

Supporting Students After Injuries

Help Students Heal with Confidence

When a student returns to school after an injury, the transition can be far more challenging than it appears on the surface. Educators play a critical role in creating supportive, flexible environments that help students rebuild confidence and reconnect with school life. Understanding what students may be experiencing, both physically and emotionally, can guide teachers in offering meaningful, compassionate support.

Student Struggles

Physical Pain and Limits – Every injury is unique, and so are the physical limitations that accompany it. While some students may be able to seemingly get through their daily life in a typical fashion, others may have major challenges to overcome.

Example: A student recovering from a fractured leg may struggle to move between classes quickly, carry heavy books, or sit comfortably for long periods. Even simple tasks like navigating crowded hallways may be exhausting or painful.



Emotional Distress – Students may feel frustrated, discouraged, or embarrassed when they can't do things that they used to do easily.

Example: A previously active student may feel upset when they can't participate fully in group projects or classroom setups that require movement, causing them to feel like a burden or "different."



Student Struggles

Feeling isolated – Injuries can disrupt a student’s normal routines and social interactions. This could happen often with students who cannot participate in sports or organized activities that they typically would do.

Example: A student who typically eats lunch with a sports team may now be sidelined, unable to join practices or games. This separation can lead to feelings of loneliness or detachment from peer groups.

Anxiety – Students may be anxious about how injuries may affect their future or be fearful about the injury reoccurring.

Example: A student recovering from a concussion may worry about not getting to return to their sport before the season ends or fearing another head injury will occur.



Sense of loss – Students may grieve lost opportunities or experiences they had been anticipating.

Example: Missing an entire sports season, a long-awaited field trip, or a school performance can make students feel like they’ve lost a piece of their identity or a milestone they’ll never get back.

Learn More

One frequently encountered injury that requires student support is a traumatic brain injury, such as a concussion.

If you would like to learn more about how to support students with traumatic brain injuries, click [here](#) to take a 1 hour online professional development module.



How Teachers Can Help

Allow students to ease back into the classroom. Provide gradual transitions, reduced workloads, or modified assignments as needed.

Example: Instead of expecting a student to immediately catch up on a week's worth of work, a teacher might break tasks into manageable chunks and extend deadlines.

Encourage the student to communicate their needs, feelings, and questions. Be available to talk with the student and reassure them that you are there to help. Provide the student with options for other adults to speak with if necessary, such as counselors or nurses.

Example: A teacher might check in privately to ask, "How are you feeling today? Are there any adjustments that would make things easier?"

Help the student set realistic goals and expectations. Many times, the student is experiencing an injury for the first time and does not know what to expect and needs guidance. Setting realistic goals can help students build confidence.

Example: If a student is frustrated that they can't write for long periods due to a wrist injury, the teacher might help set a goal like writing for five minutes at a time, gradually building up.



Celebrate progress while understanding when students make mistakes.

Example: Applauding a student for moving from using a wheelchair to crutches, or for completing a modified assignment, can boost confidence and motivation.

Be positive. While students may get down, your encouragement can help students stay hopeful during a difficult time.

Example: Remind students that injuries are temporary, and that healing often happens step by step. Your steady reassurance can help them stay emotionally resilient.

Reference

Returning to School After a Sports Injury. (2023, August 23). Alliance Orthopedics. <https://allianceortho.com/returning-to-school-after-a-sports-injury/>

