



Understanding the Impact of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Concussion in School Settings

WHAT IS TBI?

TBI, or Traumatic Brain Injury is “an acute brain injury resulting from mechanical energy to the head from external physical forces”, but not when related to “drugs, alcohol, medications, caused by other injuries or treatment for other injuries, caused by other problems (e.g., psychological trauma, coexisting medical conditions) or caused by penetrating craniocerebral injury”⁵. TBI is when there is a change in brain functioning after somebody physically injures their head in some way. It can have different types of consequences for those who live and survive a TBI¹.

Common symptoms of TBI and concussions in youth:

Physical Symptoms ⁵	Cognitive and Behavioral Symptoms ⁵	Sensation and Perceptual Symptoms ⁵
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Headache• Convulsions or seizures• Blurred or double vision• Pupil dilation• Fluids draining from nose/ears• Nausea and vomiting• Slurred speech, weakness of arms, legs, or face, or loss of balance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of or change in consciousness• Decreased level of consciousness• Confusion or disorientation• Problems remembering, concentrating, or making decisions• Changes in sleep patterns• Frustration or irritability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Light-headedness, dizziness, or vertigo• Blurred vision• Hearing problems, or ringing in the ears• Unexplained bad taste in the mouth• Sensitivity to light or sound• Mood swings, agitation, or combativeness• Feeling anxious or depressed• Fatigue or drowsiness

How does this impact youth in schools?²



Low Energy

Changes in awakesness and sleep habits can impact energy levels, which impacts motivation.



Impaired Memory and Focus

Students may struggle with knowledge and remembering the correct words to use



Concentration and Distraction

Students may show more distractibility, trouble concentrating, and confusion



Task Completion

Student may struggle with completing tasks due to memory challenges or overwhelm

How can schools meet the needs of students recovering from TBI or concussion?⁵



Allow extra time for task completion



Offer simple explanations and break down tasks into small pieces



Stay in touch with their parents to remain up-to-date on their needs



Thoroughly evaluate abilities to determine accommodations



Build knowledge & understanding among peers to maintain sensitivity

Truths About TBI that Target Common Misconceptions⁶



TBI is not contagious



Having a TBI does not make someone dangerous

Individuals with TBI can improve even if they do not gain back the same abilities as before

TBI is not a mental illness



TBI may impact some abilities but does not make a person “stupid”



What should schools encourage other students to do to make it easier for their friends who are recovering from a TBI or a concussion?⁵

Encourage students to accept their friends the way they are now, even if it may be different compared to how they remember them from before

Discourage students from comparing their friends with TBI to others or making fun of them in any way, even if they think their friends will not mind

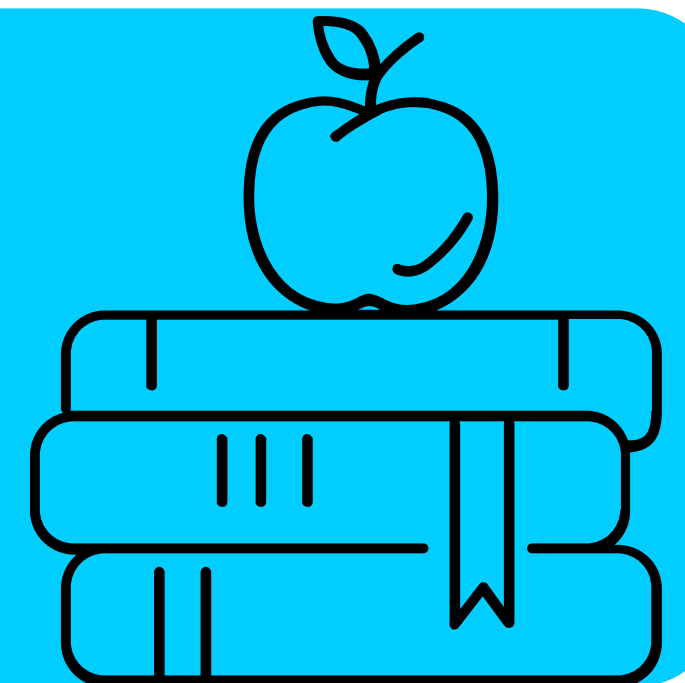
Encourage students to be compassionate when their friends express disappointment or frustration over their situation

Encourage students to celebrate the things that their friends consider achievements, no matter how small they may seem

Resources

[Upstate Concussion Center- “Concussion in the Classroom” Brochure³](#)

[Traumatic Brain Injury: Video Resources for Educators⁴](#)



References

Andrews TK, Rose FD, Johnson DA. Social and behavioural effects of traumatic brain injury in children. *Brain Inj.* 1998;12(2):133-138.

Brain Injury Association of America. Children & brain injury: Impact on education. Available from: [Brain Injury Association of America](#) Accessed March 30, 2026.

Brain Injury Association of New York State. Concussion in the classroom. Published June 2016. Accessed April 14, 2026. https://bianys.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/2019_Concussion_in_the_Classroom_2a.pdf

Kennedy Krieger Institute. Traumatic brain injury: video resources for educators. Accessed April 14, 2026. <https://www.kennedykrieger.org/patient-care/centers-and-programs/specialized-transition-program-neurorehabilitation-day-hospital/video-resources-for-educators>

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. Traumatic brain injury (TBI). National Institutes of Health. Accessed March 30, 2026. <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/disorders/traumatic-brain-injury-tbi>

Nieser A. Mild traumatic brain injuries and risk for affective and behavioral disorders. National Association of State Head Injury Administrators. Published February 7, 2024. Accessed March 30, 2026. <https://www.nashia.org/resources-list/mild-traumatic-brain-injuries-and-risk-for-affective-and-behavioral-disorders>