



COLLEGE OF
OPTOMETRISTS IN
VISION DEVELOPMENT
PREVENTION • ENHANCEMENT • REHABILITATION

Undetected Learning-Related Vision Problems – Key Issues

Vision disorders are the number one handicapping condition for children. Yet, 18 million children will not have an eye examination by an eye doctor by the time they enter school. (Only Kentucky has passed a law that requires every child to have a comprehensive eye examination before entering public school.)

Children needlessly struggle for years in schools across the country because they have undetected, learning-related vision problems.

Children are often misdiagnosed as having ADD/ADHD, labeled "dumb," or misplaced in a resource room when their academic or behavior struggles actually stem from correctable vision problems.

The Myth of 20/20 "Vision:" Vision problems most often go undetected when it is assumed a child has perfect eyesight because he/she passed a school screening eye chart test with "20/20 vision." It is a little known fact that this test does not measure how well a child can see at near distances, nor does it evaluate other visual skills necessary for learning or sports such as eye focusing, depth perception, peripheral vision, eye coordination or eye teaming.

When a child is struggling with academics, sports or behavior, parents and teachers should be encouraged to consider a vision problem. There are time-tested signs to look for that a child may have a vision problem (see "Signs of Learning-Related Vision Problems").

Developmental optometrists provide specialized vision care called vision therapy that is proven to help correct many vision problems, improve visual needed for reading, and restore self-esteem.

Statistics demonstrate the critical need for higher awareness of learning-related vision problems:

- An estimated 10-million children suffer from vision problems, according to the National Parent Teacher Association.
- One in four school-age children have vision problems according to statistics from Prevent Blindness America.
- Sixty percent of students identified as problem learners have undetected vision problems, the American Optometric Association reports.
- A study conducted by Roger A. Johnson, Ph.D. showed that 70 percent of juvenile offenders had undetected and untreated vision problems.
- A recent study highlighted at a conference at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education shows that visual perception and eye movement abilities are strong predictors of academic scores.
- In 1995, the economic impact of visual disorders and disabilities was estimated by the National Institutes of Health to be more than \$38.4 billion.

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