



## TEACHER'S GUIDE

### What Every Teacher Should Know About Their Student's Vision

Assuring a child's ability to see clearly in school is one of the most effective ways to maximize their learning potential. As you may be aware, a new state law requiring eye exams for all school-aged children took effect on January 1, 2008. Although parents have until October 15 to provide proof of an eye exam, the Illinois Parent-Teacher Association, the Illinois Federation of Teachers, the Illinois Optometric Association and the Vision First Foundation are working to raise awareness now about the new law.

- ☑ 80% of all learning during a child's first 12 years of life is obtained through vision.
- ☑ Over half of students identified as problem learners have undetected vision problems.
- ☑ Children with vision problems may not recognize that they have difficulty seeing because they have "always seen this way," or changes in their vision are so gradual that they go unnoticed.
- ☑ A school vision evaluation or a pediatrician's screening, while helpful, is not a substitute for a thorough eye examination from an eye doctor. Basic vision screenings detect children with easily identifiable vision problems, which could be as few as 5% of all potential vision problems in children.
- ☑ If vision problems are missed during crucial times in development, the child's eye health, development and learning performance may be negatively affected.

As an educator, you play a very important role in the future success of the students you teach. Often times, you're the first one to notice vision/learning problems in the classroom. Vision has a direct affect on how well a child learns. Encountering vision problems, and having them go untreated, can result in serious learning difficulties and behavioral issues.

#### Signs that a child may be experiencing vision difficulties:

- ☑ **Trouble finishing written assignments**
- ☑ **Often loses place or skips words when reading**
- ☑ **Makes errors when copying from the board**
- ☑ **Holds reading material close to face**
- ☑ **Rubs eyes**
- ☑ **Does not perform to potential**

*Alert parents if you think a child may have a vision problem.*

#### What your students should know about eye care

What could be a better learning tool than a trip to the local eye doctor? Give your class some first hand knowledge about proper eye care, safety, and what happens during an eye exam. An eye doctor can make them aware of the problems that come with poor vision, such as headaches, dizziness, blurry vision and squinting. The doctor can also tell them how to protect their precious eyesight from injuries related to sports, the sun and everyday life.

The Illinois Optometric Association (IOA) and the American Optometric Association (AOA) recommend that every child receive a comprehensive eye examination within the first year of life, then again before starting school, and after that, on a schedule recommended by an eye doctor. The IOA and AOA are dedicated to working with Illinois schools to ensure that all children receive regular eye exams. For more information on children's vision and on benevolent programs that provide funding for free eye exams for children whose families cannot afford care, contact Michael Horstman at 217-525-8012 or email [ioaed@ioaweb.org](mailto:ioaed@ioaweb.org).