



BrainSTEPS
Strategies Teaching Educators, Parents, & Students
A BRAIN INJURY SCHOOL RE-ENTRY CONSULTING PROGRAM

May 2014

**PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOLS AT THE FOREFRONT OF
CONCUSSION RETURN TO LEARN MANAGEMENT
The BrainSTEPS Program Trains 670+ Concussion Management Teams (CMTs)
Statewide in 1.5 years.**

Annually, approximately 22,000 child & adolescent concussions occur in PA. Current research states that approximately 90% of students will recover in the first 4 weeks. With the increase in public knowledge, the statewide BrainSTEPS Brain Injury School Re-Entry Consulting Program has been working to assist an ever increasing number of students with concussion return to school. Returning to the full demands of school must be carefully managed, because returning to a full academic load too soon following a concussion can significantly increase recovery time and intensify symptoms. Students must be symptom free in the academic environment before return to play begins.

In response to this as well as a deluge of student concussion referrals sparked by the recent passage of the PA Concussion in Youth Sports law, the BrainSTEPS Program established a Concussion “Return to Learn” School District Protocol with the PA Department of Education utilizing school based academic Concussion Management Teams (CMTs). **Pennsylvania is the first state in the nation to systematically roll out a program to train & facilitate 670+ Return to Learn CMTs.** CMTs support both student athletes & non-athletes at the local, district level, who are returning to the demands of school while promoting recovery. CMTs partner with BrainSTEPS consulting teams that cover the state, based out of the educational Intermediate Units. The BrainSTEPS teams are available to schools as a 2nd layer of more intensive student concussion support, consultation and training, for concussed students who are still symptomatic after 4 weeks or if they have not returned to their academic baseline. BrainSTEPS teams are available to consult with CMTs at any time.

The Concussion Management Team training is held online in conjunction with the PA Department of Health. CMTs consist of 1 Academic Monitor and 1 Symptom Monitor who manage student recovery for the initial 4 weeks. Standard symptom based accommodations are put into place and the student's progress is monitored weekly, at which time accommodations might be increased or faded depending on how the student is doing. All schools (public, private,



charter, and Career & Technical Centers) are invited to partner with BrainSTEPS for concussion related training, information on current best practices and research for accommodating students in the classroom setting.

The BrainSTEPS Program Coordinator who created the CMT project stated, “There was a need in PA schools for easily accessible tools so education professionals could accurately monitor symptoms and academics. These areas are key to managing student concussion ‘symptom thresholds’ at school, while ensuring that learning is still taking place. We do not want students to experience symptoms such as headaches, caused by cognitively fatiguing the brain due to thinking too hard while it is simultaneously trying to heal. Using our Concussion Toolkit, the CMT Monitors are guided to ask the right questions so they can formulate a plan to enable students to remain in school while recovering. The Concussion Toolkit also includes monitoring tools to gather data the schools need to justify decisions about individual student education plans. Teachers, who understand concussion, follow accommodations, and fluidly adjust them until concussion symptoms resolve are promoting recovery and lessening symptoms caused by cognitive over-exertion.”

BrainSTEPS is jointly funded by the PA Department of Health, the PA Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education via the PaTTAN network, and is implemented by the Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania. The program was created by the PA Department of Health in 2007.

BrainSTEPS will continue to train new academic Concussion Management Teams. To register a new CMT, concussion resources, and videos on concussion educational impact, please go to www.brainsteps.net or contact the statewide Program Coordinator: Brenda Eagan Brown, MEd, CBIS at eaganbrown@biapa.org or 724-944-6542

