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Healthy eyes improve your child's ability to learn
Why an eye exam should be at the top of your back-to-school list

Whether it be reading, computer usage or chalkboard work, your child's eyes serve as a gateway to their learning. In fact, many experts believe 80 percent of all learning during a child's first 12 years of life is obtained through vision. The [Wisconsin Optometric Association](#) (WOA) strongly encourages parents to schedule a comprehensive eye examination for their child with a doctor of optometry before school begins.

"If a student lacks basic vision skills, their academic performance and overall health are likely to suffer," says WOA President Dr. Brad Jorgensen. "When vision skills are lacking or not functioning properly, your child's eyes will have to work harder to compensate for the difficulties. This may result in eye-straining related problems like headache or fatigue."

The [American Optometric Association](#) (AOA) also finds children with undetected vision problems are sometimes inaccurately diagnosed with attention deficit disorder (ADD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

"A child who experiences vision difficulties might become frustrated and less confident, which can lead to a number of academic and social challenges," Dr. Jorgensen explains. "The child may avoid aspects of schoolwork, but not understand their lack of motivation stems from a vision problem."

The WOA encourages all parents to be proactive and have their child's eyes examined by an eye care professional. Keep in mind, a school vision screening, while helpful, is not a substitute for a comprehensive eye examination. Eye exam will help correct common vision problems, such as nearsightedness and farsightedness, and more serious conditions such as Amblyopia, commonly known as lazy eye.

"Children may not recognize that they have a vision problem," says Dr. Jorgensen, "particularly children who are too young to know the alphabet or even to speak. However, there are proven methods for full eye exams on young children that can be done efficiently and effectively."

The State of Wisconsin recognizes the importance of children's vision in learning, and adopted the Wisconsin's Children's Vision Law in 2001. The law, second of its kind in the nation, requires all public school districts to encourage children entering kindergarten to have their eyes tested. For more information, click [here](#).

In order to assist in the full implementation of this law, the WOA offers [Vision USA – The Wisconsin Project](#). This program assists children younger than 18 years of age from families who do not have insurance or cannot afford proper eye care. For more information and to see if your child qualifies, please contact VISION USA at 1-877-435-2020 or email woacvi@tds.net. You can find more information on this and other programs by visiting WOA's web site at www.woa-eyes.org.

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 to practice optometry by the State of Wisconsin. For more information, visit WOA's Web site at www.woa-eyes.org.