

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CHILDREN'S VISION PROBLEMS COMMONLY MISDIAGNOSED AS LEARNING DISABILITY**

*A visit to your local doctor of optometry should be added to your annual back-to-school checklist*

**Madison, Wis. (August, 2010)** – The [Wisconsin Optometric Association \(WOA\)](#) finds undetected vision problems in students can often be misdiagnosed as learning disabilities. Therefore, Wisconsin parents are encouraged to take their “back-to-schoolers” to a doctor of optometry for a comprehensive vision exam to help ensure their ability to see clearly and succeed in the classroom.

“Healthy vision is a critical part of a child’s overall learning experience,” said Dr. Marcus Neitzke, optometrist and WOA president. “A comprehensive eye health and vision exam performed by a licensed eye doctor can detect problems such as astigmatism, eye coordination and moderate amounts of farsightedness, all of which can prohibit a child’s ability to learn in school and participate in activities beyond the classroom.”

A survey\* by the [American Optometric Association \(AOA\)](#) revealed 64 percent of teachers witnessed a direct improvement in a child’s academic performance and/or classroom behavior after an eye health or vision problem was diagnosed and treated.

“Children have a hard time recognizing a vision problem exists because they do not know the difference between normal vision and their particular ability to see,” said Neitzke. “A child who displays disruptive or inattentive behavior may actually be reacting to their inability to participate fully in the classroom, as undiagnosed vision problems affect their ability to see the board or complete reading and writing assignments.”

Common signs of a vision problem may include:

- ✓ Losing place while reading
- ✓ Avoiding close work
- ✓ Rubbing eyes
- ✓ Headaches
- ✓ Turning or tilting head
- ✓ Making frequent reversals when reading or writing
- ✓ Using finger to maintain place when reading
- ✓ Omitting or confusing small words when reading
- ✓ Consistently performing below potential
- ✓ Struggling to complete homework
- ✓ Squinting while reading or watching television
- ✓ Behavioral problems
- ✓ Holding reading material closer than normal

If detected and treated early, several vision and eye health conditions can be corrected allowing the child to see clearly in class, at home and at play. The WOA recommends a child’s first eye assessment take place as early as 6 months of age. Comprehensive eye exams should be conducted beginning at age 3, before a child enters school, and then every two years, unless otherwise advised by an optometrist. In between exams, parents and teachers should monitor children for the more prevalent signs (identified above) that a student’s vision may be impaired.

“It is important to keep in mind a school vision screening, while helpful, is not a substitute for a comprehensive eye examination by an eye doctor,” said Neitzke. “Vision screenings usually only test a child’s ability to see from a distance and cannot detect eye diseases or other more complicated vision problems.”

To find an optometrist in your area, or for additional information on children’s vision or the importance of back-to-school eye exams, please visit [www.woa-eyes.org](http://www.woa-eyes.org).

*\* The American Optometric Association (AOA) Teacher Survey was created and commissioned in conjunction with TNS from May 13-17, 2010, using an online methodology, TNS interviewed 300 full- and part-time teachers for grades kindergarten through grade 8, and 100 full- and part-time teachers for grades 9-12. Please visit [www.tns-us.com.com](http://www.tns-us.com.com) for more information.*

**About the Wisconsin Optometric Association:** The Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) is a nonprofit affiliation of licensed doctors of optometry and associated businesses dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the vision welfare of the people of Wisconsin. The WOA accomplishes its goals through: education and dissemination of information, organized governmental activity, legislation and regulation, mediation with consumer and public interest groups, and provision of collective benefits to its members. Approximately 650 doctors of optometry are currently members of the WOA located in nearly every county in the state. All members must be licensed and certified to practice optometry by the State of Wisconsin. The WOA also maintains an affiliation with the American Optometric Association (AOA). For more information, visit WOA’s website at [www.woa-eyes.org](http://www.woa-eyes.org).