

READY FOR SCHOOL



Dear Parent,

Getting your child ready for school is a busy and exciting time. You've most likely bought new clothes and sneakers, taken your child for a physical exam, and talked to your child about the upcoming event – all important steps to making your child's school experience rewarding. But did you include an eye exam as part of your child's preparation for school?

The National PTA estimates ten million children suffer from visual problems. Because vision is such an important part of the learning process, classroom success may be difficult for children to achieve if a vision problem is not detected or treated. Some 60 percent of children diagnosed as problem learners have undetected vision problems.

In fact, if your child has complained of eyestrain, headaches, nausea, or dizziness during or after viewing a 3-D movie, he or she may have an undiagnosed eye condition. According to the American Optometric Association, anywhere from three to nine million people have problems with binocular vision that affect their ability to watch 3-D TV and movies.

The good news is that early diagnosis of a visual problem and early treatment usually mean a good prognosis. Did you know that the optimal time for your child's first eye exam is as early as six months of age? At this age, the visual system is developed enough for an optometrist to identify risk factors that may have adverse effects on eye and vision health – and ultimately a child's ability to learn.

The vision screenings done at school or as part of a physical are meant only to measure a child's range of vision. They can't detect conditions that may affect

visual function, and are difficult to do with children under the age of four. An optometrist has the equipment and training to give your child a comprehensive evaluation. The exam evaluates the eye's ability to see at several distances such as the board, a book, or a computer screen. It tests the eyes' ability to shift focus from one point to another, to follow words on a page, and to recognize colors accurately. The exam also checks a child's eye-hand coordination and eye health.

We encourage you to make your child's first experiences with school positive and rewarding by arranging for an eye exam by an optometrist. Through InfantSEE®, a public health program, optometrists provide a comprehensive eye and vision assessment to infants between the ages of 6 and 12 months at no cost regardless of income or ability to pay. To find an InfantSEE® provider in your area, please visit www.infantsee.org.

Including an eye examination in infancy and again before a child starts school allows you to celebrate your child's good health and eyesight, or address any detected problems early for his or her best success in school. For more information about eye exams for young children, visit the American Optometric Association website at www.aoa.org.

Sincerely,

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Young Minds Inspired

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American Optometric Association