

# Brain Injury: Addressing Your Class

Welcoming your student who sustained a moderate or severe traumatic brain injury (TBI) back into your class after an interruption in instruction can be complex and sensitive. Each student, family, and situation will be different. Every student transitioning back to school deserves support, respect, and a welcoming voice in your classroom.

A first step is to reach out to the family and student to ask if they are comfortable sharing any information with the class or if they would like you to share any information. Never share confidential information with others without written consent. Remember, a traumatic brain injury does not come with an instruction manual for the student or the family: everyone is learning together.

You spent time building a strong classroom community at the beginning of the school year, so trust and rapport have already been established. The characteristics of a classroom community are helpful as students and staff face sensitive topics and hard conversations related to a brain injury. Since each brain injury is vastly different, it is recommended that you spend time learning about how the family and student currently know the brain injury manifests. Ensure you complete CBIRT's In The Classroom modules to build a strong base of brain injury knowledge and learn strategies for skills that the injury may impact. In combination with understanding your student's needs, your In The Classroom background will help you navigate presenting information to your class. You can also use a book to help start the conversation. Examples of text resources are listed below for elementary and secondary-aged students.

Most importantly, if the student can identify his or her wants, needs, and concerns, those factors must be your top priority throughout the student's recovery. These wants, needs, and concerns may change over time, so be sure to regularly check in with the student and his or her family.

## Essential Things to Remember:

1. Every brain injury is different.
2. Brain injuries can change over time.
3. Brain injuries are considered "invisible disabilities"- in other words, a student may have the same appearance, but social-emotional, cognitive, regulation, and motor skills may be drastically different after the injury.

## Resources

### Elementary

Amanda's Fall by Kelly Bouldin Darmofal

Elvin The Elephant Who Forgets By Heather Snyder (Book and DVD)

Arnie's MRI by Jenny Archibald

Billy Butterfly Tries by Cindy Koneczny

All About Me! By Roberta DePompei and Bob Cluett (English and Spanish)

### Secondary

*Still Friends? Friends Still! How peers handle brain injury.* By Vancouver School Board, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority & Robyn Littleford

All About Me! My Life as a Teenager by Roberta DePompei

All About Me! By Roberta DePompei and Bob Cluett (Spanish)