



POLICY – PO614

Concussion Management

Area:	Student Conduct and Safety
Source:	Superintendent of Education – Safe and Accepting Schools
Approved:	Jan. 26, 2015 (Interim); Feb. 9, 2015
Revised:	Jan. 27, 2020 (Interim); Nov. 9, 2020

1. Introduction

The Durham Catholic District School Board is committed to helping all students lead successful, safe, healthy and active lives. As part of its commitment to student safety, injury prevention and well-being, the Board promotes sound practices to address concussion safety across all school and school board activities.

2. Definitions

Coach – any type of coach, including a head coach or assistant coach.

Concussion – a clinical diagnosis that is communicated by a medical doctor or a nurse practitioner:

- a brain injury that causes changes in the way in which the brain functions and that can lead to symptoms that can be physical (e.g., headache, dizziness), cognitive (e.g., difficulty in concentrating or remembering), emotional/behavioural (e.g., depression, irritability), and/or related to sleep (e.g., drowsiness, difficulty in falling asleep);
- may be caused either by a direct blow to the head, face, or neck or by 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);
- cannot normally be seen by means of medical imaging tests, such as X-rays, standard computed tomography (CT) scans, or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans.

Concussion Protocol – a protocol maintained by Ontario Physical Health and Education Association (OPHEA) as part of the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education which is to be the minimum standard for school boards. The protocol includes detailed information and procedures on:

- concussion prevention
- concussion identification, including signs and symptoms
- the initial response related to a suspected concussion
- the Return to School plan, which includes information on planning for the return to learning and return to physical activity for students with a diagnosed concussion.

Interschool Sports – organized and Board sanctioned athletic competitions taking place between two or more schools.

Official – an umpire, a referee or a judge, who presides over the field of play. Students who are acting as officials under the supervision of a coach or teacher are not included in this definition.

OPHEA – Ontario Physical Health and Education Association which provides resources to school boards and educators related to physical health and education programming in schools.

Rowan’s Law – a concussion safety law put into place by the Ontario Government in 2018 that enshrines mandatory concussion safety protocols for all sports organizations. It also resulted in amendments to the Education Act to protect amateur athletes, including students, by improving concussion safety on the field and at school.

Rowan’s Law: Concussion Awareness Resources - resources provided by the Government of Ontario to improve concussion safety in amateur competitive sport to be used by athletes under 26 years of age, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of an athlete under 18, coaches, team trainers and officials.

Team Trainer – an individual who is assigned by a school board to respond to athlete injuries. Students who are acting as team trainers under the supervision of a coach or teacher are not included in this definition.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to raise awareness about the seriousness of concussions by educating and empowering students, staff and parents/guardians to manage and prevent concussions in compliance with Rowan’s Law.

4. Application / Scope

This policy applies to all students, staff, parents/guardians and school approved volunteers across all schools and school board activities, both on and off Board property.

5. Principles

5.1 The Board recognizes that:

- 5.1.1 the conduct of students, staff, parents/guardians and volunteers must be consistent with the Gospel values, the Board's mission, vision and values and all requirements set forth by the Education Act and its applicable Regulations.
- 5.1.2 the safety of students, staff, parents/guardians and volunteers is paramount.
- 5.1.3 all brain injuries, like concussions, can have a serious impact on student achievement and well-being.
- 5.1.4 the minimum standard for risk management practices related to concussions is the OPHEA Concussion Protocol.
- 5.1.5 it has responsibility to provide safety information to students, staff, volunteers and parent(s)/guardian(s) about the management and prevention of concussions in a timely manner and at a minimum once per school year.
- 5.1.6 all staff, students, parent(s)/guardian(s) and volunteer(s) have a role in managing and preventing concussions.
- 5.1.7 concussion awareness, prevention, identification, management, tracking and training in schools is a priority.

6. Requirements

- 6.1 The Director of Education shall issue administrative procedures to support this policy and amend them thereafter as the need arises.
- 6.2 The Board shall use the Rowan's Law: Concussion Awareness Resources developed by the Government of Ontario to ensure that information students, coaches, parents/guardians, trainers and officials receive regarding concussions at school is consistent with the information they receive from sports organizations across Ontario.
- 6.3 As outlined in Rowan's Law, the Board will ensure that at a minimum, the following individuals review the approved Concussion Awareness Resource each school year prior to participation in board-sponsored interschool sports:

- a) students participating in board-sponsored interschool sports;
 - b) parents/guardians of students under eighteen (18) years of age who are participating in board-sponsored interschool sports;
 - c) coaches participating in board-sponsored interschool sports;
 - d) team trainers participating in board-sponsored interschool sports; and
 - e) officials participating in board-sponsored interschool sports.
- 6.4 The Board will ensure that the approved Rowan's Law: Concussion Awareness Resources are made available to all stakeholders in a variety of formats.
- 6.5 Where possible, learning about concussions should be addressed in the curriculum and during an annual awareness event to be held on or around Rowan's Law Day (the last Wednesday in September).
- 6.6 Concussion awareness training for relevant school staff should take place by the last Wednesday in September (Rowan's Law Day) every school year.
- 6.7 The Board shall establish Concussion Codes of Conduct for groups participating in board-sponsored interschool sports (e.g., students, parents/guardians of students under eighteen (18) years of age, coaches and team trainers). The Board will review the Concussion Codes of Conduct whenever this policy is reviewed or updated, at a minimum.
- 6.8 The Concussion Codes of Conduct must include the following requirements. Depending on their roles and responsibilities, individuals involved in board-sponsored interschool sports must commit to the relevant requirements below:
- a) maintaining a safe learning environment;
 - b) teaching and/or learning and applying the rules of a physical activity/sport;
 - c) implementing the skills and strategies for a physical activity in a proper progression;
 - d) fair play and respect for all;
 - e) acknowledging and respecting the consequences for prohibited play that is considered high-risk for causing concussions;
 - f) providing opportunities to discuss potential issues related to concussions;
 - g) recognizing and reporting concussions;

- h) acknowledging the importance of communication between the student, parents/guardians, school staff, and any sport organization with which the student is registered;
 - i) supporting the implementation of a Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan for students who have a concussion diagnosis; and
 - j) prioritizing a student's return to learning as part of the Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan.
- 6.9 The Board must receive confirmation every school year that the relevant Concussion Code of Conduct was reviewed prior to participation in Board-sponsored interschool sports.
- 6.10 The Concussion Codes of Conduct will be made available to all stakeholders in a variety of ways.
- 6.11 The Board will refer to OPHEA's Concussion Protocol when developing the process for the identification of suspected concussions that occur during school activities or events, and during interschool sports.
- 6.12 The Board will develop a Return to School Plan for students who have been diagnosed with a concussion, regardless of whether the concussion was sustained at school or elsewhere.
- 6.13 The Return to School Plan, must:
- a) establish a process outlining the graduated steps that a student is expected to follow in order to return to learning and to physical activity;
 - b) require that the student and the student's parents/guardians, if the student is under eighteen (18) years of age, be informed of the importance of sharing with the school any medical advice or recommendations received in relation to the student's concussion diagnosis and their return to learning and physical activity;
 - c) require that the student and the student's parents/guardians, if the student is under eighteen (18) years of age, be informed of the importance of disclosing the concussion diagnosis to any relevant organizations with which the student is involved or registered (e.g., sport organizations); and
 - d) require that the student or the student's parents/guardians, if the student is under eighteen (18) years of age, provide confirmation of medical clearance by a physician or nurse practitioner as a prerequisite for the student's return to full participation in physical activity.
- 6.14 If a student who is recovering from a concussion is experiencing long-term difficulties that begin to affect learning, the school board should follow

established processes for identifying and documenting instructional approaches and resources that may be required for responding to the student's ongoing learning needs (e.g., individualized classroom accommodations).

- 6.15 In accordance with relevant privacy legislation, the Board will document and track a student's progress, from removal from an activity due to a suspected concussion, to the return, through graduated steps, to learning and to physical activity.
- 6.16 The Board recognizes the sensitive nature of personal health information and will collect, use, and disclose only the relevant diagnostic information needed to fulfill the requirements of this policy and to disclose it only to the parties identified in this policy.
- 6.17 The Board will limit the collection, use, access, and disclosure of personal and health information to that which is reasonably necessary to carry out the Board's concussion identification procedures and Return to School Plan. Personal and health information collected by the Board will be retained, disclosed, and disposed of in accordance with the Board's personal information retention policy.

7. Sources

- 7.1 Education Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2., 27.1 Subsection 8(1)
- 7.2 Ministry of Education, Policy/Program Memorandum 158, School Board Policies on Concussion
- 7.3 Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education, 2019
- 7.4 Concussion Awareness Resources, Government of Ontario
- 7.5 Concussion Protocol, Ontario Physical Health and Education Association

8. Related Policies and Administrative Procedures

- 8.1 Concussion Management Administrative Procedure (AP614-1)