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ADE Releases New Concussion Management Support Resource

LITTLE ROCK — The effects of a concussion can linger long after a head trauma occurs, and oftentimes, the symptoms go unnoticed. Not only can the effects cause continued medical issues for a student, they can negatively impact a student's ability to learn.

To help families, schools, and medical professionals develop an integrated, community-based approach of support for students affected by concussions, the Arkansas Department of Education, in conjunction with the Arkansas Brain Injury Support Program (a grant-funded program out of the department's Office of Special Education), is pleased to release "REAP the Benefits of Good Concussion Management" today in support of National Concussion Awareness Day.

While any student can suffer from a concussion, student athletes are more susceptible to them because of the physical contact associated with sports.

"When I was a coach and a principal, I saw firsthand the long-lasting effects that concussions can have not only on the health of students but also on their ability to be successful in the classroom," said Matt Sewell, the director of Special Education at ADE's Division of Elementary and Secondary Education. "This new resource takes a multi-faceted approach to providing support by identifying roles and responsibilities for each member of a student's support team. It's important to remember that a combined approach is essential to helping a student fully recover long after the game is over and the student returns to the classroom."

The Arkansas manual is based on the REAP (Remove/Reduce, Educate, Adjust/Accommodate, and Pace) concussion management community-based model that was developed in Colorado after a football player died from a head trauma. In developing Arkansas' manual, partners (which include Arkansas Children's Hospital, the Arkansas Activities Association, the Schmieding Center, and the Trauma Rehabilitation Resources Program) incorporated Return to Play principles that are outlined by Arkansas concussion legislation.

The manual also identifies multiple myths about concussions, includes a symptom checklist, offers special considerations, and provides guidance regarding specific actions and timelines for a student's family team, school physical and academic teams, and medical team. In addition to outlining the steps students can take to return to their sport, the manual also identifies the most common "thinking" problems that occur following a concussion and considerations for adjustments or accommodations needed when a student returns to the classroom.

"The safety of all student athletes is our top priority, but when an injury does occur, we want to ensure students have the best support network available to help them not only 'get back in the game' but also succeed academically and in life," said Dr. Joey Walters, deputy executive director of the Arkansas Activities Association. "The 'REAP' resource is a great tool that encourages a community-wide approach to helping students heal from a concussion. We are happy to be part of its development and know it will greatly benefit students in the future."

The manual is available for review and download at <https://bit.ly/3AdkXNT>.

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