INTENDED PURPOSE:
The Ministry of Education expects all school boards in Ontario to develop and maintain a policy on concussion, (PPM 158). The components of the policy include strategies to develop awareness of the seriousness of concussions; strategies for the prevention and identification of concussions; management procedures for diagnosed concussions; and training for board and school staff.

The Halton District School Board recognizes the importance of the health, safety and overall well-being of its students and is committed to taking steps to reduce the risk of injury. Research demonstrates a concussion can have a significant impact on a student – cognitively, physically, emotionally, and socially. In fact, research shows activities that require concentration can actually cause a student's concussion symptoms to reappear or worsen. Without identification and proper management, a concussion can result in permanent brain damage and in rare occasions, even death. Research also suggests a child or youth who suffers a second concussion before he or she is symptom-free from the first concussion is susceptible to a prolonged period of recovery, and possibly Second Impact Syndrome – a rare condition that causes rapid and severe brain swelling and often catastrophic results. It is equally important to help students as they "Return to Learn" in the classroom as it is to help them “Return to Physical Activity”.

The Board recognizes children and adolescents are among those at greatest risk for concussions and while there is potential for a concussion any time there is body trauma, the risk is greatest during activities where collisions can occur, such as during physical education classes, playground time, school-based sports activities or field trips. Educators and school staff play a crucial role in the identification of a suspected concussion as well as the ongoing monitoring and management of a student with a concussion. Awareness of the signs and symptoms of concussion and knowledge of how to properly manage a diagnosed concussion is critical in a student's recovery and is essential in helping to prevent the student from returning to learning or physical activities too soon and risking further complications. Ultimately, the awareness and knowledge could help contribute to the student's long-term health and academic success.

The Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (Ophea) has released a sample concussion protocol as part of the Ontario Physical Education Safety Guidelines. Ophea’s protocol, which is based on current research evidence and knowledge, contains information on concussion prevention, symptoms and signs of a concussion, initial response procedures for a suspected concussion, and management procedures for a diagnosed concussion, including a plan to help a student return to learning and to physical activity. The Ministry of Education
consider the concussion protocol outlined in the Ontario Physical Education Safety Guidelines to be the minimum standard.

Collaborative efforts of the Halton Catholic District School Board, the Halton District School Board and Halton Regional Health Department have "Haltonized" the Ontario Safety Guidelines Concussion Management Procedures in order to meet the needs and requirements of the students in the Halton Region.

Therefore, the contents of the Halton District School Board Concussion Protocol are the minimum standard that must be implemented and followed by administrators, educators, school staff, students, parents and school volunteers to assist them in:

- Understanding their respective role and responsibilities described in the HDSB Concussion Protocol
- Understanding the seriousness of concussions, its causes, the signs and symptoms; minimizing the occurrence of a concussion through implementation of strategies for preventing and minimizing the risk of sustaining concussions;
- Following the steps for safe removal of an injured student from activity, responding appropriately to a suspected concussion, for identification of a suspected concussion, and steps to take following an initial diagnosis
- Following management procedures for a diagnosed concussion, including the HDSB Return to Learn/ Return to Physical Activity Plan;
- Attending/completing appropriate training to remain informed of the HDSB Concussion Protocol.

PROCEDURES:

Concussion Definition:
A concussion:
- is a brain injury that causes changes in how the brain functions, leading to symptoms that can be physical (e.g., headache, dizziness), cognitive (e.g., difficulty concentrating or remembering), emotional/behavioural (e.g., depression, irritability) and/or related to sleep (e.g., drowsiness, difficulty falling asleep);
- may be caused either by a direct blow to the head, face or neck, or a blow to the body that transmits a force to the head that causes the brain to move rapidly within the skull;
- can occur even if there has been no loss of consciousness (in fact most concussions occur without a loss of consciousness); and,
- cannot normally be seen on X-rays, standard CT scans or MRIs.

Concussion Diagnosis:
Concussion is the term for a clinical diagnosis that is made by a medical doctor or a nurse practitioner. Since a medical doctor or nurse practitioners are the only health professionals able to diagnose concussions, educators, school staff, or volunteers cannot make the diagnosis of concussion. In the best interest of the child it is critical that a medical doctor or nurse practitioner examine a student with a suspected concussion. Without medical documentation the student’s participation in learning or physical activities will be restricted. This decision resides with the school Principal.

**Please refer to Tool to Identify a Suspected Concussion Form (Form C-2) and Documentation of Monitoring/Medical Examination (Form C-3) in the HDSB Concussion Protocol.**
**Note:** Injuries that result from a second concussion may lead to “Second Impact Syndrome”, which is a rare condition that causes rapid and severe brain swelling and often catastrophic results, if an individual suffers a second concussion before he or she is free from symptoms sustained from the first concussion.

**Prevention and Minimizing the Risk of Concussions:**
Education is the prime factor in supporting the prevention of a concussion. Any time a student/athlete is involved in physical activity; there is a chance of sustaining a concussion. Therefore, it is important to take a preventative approach when dealing with concussions.

Prior to any activity school staff (includes administration staff, teaching staff, support staff, coaches, volunteers, etc.) must meet with participants to provide instruction on strategies for preventing and minimizing the risk of sustaining a concussion and other head injuries. For specific strategies school staff should refer to Halton District School Board Safety Guidelines relevant to specific sport/activity (e.g., Curricular Module 1, Intramural Module 2, Interschool Module 3).

**Summary of Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan:**
The Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity Plan is a collaborative effort between home and school to support the student’s progress through the plan following a diagnosed concussion.

The 6 Step Plan is necessary and identifies the sequence of supporting a Return to Learn priority prior to a Return to Physical Activity focus.

A minimum of 24 hours is necessary for EACH step. There is no set timeline for a student’s progression through each of the steps.

**Summary of Steps:**

**Return to Learn/Return to Physical Activity – Step 1**
- Completed at home; student requires cognitive and physical rest
- If symptom free, student may go directly to Return to Learn Step 2b and Return to Physical Activity Step 2

**Return to Learn – Step 2a**
- Symptoms improving
- Return to school with monitored re-integration to classroom and cognitive effort; and Physical Rest

**Return to Learn – Step 2b**
*Note: Return to Learn Step 2b and Return to Physical Activity Step 2 occur concurrently*
- Symptom free
- Return to regular school routine and learning activities

**Return to Physical Activity – Step 2**
- Light aerobic physical activity and regular learning activities

**Return to Physical Activity – Step 3**
- Begin sport specific type of physical activities

**Return to Physical Activity – Step 4**
- Greater range of physical activity options permitted, but no body contact

**Return to Physical Activity – Step 5**
- Full participation in all non-contact type physical activities, and return to training in contact sports

**Return to Physical Activity – Step 6**
- Full participation, no restrictions
BUT
If after Return to Learn Step 2a, concussion symptoms return, the student will return to the designated step as directed by the physician – this may include return to step

RESPONSIBILITIES:
Superintendent of Education will:
• Perform a regular review of the Concussion Administrative Procedure to ensure guidelines align with current best practice recommendations and, at a minimum, Ophea concussion guidelines;
• Ensure information on the Concussion Administrative Procedure is shared with the greater school community, including organizations that use the school facilities, such as community sports organizations and licensed child-care providers operating in schools of the Board;
• Share concussion prevention, identification and management information with students and their parents/guardians.

Principal will:
• Abide by the Concussion Administrative Procedure;
• Ensure staff, volunteers, parents/guardians, and students are aware of the Concussion Protocol and understand their roles and responsibilities;
• Ensure the Concussion Protocol is followed by all school staff (including occasional staff/support staff, recess supervisors), parents/guardians, students, and volunteers;
• Facilitate attendance and/or completion of concussion in-servicing/training for staff and coaching volunteers, and repeat as necessary;
• Ensure concussion protocol documentation is readily available to all school staff and volunteers;
• Ensure the Halton District School Board Elementary or Secondary Physical Education Safety Guidelines (Curricular Module 1, Intramural Module 2, Interschool Module 3) are being followed
• Oversee the HDSB Board form “The Letter to Parents/Guardians”: Medical Form and Acknowledgement of Risk for School/FDK/Physical Education/ DPA/ Intramurals and Clubs, Appendix A, is distributed to all parents/guardians (e.g. via Summer Mailing Package), collected by the school and remind all staff the form must be completed prior to student participation in any physical activity, physical education class, and school intramural programs
• For Interschool Athletics, in addition to the above form: Medical Form and Acknowledgement of Risk for School/FDK/Physical Education/ DPA/ Intramurals and Clubs, Appendix A, for any students wishing to try-out/participate on an Interschool team, oversee the Interschool Athletic Program: Acknowledgement of Risk, Medical Authorization, Student Accident Insurance Form, Appendix B, is distributed, completed and signed by parents/guardian prior to student participation in the first try-out/practice, for each athletic season
• Ensure all incidents are recorded, reported and filed as required by this Administrative Procedure, as appropriate, and with an OSBIE incident report form;
• Prior to student return to school, ensure completion and collection of the following documentation (forms found in the HDSB Concussion Protocol): Documentation of Monitoring/Medical Examination (Form C3)
Halton District School Board

Administrative Procedure

- Ensure Documentation for a Diagnosed Concussion Return to Learn / Return to Physical Activity plan (Form C4) is completed and signed by Parents/Medical Doctor/Nurse Practitioner as needed, as student progresses through each step.
- File above documents (Forms C3 & C4) in student’s OSR and provide copy to appropriate school staff.
- Alert appropriate staff about students with a suspected or diagnosed concussion.
- Work as closely as possible with students, parents/guardians, staff, volunteers, and health professionals to support concussed students with their recovery and academic success.
- For students who are experiencing difficulty in their learning environment as a result of a concussion, coordinate the development of an Individual Learning Plan, using Table 2: Return to Learn Strategies/Approaches, and approve any adjustments to the student’s schedule as required.
- Attempt to obtain parental/guardian cooperation in reporting all non-school related concussions.

School Staff (Includes administration staff, teaching staff, support staff, coaches, volunteers, etc.) will:

- Understand and follow Concussion Protocol and Administrative Procedure;
  - Prevention and Education: all Classroom Teachers, all School Staff
  - Prevention and Education, Identification and Management, and Training: Schools Leads, all Health and Physical Education Teachers and Coaches of Interschool Athletics
- Attend and complete concussion training (e.g. staff meeting, online, workshop, read concussion protocol package, etc.)
- Ensure the HDSB Board form “The Letter to Parents/Guardians”: Medical Form and Acknowledgement of Risk for School/FDK/Physical Education/ DPA/ Intramurals and Clubs, Appendix A, has been completed and signed by parents/guardians prior to student participation in any physical activity, physical education class, and school intramural programs.
- For Interschool Athletics, in addition to the above form: Medical Form and Acknowledgement of Risk for School/FDK/Physical Education/ DPA/ Intramurals and Clubs, Appendix A, for any students wishing to try-out/ participate on an Interschool team, oversee the Interschool Athletic Program: Acknowledgement of Risk, Medical Authorization, Student Accident Insurance Form, Appendix B, is completed and signed by parents/guardian prior to student participation in the first try-out/practice, for each athletic season.
- Ensure age-appropriate concussion education, including prevention, is included for all students participating in activities that could result in a concussion using the Halton Student Concussion Education Project (HSCEP) for grades 3, 6, and 9 and Coaches Modules: safety lessons connected to the Personal Safety and Injury Prevention Strand in HPE curriculum, Kindergarten to Grade 12;
- Ensure the Halton District School Board Elementary or Secondary Physical Education Safety Guidelines (Curricular Module 1, Intramural Module 2, Interschool Module 3) are being followed and implement risk management and injury prevention strategies specific to sport/activity;
- Be able to recognize signs, symptoms and respond appropriately in the event of a suspected concussion; Tool to Identify a Suspected Concussion (Form C2) in the HDSB Concussion Protocol.
• Ensure the Tool to Identify a Suspected Concussion (Form C2) and Documentation of Monitoring/Medical Examination (Form C3) is included in occasional teacher lesson plans and field trip folders;
• Make sure occasional teaching staff is updated on concussed student’s condition;

Parents/Guardians will:
• Reinforce concussion prevention strategies with their child (e.g. following rules of fair play, playground safety rules, wearing properly fitted helmets, using equipment safely);
• Understand and follow parents/guardian roles and responsibilities in the Administrative Procedure;
• In the event of a suspected concussion, ensure child is assessed as soon as possible by medical doctor/nurse practitioner;
• Be responsible for the completion of all required documentation;
• Collaborate with school to manage suspected or diagnosed concussions appropriately;
• Follow physician/nurse practitioner recommendations to promote recovery;
• Cooperate with school to facilitate Return to Learn and Return to Physical Activity and support child’s progress through Documentation for a Diagnosed Concussion Return to Learn / Return to Physical Activity plan (Form C4);
• Report non-school related concussion to principal (Documentation for a Diagnosed Concussion Return to Learn / Return to Physical Activity plan, Form C4 will apply);

Students will:
• Learn about concussions, including prevention strategies, signs and symptoms, concussion management and student roles and responsibilities, throughout applicable curriculum (i.e.; Halton Student Concussion Education Program (HSCEP) in grade 3, 6, and 9 and Coaches Modules; safety lessons connected to the Personal Safety and Injury Prevention Strand in HPE curriculum, Kindergarten to Grade 12);
• Immediately inform school staff of suspected or diagnosed concussions occurring during or outside of school;
• Inform school staff if they experience any concussion related symptoms (immediate, delayed or reoccurring);
• Remain on school premises until parent/guardian arrives if concussion is suspected;
• Follow concussion management strategies as per medical doctor/nurse practitioner direction and Documentation for a Diagnosed Concussion Return to Learn / Return to Physical Activity plan (Form C4);
• Communicate concerns and challenges during recovery process with school lead, school staff, parents/guardians, and health care providers;