# Superintendent’s Memo #017-19


**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education**

DATE: January 18, 2019

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction

## SUBJECT: School Board Policies on Concussions in Students

This memorandum provides information regarding amendments to the *Code of Virginia* to include § 22.1-271.5 and § 22.1-271.6 directing the Board of Education to develop and distribute guidelines to school divisions dealing with concussions in students and requiring each school division to develop policies and procedures regarding the identification and handling of suspected concussions in students. Pursuant to Senate Bill 652, (Northam 2010); House Bills 410 (Anderson) and 1096 (Filler-Corn), and Senate Bill 172 (Stuart 2014); and House Bill 954 (Keam 2016), the goals of the Student-Athlete Protection Act (SB 652, SB 172, HB 410, HB 1096, and HB 953) are to ensure that students who sustain concussions are properly diagnosed, given adequate time to heal, and are comprehensively supported until they are symptom free.

Each school division shall develop policies and procedures regarding the identification and handling of suspected concussions in students that address the academic needs and gradual reintroduction of cognitive demands for students who have been determined to have a concussion. Concussion symptoms may have a significant impact on learning and academic achievement. A concussion may interfere with a student’s ability to focus, concentrate, memorize, and process information. School personnel shall be alert to cognitive and academic issues that may be experienced by a student who has suffered a concussion or other head injury, including (i) difficulty with concentration, organization, and long-term and short-term memory; (ii) sensitivity to bright lights and sounds; and (iii) short-term problems with speech and language, reasoning, planning, and problem solving. Local school boards shall accommodate the gradual return to full participation in academic activities, as appropriate, based on the recommendation of the student's licensed health care provider as to the appropriate amount of time that such student needs to be away from the classroom and would benefit from these accommodations to promote recovery following a concussion.

If you need technical assistance or have questions about school board policies on concussions in students, please contact Deborah Johnson, Specialist for Intellectual Disabilities and Traumatic Brain Injury, Office of Special Education Instructional Services, by email at deborah.johnson@doe.virginia.gov or by telephone at (804) 371-2725; or Vanessa Wigand, Coordinator for Health Education, Office of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, by email at Vanessa.wigand@doe.virginia.gov or by telephone at (804) 225-3300.

JFL/VCW/dr

### Attachment

1. Virginia Board of Education Guidelines For Policies on Concussions in Students