



Student Kyle Hangley (seated) demonstrates ImPACT concussion testing to (standing, left to right) Hopatcong High School Athletic Director Thomas Vara, Trainer John Canzone, PTSO Vice-President Jackie Hangley, and PTSO President Mike Hangley.

HHS Ahead of the Game in Concussion Testing

With a rash of serious injuries to his fall athletes last year, Tom Vara, Hopatcong High School's Athletic Director, knew he needed to take some serious steps to protect his kids and to prevent injuries from decimating his teams.

The solution was his teaming up with Athletic Trainer John Canzone to create a cutting-edge protocol designed to educate coaches, trainers, administrators, students and parents on the symptoms and dangers of head concussions.

"We examined our conditioning program and the way coaches teach skills in a variety of sports. But, we were particularly concerned about healing time with concussions," Vara said. "We needed to develop a return-to-play protocol to make sure our athletes are healthy enough to return to their teams."

Part of the protocol involved ImPACT, a computerized neurocognitive assessment program used as one criteria to determine an athlete's ability to return to sports after a head concussion. The program was purchased by the high school's PTSO, and every fall athlete has been tested. "The program establishes a baseline. When an athlete has a concussion, a retest is given. The results help us determine if that student is able to play," Vara said.

"But the next step in the process was to educate all of our stakeholders," he continued. Vara brought in Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation. "Concussion: Signs, Symptoms and Effects," a component of Kessler's Sports Education Lecture Series, was delivered to an audience from several area schools on September 1. The program is designed to help reduce the risk of injuries to young athletes.

"The stakes are too high," said Vara. "We need to make sure we do everything we can to keep the kids on our teams healthy by preventing injuries and by making sure they're able to return from injury at the proper time.

For additional information,
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