Return to Physical Activity

Activity: Individual sport-specific physical activity only (e.g., running drills in soccer, skating drills in hockey, shooting drills in basketball)

Restrictions: No resistance/weight training. No competition (including practices, scrimmages). No body contact, no head impact activities (e.g., heading a ball in soccer) or other jarring motions (e.g., high speed stops, hitting a baseball with a bat).

Objective: To add movement

Step 4 – Return to Physical Activity

Activity: Activities where there is no body contact (e.g., dance, badminton). Progressive resistance training may be started. Non-contact practice and progression to more complex training drills (e.g., passing drills in football and ice hockey).

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Step 4 – Return to Physical Activity (continued)

Restrictions: No activities that involve body contact, head impact (e.g., heading the ball in soccer) or other jarring motions (e.g., high speed stops, hitting a baseball with a bat).

Objective: To increase exercise, coordination and cognitive load.

Teacher:

Communicates with parents/guardians that the student has successfully completed Steps 3 and 4 by completing [Appendix E – Documentation for a Diagnosed Concussion – Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan](#).

Parent/Guardian:

Must provide the school principal with written documentation from a medical doctor or nurse practitioner (may use [Appendix E – Documentation for a Diagnosed Concussion – Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan](#)) that indicates the student is symptom free and able to return to full participation in physical activity in order for the student to proceed to Step 5 – Return to Physical Activity.

School Principal:

Written documentation (e.g., [Appendix E – Documentation for a Diagnosed Concussion – Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan](#)) is then filed by the school principal in the Documentation File of the student's OSR.

Step 5 – Return to Physical Activity

Activity: Full participation in regular physical education/intramural/interschool activities in non-contact sports. Full training/practices for contact sports.

Restrictions: No competition (e.g., games, meets, events) that involve body contact.

Objective: To restore confidence and assess functional skills by teacher/coach.

**THE PROTESTANT SEPARATE SCHOOL BOARD
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POLICY MANUAL

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Step 6 – Return to Physical Activity (Contact sports only)

Activity: Full participation in contact sports

Restrictions: None

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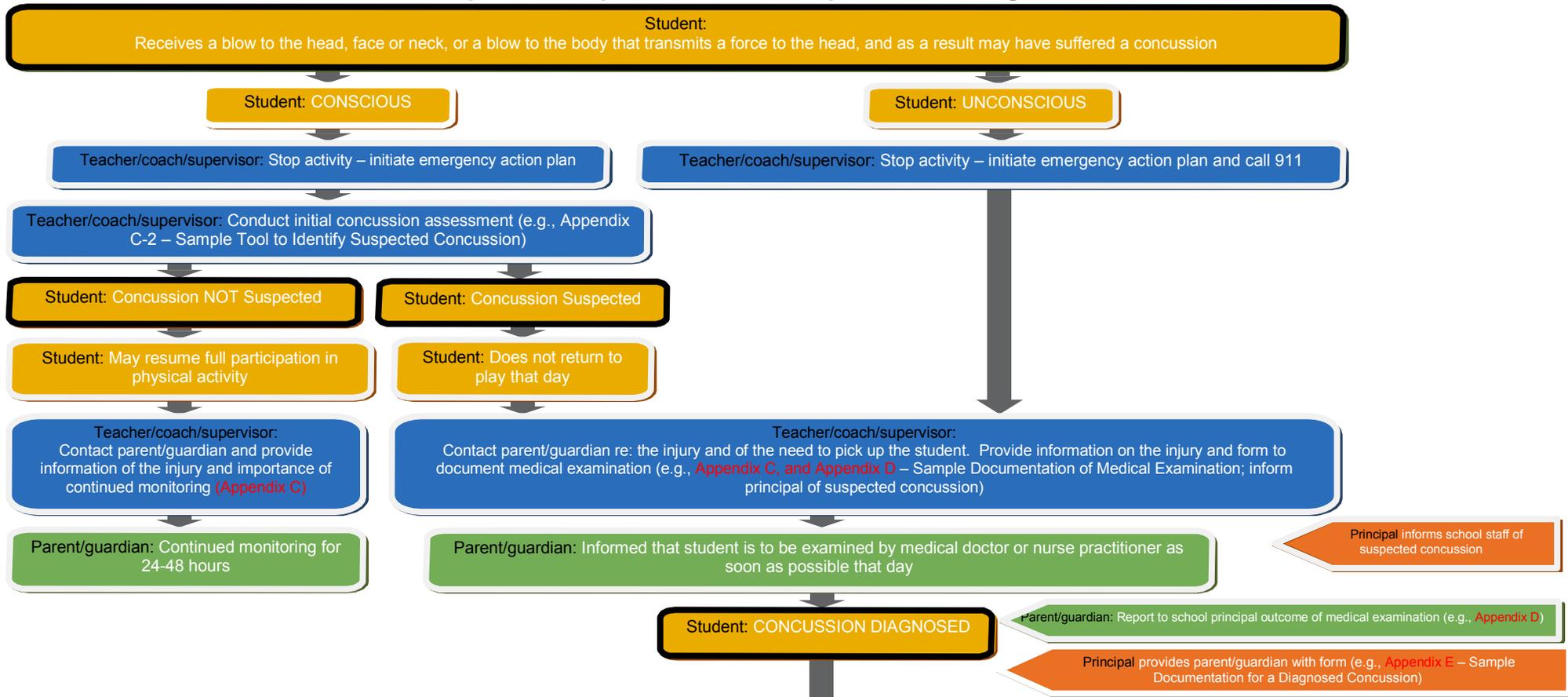
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CHART 1: Steps and Responsibilities in Suspected and Diagnosed Concussions



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