



**“AUGUST IS CHILDREN’S VISION AND LEARNING MONTH”
PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED BY
THE COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRISTS IN VISION DEVELOPMENT (COVD)**

**Campaign designed to raise awareness about connection between vision and learning problems
and vision therapy treatments**

As parents ready millions of children across the US to start the new school year, COVD’s “August is Children’s Vision and Learning Month” campaign is working to raise awareness about the important connection between vision and learning.

Current research shows that vision problems afflict millions of American children and thereby impact their ability to learn:

- One in four school-age children have vision problems, according to the American Foundation in Vision Awareness;
- 18 million children will not have had eye examinations by a Doctor of Optometry or other certified vision care professional prior to entering school;
- 60 percent of students identified as “problem learners” have undetected vision problems, according to the American Optometric Association.

“Vision disorders are one of the leading impediments to successful learning in children,” said Dr. Drusilla Grant, Immediate Past President of the College of Optometrists in Vision Development. “Many vision problems go undetected because a child is told he or she has 20/20 vision and healthy eyes. This can be misleading because their visual skills like tracking, eye teaming, and focusing may not have been evaluated and this is really where the problem lies.”

Exams using only the eye chart do not measure how well a child can see at near distances, nor do they evaluate depth perception, eye coordination or numerous other visual skills required in the learning process. They also don’t evaluate the visual abilities that are needed to extract information off of a page.

According to Dr. Dan L. Fortenbacher, COVD President, “We’re dealing with far more than just ‘eyesight.’ Our concern and primary focus is with identifying and treating a delay in the patient’s ability to access and process visual information in ways that are the necessary prerequisites for developmental learning. These issues can be treated through vision therapy, but particularly when diagnosed early.”

While “August is Children’s Vision and Learning Month” is concentrated on the month of August, the goal of the campaign is to broaden awareness year-round that vision is more than 20/20. The 20/20 test does not test how well you see at reading distance. In fact, the 20/20 test fails to evaluate many other important aspects of normal vision such as:

- Eye focusing
- Eye coordination
- Eye teaming (binocular vision)
- Eye movement
- Visual perceptual skills
- Color vision

At the center of its national “August is Children’s Vision and Learning Month” public awareness campaign, COVD urges parents, teachers, and all other decision-makers involved in the health and welfare of children to learn more



about how vision impacts children's ability to learn. Two articles recently published in the COVD journal, *Optometry & Vision Development*, found that children with vision problems have a hard time learning basic mathematical skills and that if the appropriate vision therapy is given, math skills improve.

Parents and teachers are encouraged to make a comprehensive eye examination part of their preparations for the new school year and to look for the following indications that vision problems may be contributing to learning challenges of their children and students:

- Frequent loss of place when reading
- Poor reading comprehension
- Sloppy handwriting
- Confusing similar looking words
- Failure to recognize the same word in sequential sentences
- Complaints of eyes hurting or headaches after reading
- Avoidance of close work (such as reading)
- Attention problems

Any of the above symptoms may be a sign that your child may be struggling with a learning-related vision problem. Fortunately, through vision therapy, many learning-related vision problems can be corrected. Protocols typically involve a prescribed program aimed at eliminating faulty vision skill patterns and rebuilding them correctly. For an in-depth checklist of symptoms, information on vision therapy and the critical link between vision and learning or to find a doctor near you, visit our website, www.covd.org.

EDITORIAL NOTE:

“August is Children’s Vision and Learning Month” PSAs and print ads are available for download at: www.covd.org.

About COVD

The College of Optometrists in Vision Development (COVD) is an international, non-profit optometric membership organization that provides education, evaluation and board certification programs in behavioral and developmental vision care, vision therapy and visual rehabilitation. The organization is comprised of doctors of optometry, vision therapists and other vision specialists. For more information on learning-related vision problems, vision therapy and COVD, please visit www.covd.org or call **888.268.3770**.

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