

**Legal References:** The Education Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter E.2

**Related References:** Ministry of Education, PPM 158, School Board Concussion Policies, OPHEA Safety Guidelines

**Effective Date:** May 2015

**Revisions:**

**Reviewed:**

#### 1. Preamble

1.1 The KidsAbility School Authority (Board), recognizes the importance of the health, safety and well-being of its students as essential pre-conditions for effective learning. The Board understands all stakeholders, including trustees, administrators, educators, school staff, students, parents, school volunteers and community-based organizations have an important role to play in promoting student health and safety, and fostering and maintaining healthy and safe environments in which students can learn. To this end, the Board is committed to taking steps to reduce the risk associated with concussions.

1.2 Concussions can have a serious effect on a young, developing brain. Proper recognition and response to concussion in the school environment can prevent further injury and can help with recovery. Children and adolescents are among those at greater risk for concussions due to body trauma at any time. Although falls and motor vehicle accidents are the leading causes of concussion, there is a heightened risk due to concussion during physical activity which includes physical education classes, playground time or sports activities.

1.3 To address this increased risk of concussions, and to prevent and identify the signs and symptoms of concussion, the Board is committed to increasing awareness for all students, staff, parents, volunteers and health care practitioners to support the proper management of concussions.

1.4 As part of the response to student concussion, school administration and staff, with the support of parents/guardians, the student, and medical professionals will follow a Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan for students diagnosed with a concussion.

## **2. Definition of a Concussion**

The Ministry of Education Policy Procedure Memorandum 158 School Board Policies on Concussions defines a concussion as follows:

2.1 A concussion is a brain injury that causes changes in the way in which the brain functions which can lead to symptoms that can be physical (e.g. head-ache, 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),

2.2 A concussion 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,

2.3 A concussion can occur even if there has been no loss of consciousness (in fact, most concussions occur without a loss of consciousness),

2.4 A concussion 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.

## **3. Concussion Awareness, Prevention and Management, Identification and Response**

3.1 Awareness: The Board is committed to building awareness of head injuries, concussions and their impact with staff, students, volunteers, parents, and community partners. Knowledge about properly managing concussions or suspected concussions is essential in a student's recovery.

3.2 Prevention and Management: Concussions may occur anytime a student is involved in an activity whether at school or in the community. The Board takes a preventative approach to concussions using education as a tool to prevent and minimize the risk of concussion. As with all aspects of student safety, the Board promotes a culture of safety-mindedness first. Based on the OPHEA Concussion Safety Guidelines September 2014, three key aspects of concussion prevention and management include:

3.2.1 Providing information/actions that prevent concussions from happening (e.g. rules and regulations, minimizing slips and falls by checking that classroom floor and activity environments provide for safe traction and are obstacle free, etc.),

3.2.2 Appropriate management of a concussion when one has occurred (e.g. Effective identification of the problem, and Management of the Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity plan) designed to prevent the worsening of a concussion,

3.2.3 Preventing long term complications of a concussion (e.g. chronic traumatic encephalopathy) by advising the participant to permanently discontinue a physical activity/sport based on evidence-based guidelines.

3.3 Identification: The Board is committed to ensuring the proper identification of a

concussion or suspected concussion. Whenever there is a blow to the head, face, or neck, or a blow to the body that transmits a force to the head, a concussion is to be suspected. When a concussion is suspected:

3.3.1 The student will immediately be removed from all physical activities,

3.3.2 The student's parents/guardians will be contacted,

3.3.3 The Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan: "Suspected Concussion Checklist" will be completed and a copy given to the parents,

3.3.4 The parents/guardians will provide the school principal with medical documentation as to whether there is or is not a diagnosed concussion.

3.4 Response: The Board believes that the successful treatment of a concussion is fundamental to optimizing the learning, well-being and achievement of the student. When a concussion is diagnosed the student will follow a medically supervised, individualized and gradual Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan (Appendix A).

#### **4. Responsibilities**

4.1 The responsibility for administration of this policy lies with Senior Administration and the school. The school principal or designate is required to follow this policy and will lead the coordination and management of the Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan with the support of staff, parents/guardians, student, and associated medical professionals.

4.2 School staff and volunteers are required to follow this policy and fulfill the direction of the Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan.

4.3 Parents/guardians and students are responsible for developing their awareness about concussion prevention, identification and management and fulfilling their role as part of the collaborative team who implement the Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan where a student is diagnosed with a concussion.

4.4 Information on concussion awareness, prevention and management, identification and response is accessible to all stakeholders at [www.ontario.ca/concussions](http://www.ontario.ca/concussions).