



Attention All Wisconsin School Nurses!

Clear Vision, Bright Future

Healthy Eyes are the Key to Successful Learning in ALL Children

Over the past several years, the Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA), a statewide professional non-profit association consisting of doctors of optometry, has worked with school nurses in Wisconsin to raise the public's awareness regarding the importance of good vision and eye health in children. In 2001, the WOA worked with state lawmakers to pass a law requiring all Wisconsin Public School Districts to request that each pupil entering Kindergarten have their eyes tested. Working together, Wisconsin doctors of optometry and school nurses like you have helped hundreds of Wisconsin children receive the vision and eye health care they need to be successful in school.

Unfortunately, too many children in Wisconsin still begin a new school term with undetected vision and/or eye health problems. Given the fact 80% of all learning in a child's first twelve years of life is obtained through vision, we can do more to assure children see clearly in school and to maximize their ability to learn.

Attached, you will find the following information:

- ❖ **Wisconsin's Children's Vision Law (Chapter 118.135):** Requires school districts to encourage parents of Kindergarten children to have their child's eyes examined by a doctor of optometry or evaluated by a physician.
- ❖ **Letter to Parents:** Please help distribute this letter to the parents of students.
- ❖ **2015 VISION USA Fact Sheet:** Explains essential details of the VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project program.
- ❖ **VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project Patient Application Form (English and Spanish)**
- ❖ **Kindergarten Eye Health Examination Report (English and Spanish):** From the State of Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services (DPS), this form should be used by the examining doctor and returned by the student to the school for the child's records.
- ❖ **Teachers' Guide to Vision:** Important information and instruction for teachers on how vision and eye health impacts learning as well as signs that a child may be experiencing difficulties associated with vision problems.

Optometry's Pledge to Students in Need

Fourteen years ago, Wisconsin doctors of optometry made a public pledge to provide vision and eye health care to any child in need who's family cannot afford the cost of care. To fulfill this pledge, the WOA created several benevolent programs to help children who do not qualify for medical assistance or who do not have private insurance. One of these programs is called VISION USA - The Wisconsin Project. This program offers children of low income, working families vision and eye health services at no cost, plus glasses if prescribed.

After fourteen years, our work continues! Thousands of students attend classes each day with vision and eye health challenges. These children struggle to see the board, read a book, or work on the computer. Wisconsin doctors of optometry believe we should all take responsibility for these children!

The WOA is forwarding this information packet to you and asks that you include it in your school's kindergarten enrollment packets as well as all student information handouts for the 2015 school year. Please make Patient Application Forms available to all students who are eligible for and wish to participate in VISION USA.

As a school nurse, you play a critical role in improving the quality of your students' health and learning experience. By helping Wisconsin doctors of optometry spread this message, you are ensuring that students maximize their academic performance from the beginning of their educational career. To learn more about the program and/or to access application forms, visit <http://www.woa-eyes.org/vision-usa-public> or contact 877-435-2020.

Warmest regards,

Dr. Eric Paulsen
President, Wisconsin Optometric Association



WISCONSIN STATUTE, CHAPTER 118.135

GENERAL SCHOOL OPERATIONS

Chapter 118.135 - Eye examinations and evaluations

- (1) Beginning in the 2002–03 school year, each school board and each charter school shall request each pupil entering kindergarten to provide evidence that the pupil has had his or her eyes examined by an optometrist licensed under Chapter 449, or evaluated by a physician licensed under chapter 448.
- (2) A pupil who complies with a request under sub. (1) Shall provide evidence of an eye examination or evaluation by December 31, following the pupil's enrollment in kindergarten. The school board or charter school **shall provide pupils with the form distributed by the Department of Safety and Professional Services under s. 440.03 (16) for that purpose.**
- (3) To the extent feasible, the medical examining board and the optometry examining board shall encourage physicians and optometrists, for the purpose of this section, to conduct free eye examinations or evaluations of pupils who are in financial need.



Wisconsin's Children's Vision Law Attention Parents!

80% of all learning during a child's first 12 years of life is obtained through vision.
–Vision Council of America

Vision disorders are the fourth most common disability in the United States and the most prevalent handicapping condition in childhood.
–Preschool Children's Vision Screening Study Group

8 to 12 million school age children are at risk from undetected vision impairments.
–National Eye Institute

Dear Wisconsin Parent,

Your child's ability to see clearly in school will have an enormous impact on their ability to learn. As a parent, you can ensure your child's academic performance is maximized from the beginning of their educational career by scheduling your child for a comprehensive eye health exam by an eye doctor. Please remember that vision screenings, which are offered in many communities and in many schools, are not enough. Although helpful, they DO NOT detect eye diseases or more complicated vision disorders in your children. Wisconsin optometrists believe undiagnosed and untreated vision and eye health problems represent one of the most serious, yet overlooked health issues facing our nation's children.

It is because of these potential threats to our children's vision and eye health and academic futures that the Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA), a statewide professional, non-profit association consisting of doctors of optometry, has partnered with parents, school district administrators, school nurses, and other health providers to encourage students to receive the eye health and vision care they need. This partnership, known as the "Clear Vision, Bright Future" initiative, provides the opportunity not only to enhance the academic future of your child, but also to provide a strong foundation for those who may be at-risk for learning problems as a result of vision and eye health challenges.

Wisconsin doctors of optometry remind you not to assume that your child has healthy eyes and can see clearly in school just because he or she doesn't say anything to you. That assumption could place your child's future eye health and school achievement at risk. Don't wait for signs of struggle to emerge; be proactive and have your child's eyes examined today.

Tips for parents scheduling comprehensive eye exams for their children:

1. Schedule the exam early in the day, and if possible, at least 3-4 months before school starts
2. Let your child know that there won't be any shots or pain involved
3. Make a game of it; practice looking at pictures and making it fun

Wisconsin's Children's Vision Law

Current Wisconsin law (Chapter 118.135) states that all Wisconsin Public School Districts are required to request that parents of Kindergarten children have their child's eyes examined by an optometrist or evaluated by a physician. Each school board or charter school shall provide pupils with the form distributed by the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS), for that purpose.

Financial Assistance for Eye Exams

Many families in Wisconsin do not have insurance coverage for their children's eye exams and cannot afford such care. Members of the WOA provide no-cost eye examinations for children who meet certain financial criteria. **Please contact VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project at (877) 435-2020 for more information. You may access and print applications for submission to the program on the VISION USA page of the WOA website, <http://www.woa-eyes.org/vision-usa-public>.**

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Dr. Eric Paulsen
President, Wisconsin Optometric Association



VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project 2015 Fact Sheet

WHAT IS VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project?

VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project offers eye care services at no cost to children age 18 and under from low-income, working families in our state. Participating eye doctors and optical labs have agreed to provide their services and products so that children may continue to live and **learn** without suffering from common vision or eye health problems. This program is coordinated through the **Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA)** and is independent from any other like programs, including those run by the American Optometric Association (AOA). The WOA is a non-profit association consisting of doctors of optometry and is not affiliated with any state or governmental entity. Note: *The WOA does not provide services for adult patients through this benevolent program.*

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project?

Eligible applicants must be age 18 or younger and enrolled in school, have NO medical insurance which covers vision and eye health care, and have not had eye exam by an eye doctor in the last 12 months. Additionally, the applicant's family income must fall below an established level based upon the U.S. Federal Poverty Guidelines calculated to 200%, as set by the VISION USA Board of Directors according to household size. Parents/guardians of applicants to the program should be working at least part-time.

WHEN TO APPLY FOR VISION USA

Applications are accepted year-round. WOA strongly recommends that students receive a comprehensive eye exam from a licensed eye doctor before heading back-to-school.

HOW TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION TO THE PROGRAM

Applications in both English and Spanish can be found on the WOA website, www.woa-eyes.org, under Children's Programs and then VISION USA. The following link will send users directly to the VISION USA page: <http://www.woa-eyes.org/vision-usa-public>. On the VISION USA page, parents/guardians will find the program requirements and can access application forms to print and submit to the WOA for consideration.

If parents do not have internet access, they can request an application by contacting the WOA office at:

VISION USA – THE WISCONSIN PROJECT
6510 Grand Teton Plaza, Suite 312
Madison, WI 53719
Phone: 1-877-435-2020

If approved for the program, the applicant will be sent information to contact a specific, local participating eye doctor in order to schedule an eye exam. Each eligible child will receive a comprehensive eye exam at no cost to the patient. Whenever possible, the Wisconsin Optometric Association will work with local eye doctors and local labs to provide basic lenses, if needed.

THE NEED FOR VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project

Many low-income, working families in this country cannot afford vision and eye health care for their children. Because these families earn an income, they often fall between the cracks of government aid and private health care assistance. This is where VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project steps in and provides vision and eye care to children free of charge.

WOA believes the number of children who go without proper vision and eye health care in our country is unacceptable and will continue to encourage parents to have their children's eyes tested before they enter school. The members of the Wisconsin Optometric Association are proud to provide these benevolent services to the children of our state.



VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project Patient Application Form

VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project is an independent program run by the Wisconsin Optometric Association, a **non-profit association consisting of doctors of optometry** that practice in Wisconsin. The program offers comprehensive eye care services to children age 18 and under who are from low income, working families and have no insurance which covers vision and eye health care. Applications will be accepted year-round, and **if approved, the applicant will be sent information in order to contact a local doctor to set up an eye exam.** It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to contact the doctor and make the appointment. Each eligible child will receive a free comprehensive eye examination. Whenever possible, the Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) will work with local eye doctors and service organizations such as the Lions Club to provide basic lenses, if prescribed. **Note: volunteer doctors provide these services, and a participating doctor may or may not be available in your area.**

Eligibility requirements are as follows. Please read them carefully, to make sure your child qualifies:

1. Patients must be age 18 or under.
2. Patients must have NO insurance which covers eye care (this includes vision and eye health coverage through Medicaid, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, and BadgerCare). **If the patient does have insurance that covers eye care, he or she will be denied an exam through VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project.**
3. Patients must not have had an eye exam provided *by an eye doctor* within the last 12 months of applying for the program. **If the patient has had an eye exam by an eye doctor within the 12 months of application, he or she will be denied an exam through VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project.**
4. Family income must be within an established level according to household size; this is based upon the U.S. Federal Poverty Guidelines. ****Parents or guardians must enclose either a copy of their most recent tax return, or a verification letter from the school stating that the child qualifies for free/reduced lunch. If proper income verification is not included with the application, the application will be returned to the parent/guardian.**
5. Parent or guardian of the child must be currently working at least part-time.

The applicant must meet ALL requirements to qualify for the program.

More than one person in each family may apply for a VISION USA exam, if eligibility requirements are met. Please submit one application per child. **For more information, or to obtain an application in Spanish, visit the VISION USA page at the WOA website, www.woa-eyes.org/vision-usa-public, or call 1-877-435-2020. Please note: WOA staff does not speak Spanish.**

Send this completed form with requested information to the WOA office at the following address:

**VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project
6510 Grand Teton Plaza, Suite 312
Madison, WI 53719
Fax: 608-824-2205**



VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project Patient Application Form

VISION USA - The Wisconsin Project offers comprehensive eye care services to children age 18 and under who are from low income, working families and have no insurance which covers vision and eye health care. Services are donated by volunteer optometrists and may be limited in some areas. VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project is an independent program run by the Wisconsin Optometric Association, a non-profit association consisting of doctors of optometry that practice in Wisconsin. **Eligibility requirements must be met in order to qualify.**

You must answer ALL information and questions. Incomplete applications will be returned or discarded. Please complete one form for each child applying. **PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY.**

Child's First Name: _____ Child's Last Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Daytime Phone Number: (_____) _____ Email Address: _____

Child's Date of Birth: _____ Child's Social Security Number (*required for U.S. citizens): _____

Child's Gender (circle one): Male Female Date child will/did enter kindergarten: _____

Please Answer All Questions Below (circle either "yes" or "no" for each question):

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. Is the applicant age 18 or under? (required for approval) | YES | NO |
| 2. *Is the applicant a U.S. citizen? | YES | NO |
| 3. Does applicant have eye care coverage by any type of government or private health care insurance (i.e. Medicaid, Medicare, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, BadgerCare)? (If yes, applicant will be denied an exam through VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project). | YES | NO |
| 4. Has applicant had an eye examination at an <u>eye doctor's</u> office within the last 12 months? (If yes, applicant will be denied an exam through VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project). | YES | NO |
| 5. What is the total number of people living in your household, including applicant? (response required) _____ | | |
| 6. What was your household's adjusted gross income last year? (response required) ** _____ ** | | |
| 7. Is a parent or guardian of the above child currently working at least part-time? (response required) | YES | NO |
| 8. Who referred you to this program? _____ | | |

****Please include a copy of your most recent federal tax return or school verification of the child's free/reduced lunch. This application will be returned, if income verification is not included. If it is discovered that applicant is ineligible for the program after the exam has taken place, the cost incurred will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian of that child.**

Your completed application form will be reviewed to determine your child's eligibility. If he or she qualifies for the program, you will receive a letter with information in order to contact a participating doctor in your area. If your child does not qualify, you will be notified in writing within two to four weeks of receipt of your application. **Please return the completed application to: VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project, 6510 Grand Teton Plaza, Suite 312, Madison, WI 53719.**



VISIÓN USA – The Wisconsin Project El Formulario de Solicitud del Paciente

VISIÓN USA – The Wisconsin Project les ofrece los servicios básicos del cuidado de ojo a los niños de las edades de 18 y abajo, de las familias de ingresos bajos que trabajan actualmente, pero cuyos niños no tienen seguros médicos que cubren el cuidado de ojo. Las aplicaciones se aceptarán todo el año y si está aprobado, el solicitante recibirá por correo la información para contactar a un doctor local a establecer un examen de ojo. Es la responsabilidad del padre/guardián para ponerse en contacto con el doctor y hacer la cita. Cada niño elegible recibirá un examen comprensivo gratuito de los ojos. La Asociación Optométrica de Wisconsin siempre tratará de trabajar con doctores de ojos locales y organizaciones de servicio tales como el Club de Leones, Rotatorio, etc. para proporcionar lentes básicos si es necesario. Una nota: doctores voluntarios proporcionan estos servicios y a un doctor que participe pueden o no pueden estar disponible en su área.

Los requisitos de la elegibilidad son los siguientes. Léalos con cuidado, por favor, para estar seguro que califica.

- 1. El padre o el guardián de niño debe estar trabajando actualmente por lo menos a tiempo parcial (media jornada o “part time”).**
- 2. El paciente debe de tener 18 años o menos.**
- 3. El paciente no debe tener un seguro médico que cubre cuidado de los ojos (Medicaid, Blue Cross / Blue Shield, BadgerCare). Si se descubre que el niño está cubierto por un seguro que cubre el cuidado de los ojos, y han recibido servicios a través del programa, la familia del niño o el tutor tendrá la responsabilidad financiera por el costo de los servicios de optometría.**
- 4. El paciente no debe haber recibido un examen de ojo por un optometrista dentro de los últimos 12 meses.**
- 5. Los ingresos de la familia deben estar debajo de un nivel establecido según el tamaño de la casa. **Padre o guardián debe de incluir, con la aplicación completada, una copia de su declaración de impuestos más reciente, o incluir comprobante de la escuela que el niño califica para almuerzo gratuito/reducido con la aplicación completada. Se devuelve la aplicación si uno de estas formas de comprobación de ingresos no está incluida.**

**El solicitante debe cumplir todos los primeros tres requisitos, a pesar del nivel de ingresos. Si ellos no encuentran estos tres requisitos, ellos no califican para el programa.

Más que una persona en cada familia puede solicitar un examen, si los requisitos de la elegibilidad se cumplen. Sométase por favor una aplicación separada para cada niño. Para más información, llame al 1-877-435-2020 (se habla inglés sólo). Mande esta forma completada con información solicitada a:

**VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project
6510 Grand Teton Plaza Suite 312
Madison, WI 53719
1-877-435-2020 (Se Habla Ingles. Favor de llamar con un interprete)**



VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project El Formulario de solicitud paciente

VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project les proporciona los exámenes gratuitos de ojo a los niños de 18 años y menos que son de familias de ingresos bajos que trabajan. Los servicios son donados por optometristas voluntarios y pueden ser limitados en algunas áreas. Los requisitos de la elegibilidad se encuentran al lado anterior de esta aplicación.

Usted debe contestar TODA de la información y preguntas; las aplicaciones incompletas se desecharán. Complete una forma para cada niño que aplica. POR FAVOR ESCRIBE LEGIBLEMENTE.

Primer Nombre del Niño: _____ Apellido: _____

El Nombre de Padre/guardián: _____

Dirección: _____

La ciudad: _____ Estado: _____ Código postal: _____

Número de teléfono: () _____

La Fecha de Nacimiento de niño: _____ Número de seguro social (si tenga): _____

Sexo: (rodea uno) Femenino Masculino Fecha que entró el kinder: _____

Conteste por favor todas las preguntas abajo.

	YES	NO
1. ¿Es el padres o tutor trabaja por lo menos a tiempo parcial?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. ¿Es ciudadano americano el niño (No afecta su aprovacion para este programa	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. ¿Es el niño de 18 años o más jóvenes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. ¿ El niño tiene seguro médico (Medicaid, Medicare, Blue Cross/ Blue Shield, Badger care) que cubra cuidado de los ojos?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. ¿Ha tenido el niño un examen de la vista por un optometrista/ oftalmólogo en lose últimos 12 meses?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. ¿Cuantas personas viven en la casa/ familia incluso en niño? _____		
7. ¿Aproximadamente cuanto fue su ingreso familiar el año pasado? _____		
8. ¿Quien lo refirió a este programa?		

****Incluye por favor una copia mas reciente de sus ingresos, o una copia de la escuela de comprobante que el nino califica para el almuerzo gratuito/reducido. Esta aplicación se desechará si comprobación de ingresos no se incluye. Si se descubre que ese solicitante es inelegible para el programa después que el examen ha sucedido ya, el costo**

La forma completada se revisará para determinar su elegibilidad. Si usted califica, recibirá una carta con información a contactar a un doctor que participa en su área. Si usted no califica, usted será notificado por escrito dentro de 2-4 semanas de recibo de su aplicación. Por favor regrese la aplicación completa a: VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project; 6510 Grand Teton Plaza Ste 312, Madison, WI 53719

**State of Wisconsin
Department of Regulation and Licensing
KINDERGARTEN EYE HEALTH EXAMINATION REPORT**

Student's Name _____ Birth Date _____ Sex _____
Parent or Guardian _____ Phone _____
Address _____ County _____
School/Kindergarten _____ City _____
Date entering Kindergarten _____

The State of Wisconsin encourages parents of Kindergartners to arrange for their child's eyes to be examined by an optometrist or evaluated by a physician by December 31 of the child's first year in school. An examination or evaluation should include, at a minimum, the elements listed below. (By checking the box, the examining doctor is indicating that the element checked was performed.)

- Brief history (general health and eye health) of the child, including family history
- General external observation of the child's eyes and surrounding structures
- Ophthalmoscopic examination through an undilated pupil
- Gross measurement of peripheral vision
- Evaluation of eye coordination and function (alignment and motility)
- Visual acuity for each eye (separately)

Findings:

As a result of this examination, follow-up care for the child is recommended: Yes No

Date of examination:

Doctor/Physician Signature:

Print or stamp:

Doctor/Physician Name
Address
Phone

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO PARENTS

This examination is not required by law. Disclosure of the information noted above is necessary to comply with the statutory purpose as outlined in s. 118.135, Wis. Stats.

Disclosure of this information is voluntary and there is no penalty for non-compliance.

You are encouraged to provide a copy of this form to the school and keep a copy for your record.

Consent of parent or guardian: I agree to release the above information on my child to appropriate school authorities and consent to my child obtaining an eye examination.

Signature _____

Date _____

State of Wisconsin
Department of Regulation and Licensing
INFORME DEL EXAMEN DE SALUD DE LOS OJOS PARA KINDERGARTEN
(KINDERGARTEN EYE HEALTH EXAMINATION REPORT)

Nombre del Alumno _____ Fecha de Nacimiento _____ Sexo _____
 Padre/Madre o Guardián _____ Numero de Teléfono _____
 Dirección _____
 Ciudad _____ Condado _____
 Escuela/Kindergarten _____ Fecha de Ingreso _____

To be completed by the examining doctor

The State of Wisconsin encourages parents of Kindergartners to arrange for their child's eyes to be examined by an optometrist or evaluated by a physician by December 31 of the child's first year in school. An examination or evaluation should include, at a minimum, the elements listed below. (By checking the box, the examining doctor is indicating that the element checked was performed.)

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- General external observation of the child's eyes and surrounding structures
- Ophthalmoscopic examination through an undilated pupil
- Gross measurement of peripheral vision
- Evaluation of eye coordination and function (alignment and motility)
- Visual acuity for each eye (separately)

Findings:

As a result of this examination, follow-up care for the child is recommended: Yes No

AVISO IMPORTANTE A LOS PADRES DE FAMILIA

Este examen no es requerido por ley. La información anotada abajo es necesaria para cumplir con los requisitos establecidos en la sección 118.135 de los estatutos del Estado de Wisconsin.

El proporcionar esta información es voluntario y no hay ninguna sanción si usted no la proporciona. Le sugerimos que entregue una copia de esta forma a la escuela y que usted se quede con otra copia.

Consentimiento de padre/madre o guardián:

Estoy de acuerdo en proporcionar la información sobre mi hijo/a a las autoridades apropiadas de la escuela y estoy de acuerdo que mi hijo/a reciba el examen de los ojos.

Firma _____

Fecha _____

Date of examination:

Doctor/Physician Signature:

Print or stamp:
 Doctor/Physician Name
 Address
 Phone



A Teacher's Guide to Vision

What Every Teacher Should Know About Their Students' Vision & Eye Health

- 📖 80 percent of all learning during a child's first 12 years of life is obtained through vision.
- 📖 Per the American Optometric Association (AOA), approximately 60 percent of students identified as "problem learners" have undetected vision problems.
- 📖 Children with vision problems may not recognize they have difficulty seeing because they have "always seen this way," or, changes in their vision are so gradual that they go unnoticed.
- 📖 A school vision screening or a pediatrician's test is not a substitute for a comprehensive eye examination from an eye doctor.
- 📖 According to the AOA, vision screenings are not diagnostic, and therefore, typically identify only a small portion of the vision problems in children.
- 📖 Most vision screenings check only to determine how well a person can see at a distance. Vision exams, however, are much more thorough.
- 📖 A comprehensive eye exam includes tests to determine nearsightedness, farsightedness, astigmatism, eye coordination and eye muscle function, eye focusing abilities.
- 📖 If vision problems are missed during crucial times in development, a child's eye health, development, and learning performance may be negatively affected.
- 📖 The Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) provides care at no cost to qualifying children who cannot afford exams or glasses. Please see enclosures regarding the VISION USA – The Wisconsin Project program.

Signs that a child may be experiencing vision difficulties:

- 📖 Trouble finishing written assignments
- 📖 Often loses place or skips words when reading
- 📖 Makes errors when copying from the board
- 📖 Holds reading material close to the face
- 📖 Rubs eyes
- 📖 Does not perform to potential
- 📖 Uses finger to hold their place
- 📖 Avoids close work
- 📖 Complains of frequent headaches
- 📖 Adjusts head to use one eye
- 📖 Reverses letters or words while reading or writing
- 📖 Omits or confuses small words while reading

If you think a child in your classroom may have a vision problem, please alert parents

As an educator, you play an important role in the future success of the students you teach. Oftentimes, you are the first one to notice vision/learning problems in the classroom. Vision has a direct effect on how well a child learns. If left untreated, vision problems can result in serious learning difficulties and behavioral issues.

BASIC VISION SKILLS NEEDED FOR SUCCESS IN SCHOOL

Near Vision	The ability to see clearly and comfortably at 10-13 inches
Distance Vision	The ability to see clearly and comfortably beyond arm's reach
Binocular Coordination	The ability to use both eyes together
Eye Movement Skills	The ability to aim the eyes accurately, move them smoothly over a page, and shift them quickly and accurately from one object to another
Focusing Skills	The ability to keep both eyes accurately focused at the proper distance to see clearly and to change focus quickly
Peripheral Awareness	The ability to be aware of things located to the side while looking straight ahead
Eye/Hand Coordination	The ability to use the eyes and hands together



A Lesson in Vision and Reading

Important Terms and Definitions

Visual Acuity. Visual acuity is the ability to see objects clearly. It is usually the only skill assessed in a school vision screening. The typical school eye chart is designed to be seen at 20 feet and measures how well or poorly the child sees at that distance. If a problem is discovered in the screening, the child should be referred for a thorough optometric examination.

Visual Fixation. Fixation is the skill utilized to aim the eyes accurately. Static fixation is the ability to focus on a stationary object when reading a word or working a math problem. Saccadic fixation is the ability to move the eyes quickly and accurately across a page to read a line of print. Pursuit fixation is the ability to follow a moving object with the eyes. These complex operations require split-second timing for the brain to process the information received and to track the path of the moving object.

Accommodation. Accommodation is the ability to adjust the focus of the eyes, as the distance between the individual and the object changes. Children frequently use this vision skill in the classroom as they shift their attention (and focus) between their books, the chalkboard, and computer for sustained periods of time. Being able to maintain focus for sustained periods of time is important for reading, writing, and taking tests.

Binocular Fusion. Binocular fusion refers to the brain's ability to gather information received from each eye separately and form a single, unified image. A child's eyes must be precisely aligned or blurred; otherwise, double vision, discomfort, confusion, or avoidance may result. If that occurs, the brain often subconsciously suppresses or inhibits the vision in one eye to avoid confusion. That eye may then develop poorer visual acuity (known as amblyopia, or 'lazy eye').

Convergence. Convergence is the ability to turn the two eyes toward each other to look at a close object. School desk work is one instance in which a child depends on this vision skill.

Field of Vision. Field of vision is the wide area over which vision is possible. It is important that a child be aware of objects in the periphery (left and right sides, up and down) as well as in the center of the field of vision. Near central or para-central vision is important for reading ability.

Perception. Visual perception is the total process responsible for the reception and understanding of what is seen. Good visual perception is necessary for successful school achievement. Form perception is the ability to organize and recognize visual images as specific shapes. The shapes the child encounters are remembered, defined, and recalled when development of reading skills begins. Regular optometric care can help assure that a child will have the visual skills necessary for successful classroom performance.

Treating Reading-Related Vision Problems. The optometrist examines these vision skills and determines how well the child is using them together. When a vision problem is diagnosed, the optometrist can prescribe glasses, vision therapy, or both. Vision therapy has proved quite effective in treating reading-related vision problems. It involves an individualized program of training procedures designed to help a child acquire or sharpen vision skills that are necessary for reading.

Treating Reading Problems. Because reading problems usually have multiple causes, treatment must often be multidisciplinary. Educators, psychologists, optometrists, and other professionals must confer and work together to meet each child's needs. The optometrist's role is to help the child overcome the vision problems interfering with the ability to read. Once this is accomplished, the child is then more capable of responding to special education efforts aimed at treating the reading problem itself.



Introduce Your Students to Eye Care. What could be a better learning tool than having an optometrist visit your classroom for a guest lecture about vision? Or perhaps, a field trip to the local eye doctor's office?

Give your class some firsthand knowledge about proper eye care, safety, and eye exam procedures. An eye doctor can make students aware of the problems that come with poor vision, such as headaches, dizziness, blurred vision, squinting, etc., and tell them how to protect their precious eyesight from injuries related to sports, sun, and everyday life!

The Wisconsin Optometric Association can help you connect with an optometrist in your area. Please call 877-435-2020 for a recommendation.

The Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) and Wisconsin Foundation for Vision Awareness (WFVA) recommend that every child receive a comprehensive eye examination before starting school and afterwards on a schedule recommended by an eye doctor. *The WOA and WFVA are dedicated to working with Wisconsin schools to ensure that all children receive regular eye exams. For more information on children's vision and free eye exams for children who cannot afford care, call 1-877-435-2020.*