



The Biggest Mistakes We See In Return To Learn Plans Related to Slowed Processing Speed

The biggest mistake we see educators make in a Return to Learn Plan is to offer “time extensions” and “postponement” of make-up work, current work and quizzes/tests.

The biggest mistake we see healthcare providers make is to “prescribe” absolute RTL recommendations like NO reading, NO computers, NO tests during recovery from a concussion.

These mistakes lead to the “Empty Grade Book” phenomenon. (*View “Empty Grade Book” Tip Sheet.*)

While these recommendations come from a place of good intentions, they tend to backfire in the case of concussion. We know that both teachers and healthcare providers are thinking:

*Let’s let this student with a concussion have four weeks to heal
(or get to being symptom-free)
and then we will get him/her back to the task of school.*

However, school, especially high school, moves at such a fast pace that four weeks of extensions and postponements ends up not being a “gift” at all, especially if the student believes that he/she will still be responsible for all the work. Students worry that when they finally begin to feel better, they will have piles of make-up work to complete on top of piles of current work to complete. This leads to anxiety and will undoubtedly make recovery from the concussion harder (and longer).

As educators, we do not want to be contributing to the factors that delay and hamper recovery from concussion. Our ability to look at our curriculum and see what parts of it might be non-essential (repetitive, “busy work”) and what parts might be semi-essential (interesting but would not make or break the curriculum) allow us to help our students. For the parts that are left over, for the parts that you deem are essential, ask yourself:

- how can I find a way to teach to these essential areas in the next few weeks?
- how can I find a way to assess mastery of the most essential elements?
- how can I help this student with a concussion earn a fair grade?

REMOVAL of non-essential work and REDUCTION of semi-essential work are THE most helpful academic interventions a teacher can give a student with a concussion. These adjustments keep the most essential learning going (albeit in smaller amounts) for weeks on end, while keeping symptoms and frustration down. It’s a WIN-WIN!

