



COLLEGE OF
OPTOMETRISTS IN
VISION DEVELOPMENT
PREVENTION • ENHANCEMENT • REHABILITATION

Vision Therapy Case Studies

Children throughout the country struggle with undetected vision problems that prevent them from reaching their full potential. In many cases, these children are labeled "dumb," misdiagnosed as ADD/ADHD, or placed in special education resource rooms. Learning-related vision problems can often be treated with a program of vision therapy – but too many teachers and parents do not consider seeking a vision evaluation or know about vision therapy. Each year, developmental optometrists are able to help thousands of children who struggle in school due to undetected and untreated learning-related vision problems. The following case studies illustrate some of the vision problems children experience and how they can be helped through the use of vision therapy.

Kaitlyn, 5th Grade

Problem: Kaitlyn struggled with schoolwork and began to think she just wasn't smart enough to do well in school. She complained of headaches when reading and often covered one eye. She frequently lost her place when reading and comprehended things much better when being read to by someone else.

Evaluation: An initial eye examination found that she had 20/20 visual acuity. Specialized vision testing revealed that Kaitlyn's eye tracking skills and focusing ability became unstable when she was reading.

Solution: She began a program of vision therapy to help her better control her eye movements and improve eye-focusing abilities. At the conclusion of therapy, Kaitlyn's mother reported: "Kaitlyn has improved two grade levels in reading and math. She has not had a headache in two months and no longer suffers from frustration due to slow learning. Kaitlyn has improved much faster than we thought possible."

Marien, Age 12

Problem: Marien was a bright twelve-year-old who struggled to read. A neuropsychologist had evaluated her and suspected the root of her academic problems was an emotional disorder and possibly dyslexia. This diagnosis perplexed Marien's parents because it seemed to only partially identify Marien's struggles.

Evaluation: A comprehensive vision examination determined that Marien had a significant tendency for one eye or the other to drift outward. As a result, every time she sat down to read or write, Marien had to work very hard to keep from seeing double.

✦ Solution: A five-month program of vision therapy resulted in significant improvement in Marien's visual abilities and school performance. Her eye teaming greatly improved and she was more confident and became more responsible with her schoolwork. Her mother reported that following therapy her grades improved considerably. In math, where she had found word problems very difficult, she went from a grade of "D" to an "A." "Marien now believes in herself and that is the greatest gift we or her family could ever give her," her mother said.

Dustin, Age 7

Problem: At the beginning of first grade Dustin tested at the fourth grade level in science and social studies, but was on a preschool level in math and reading. He also hated any activity that dealt with a ball of any sort. If a ball was thrown to him, nine times out of ten he was unable to catch it. A school psychologist assessed him to be five points above functionally retarded. He withdrew from all activities that made him feel challenged.

Evaluation: Frustrated by the school system's inability to determine why Dustin was unable to succeed, his parents sought a comprehensive vision evaluation.

Solution: Testing determined the need for vision therapy to help him learn to more effectively process visual information. Dustin's parents noticed improvements in his school performance in less than a month. "When Dustin started vision therapy he could not recognize any letters of the alphabet, nor copy anything written down in front of him. Today he can copy sentences with proper spacing and read a beginner's book with assistance," his parents reported. "Dustin shows a noticeable improvement in self-esteem and is beginning to flourish in all avenues."

Rebecca, Age 17

Problem: Rebecca puzzled her parents and teachers. Seemingly bright, she had inordinate difficulty reading. She read very slowly and her comprehension was much better when listening.

Evaluation: A comprehensive vision examination detected a learning-related vision problem.

Solution: A program of vision therapy soon improved her reading skills. "Not only am I a faster and more accurate reader, but I can enjoy it more and read for longer periods of time," she said. "This program has made school easier and homework time shorter. My only regret is not doing this earlier in my life so that I would be more confident and would have done better. Vision therapy makes me feel like a better person."

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