

Dear Educator,

Do your students know that eye health supports overall health? Do they know that vision screening is not the same as a comprehensive eye and vision examination by an optometrist or ophthalmologist? Do they know what an optometrist does and why optometry can be a fulfilling career for those who want to have a positive impact on the health of their community?

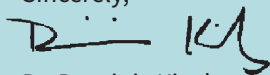
This free, standards-based program from Latinos en Optometry, Transitions Optical, and the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired focuses on eye health and careers in optometry, while complementing health, STEM, and career education lessons.

Share: We hope that you enjoy the program and encourage you to share it with other educators and school nurses.

Tell Us: Please let us know your thoughts on this program by visiting ymiclassroom.com/feedback-leo.

We look forward to your comments and suggestions.

Sincerely,



Dr. Dominic Kinsley
Editor in Chief
Young Minds Inspired

Questions? Contact YMI toll-free at 1-800-859-8005, or by email at feedback@ymiclassroom.com.

About Latinos en Optometry

Latinos en Optometry seeks to gain a broader representation of Latinos within the optometry and eye care professional community, as well as increase eye care professional knowledge and understanding of unique cultural differences within the Latino communities they serve. Learn more at latinosenoptometry.org.

EYING THE FUTURE

Target Audience

Middle and high school students

Program Components

Available at ymiclassroom.com/leo:

- This two-page teacher's guide
- One reproducible student activity sheet
- One reproducible informational handout
- A bilingual parent/caregiver letter
- Curriculum standards

Concepts and Skills

- | | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eye health • Careers in optometry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Analytical thinking • Decision making to promote health • Reading informational text |
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How to Use This Program

Make photocopies of the activity and handout and use the information on the teacher pages to guide learning. Have students share their completed activity sheet and handout with their families. Also, make copies of the parent/caregiver letter to send home and post it on your classroom website to extend the eye health messaging. Visit ymiclassroom.com/leo for standards alignment and more resources.

Classroom Activity

Keeping Sight of Eye Health

Start this activity by asking students what steps they take to help keep themselves healthy. Answers may include eating healthy foods, engaging in physical activity, and getting sleep. Ask: *What are preventative steps we take for our health?* Students may mention going to the doctor. Ask them: *How do you take care of your eyes?*

Explain to students that a vision screening — where they read an eye chart — is not the same thing as a comprehensive eye examination. While a vision screening at school or a doctor's office or motor vehicles bureau may uncover some vision problems, they can miss more than they find, which is why it's so important for everyone to have regular eye examinations conducted by an optometrist or ophthalmologist.

Pass out the activity sheet and review the instructions. After students complete the quiz, discuss the correct answers to dispel any misconceptions. For Part 2, have students work in small groups. Encourage them to share their completed projects with their families, and display the projects around the school, including the nurse's office.



Answers: Part 1:

1. False: 20/20 vision refers only to the sharpness or clarity of vision at a distance. It does not measure other components of visual ability such as peripheral awareness, eye coordination, depth/color perception, and focusing ability. Even if you have 20/20 vision you may still need glasses or contact lenses to correct other eye conditions like astigmatism or hyperopia (farsightedness).

2. True: Sun damage to eyes that are unprotected or under-protected may not be evident for years, but once the damage is done, it cannot be repaired. An eye doctor can recommend sunglasses and UV-blocking contact lenses that can help protect your eyes from sun exposure year-round.

3. False: Everyday eyeglasses, sunglasses, and contact lenses do not protect against eye injuries. More than 90% of sports- and recreation-related eye injuries can be prevented by using appropriate eye and facial protection. An eye care professional can recommend and prescribe special protective eyewear designed for specific sports.

4. False: While eating foods rich in Vitamin A like carrots can help you maintain good eyesight, it won't *improve* your vision or keep you from needing glasses or contacts. A well-balanced diet can have preventive and protective benefits for your overall well-being, as well as your vision and eye health.

5. True: Viewing a computer or digital screen without taking breaks makes the eyes work harder and can contribute to symptoms such as eye discomfort, vision problems, headaches, and shoulder pain. To help prevent eyestrain, be sure to rest your eyes every 20 minutes by looking up or across the room, and blink regularly or use preservative-free artificial tears to keep your eyes lubricated. To further reduce eyestrain from gaming and digital eyestrain, spend time outdoors.

6. True: Eye disease does not affect all ethnic groups equally. For example, studies show that African American and Latino-American people are more likely to develop diseases such as glaucoma, cataracts, and diabetic retinopathy compared to Caucasians. No matter your background, yearly comprehensive eye exams by an optometrist or ophthalmologist are an important part of preventive health care.

7. False: Glasses are prescribed to help you see clearly. They do not weaken your eyes or change their structure. In fact, not wearing glasses when you need them can strain your eyes and lead to headaches, eye fatigue, and blurred vision.

8. False: Rubbing your eyes may feel soothing, especially when they are itching or tired, but excessive rubbing can be harmful. It can lead to eye infections, corneal abrasions, and other problems. If you have the urge to itch or rub your eye, always wash your hands first with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, use a tissue instead of your fingers if touching your eyes directly, and ask your eye doctor about specific types of eye drops to reduce irritation and eye rubbing.

9. False: People who have myopia have difficulty seeing objects at a distance. Once myopia develops in children, it can continue worsening into the teens and even early adulthood. There are treatment options that can be prescribed to slow it down, but the growth cannot be stopped or reversed.

This means there is no cure for myopia — only ways to correct the blurred far-away vision which comes with it.

10. False: Opticians are technicians who fit eyeglasses, contact lenses, and other vision-correcting devices. Opticians are not eye doctors and can't perform eye exams or write prescriptions. Doctors of Optometry examine, diagnose, and treat, and manage diseases, injuries, and disorders of the eye.

Handout Eying the Future

Now that students know more about eye health, ask them what they think an eye doctor does. Pass out the information sheet and have the students read and discuss it in small groups. Reconvene and ask students: *What surprises you about the eye health field? Which career options sound the most interesting?*

Extension Activities

- Watch the videos featuring messages from optometrists as a class at ymiclassroom.com/leo. For each video clip, ask students to share what they learn and elements of careers in optometry that might appeal to them as a potential future opportunity.
- Encourage students to visit latinosenoptometry.org/students to learn more about career opportunities in the fast-growing field of optometry, including an opportunity to connect one-on-one with an optometrist.

Resources

Latinos en Optometry: latinosenoptometry.org

The Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO)

Eye Opener Sessions: eyeopenersession.org

Transitions: About Light Sensitivity:

www.transitions.com/en-us/quiz

YMI program: ymiclassroom.com/leo

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KEEPING SIGHT OF EYE HEALTH

Part 1: Mark each statement below as “T” for True or “F” for False to “see” how much you know about eye health.

1. ☐ If your vision is 20/20, it means you have perfect vision.
2. ☐ Sun damage to your eyes is irreversible.
3. ☐ Eyeglasses and contact lenses provide adequate protection against eye injuries when playing sports.
4. ☐ Eating carrots will always improve your vision.
5. ☐ Too much time on digital devices can cause eyestrain and other problems.
6. ☐ Certain ethnic groups are more prone to eye disease.
7. ☐ Wearing glasses weakens your eyes.
8. ☐ Rubbing your eyes is harmless.
9. ☐ Myopia, or nearsightedness, can be cured.
10. ☐ Opticians and optometrists are the same type of doctor.

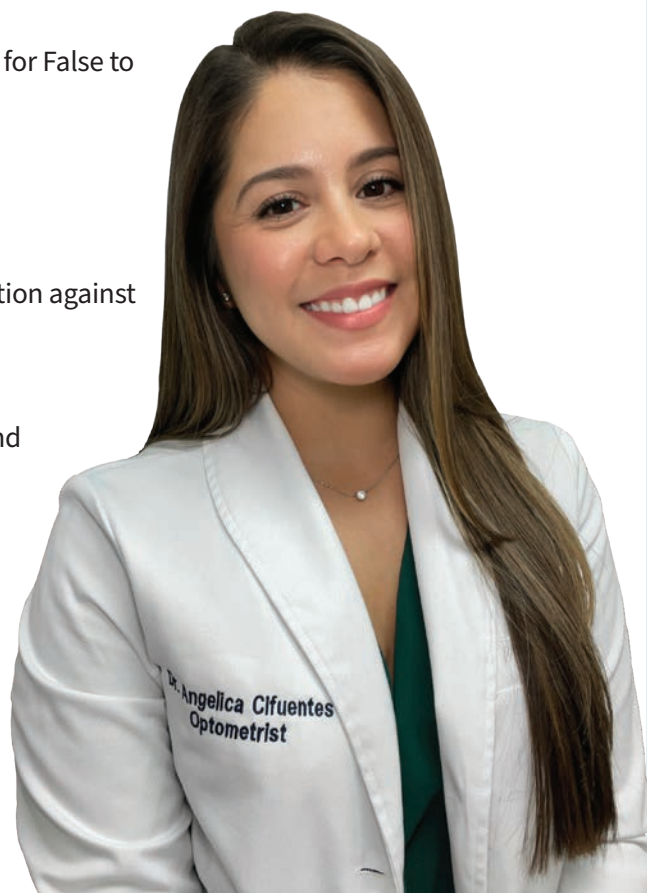


Photo courtesy of Dr. Angelica Cifuentes

Part 2: Spread the word! Work with your group to create awareness about the importance of protecting your eyes from the sun and non-visible and visible blue-violet light. Your outreach message might take the form of a public service announcement, a meme, a short video, a poster, or a pamphlet.

We all know that too much sun causes skin damage. But did you know its ultraviolet (UV) rays can also damage the eyes? Overexposure to blue-violet light from the sun and through constant use of electronic devices and screens can be harmful to your eyes. Here are some helpful resources to get you started:

- What Is Blue-Violet Light & Is It Bad For Your Eyes?: transitions.com/en-us/blue-light/
- What's Blue Light, and How Does It Affect Our Eyes?: healthline.com/health/what-is-blue-light
- Computer Vision Syndrome: aoa.org/healthy-eyes/eye-and-vision-conditions/computer-vision-syndrome
- Should You Be Worried About Blue Light?: aoa.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/should-you-be-worried-about-blue-light

EYING THE FUTURE

Optician, Optometrist, Ophthalmologist — What's the Difference?

- **Opticians are not eye doctors.** They are technicians trained to design and fit eyeglasses and contact lenses, based on the prescriptions issued by other eye practitioners, like ophthalmologists and optometrists. Each state has its own requirements for licensure, but in most places, the main prerequisite is completing either a two-year apprenticeship or graduating from an approved training program.
- **Doctors of Optometry (OD)** are primary eye health care providers who examine, diagnose, treat, and manage diseases and disorders of the eye, and also play a major role in maintaining the overall health and well-being of their patients. Traditional OD programs take 4 years to complete. They include both academic coursework and supervised clinical experience. (See American Optometric Association at [aoa.org/healthy-eyes/whats-a-doctor-of-optometry?](https://www.aoa.org/healthy-eyes/whats-a-doctor-of-optometry?))
- **Ophthalmologists** are medical (MD) or osteopathic (DO) doctors who specialize in eye and vision care. Typical training for an ophthalmologist includes a four-year college degree followed by four years of medical school and at least four additional years of medical and surgical training. (See American Academy of Ophthalmology at [aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/what-is-ophthalmologist?](https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/what-is-ophthalmologist?))

An Important Part of Caring For Your Eyes, Vision, and Overall Health

An in-person, comprehensive eye exam with a Doctor of Optometry includes a range of tests in order to do a complete evaluation of the health of your eyes and your vision. Not only can your optometrist assess your eye health, but optometrists are often the first doctor to identify other health conditions because they can see many things in the eye that are not visible elsewhere. If they identify a systemic health condition, they can work with a patient's overall health care team to ensure appropriate follow-up care.

A Diverse Career

Optometrists are experiencing diversification in optometry roles, expanding beyond traditional practice settings such as offices or optical goods stores. Optometrists now have opportunities in various sectors, including corporate, academia, research, and public health.

For example, you could:

- Conduct research to help develop innovative products and services, ensuring optimal visual outcomes.
- Specialize in neuro-optometry to help patients with visual defects due to disabilities, traumatic brain injuries, and other neurological complications.
- Specialize in pediatric or geriatric optometry to serve the vision needs of children or the elderly.
- Specialize in sports vision optometry to help athletes enhance their visual skills to improve performance.
- Develop and implement public health programs within your community.

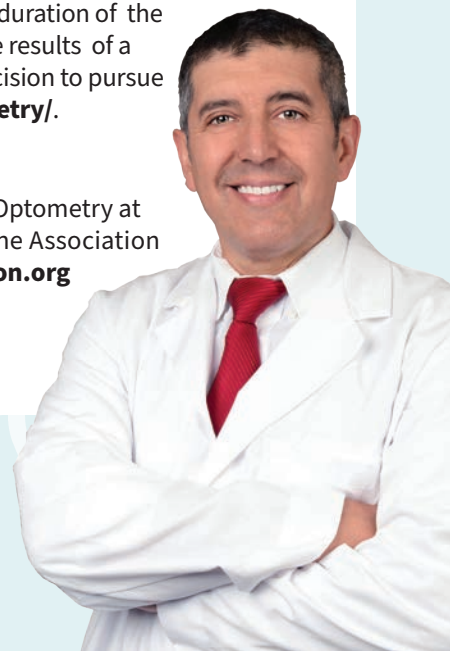
There are lots of diverse opportunities!

Planning for a Career in Optometry

Chart a course to an extraordinary career by preparing as soon as you can. In middle and high school, take courses in STEM — science, technology, engineering, and math. Consider volunteering in a vision center or an eye doctor's office. Many factors go into choosing a medical specialty such as optometry, including personal history, clinical interests, duration of the training involved, career opportunities, and financial and work-life balance considerations. See the results of a survey of practicing optometrists to look at some critical factors that might help influence your decision to pursue optometry as a profession: latinosenoptometry.org/students/career-considerations-in-optometry/.

Learn More

To find out more about educational requirements for and careers in optometry, visit Latinos en Optometry at latinosenoptometry.org/students. You can also hear directly from an optometrist through The Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) Eye Opener Session. Sign up at eyeopenersession.org to connect one-on-one with an OD. From short, online conversations to in-person shadowing opportunities, it's a simple, no-pressure way to find out what it's like to be an eye doctor.



EYING THE FUTURE

Dear Parent or Caregiver,

In class, your child has been learning about eye health and the importance of regular comprehensive exams conducted by an optometrist or ophthalmologist.

Eye Exams: Your child may have a vision screening as part of their annual physical, but that is not an eye exam. Comprehensive eye exams check both vision and eye health and if a disease or other conditions are detected, a Doctor of Optometry can help direct patients to the right prevention plans or the next steps in official diagnosis and treatment.

Career Opportunities: Your child also learned about what an optometrist does, different specialty areas within optometry, and the educational requirements to become an optometrist, and heard from several optometrists about why becoming a Doctor of Optometry can be a fulfilling and future-focused career path.

Ask your child to share with you what they've learned about protecting their vision and check out "Eyes on the Future: Exploring Career Paths in Optometry" at ymiclassroom.com/leo together to learn more.

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Carta reproducible para las familias

MIRANDO HACIA EL FUTURO

Estimado padre o cuidador:

En clase, su hijo/hija ha estado aprendiendo sobre la salud de los ojos y la importancia de someterse regularmente a exámenes completos realizados por un optometrista u oftalmólogo.

Exámenes oculares: Su hijo/hija puede someterse a una prueba de la visión como parte de su revisión médica anual, pero eso no es un examen ocular. Los exámenes oculares completos comprueban tanto la visión como la salud ocular y, si se detecta una enfermedad u otras afecciones, un médico optometrista puede ayudar a orientar a los pacientes respecto de los planes de prevención adecuados o guiarlos hacia los siguientes pasos en el diagnóstico y tratamiento oficiales.

Oportunidades profesionales: Su hijo/hija también aprendió lo que hace un optometrista, las diferentes especialidades de la optometría, los requisitos educativos para convertirse en optometrista y escuchó a varios profesionales explicar por qué convertirse en médico optometrista puede ser una carrera satisfactoria y orientada al futuro.

Pídale a su hijo/hija que comparta con usted lo que ha aprendido sobre la protección de la vista y la salud ocular, y revisen "Los Ojos en el Futuro: Explorando Carreras en Optometría" en ymiclassroom.com/leo juntos para aprender más.

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