

Pointers For Parents

Students' Most Important Sense: Sight

(NAPSA)—Petting the classroom rabbit, tasting an afternoon snack, listening to a story, smelling a budding flower, and seeing words in a textbook—children use all five senses to learn in the classroom. But if the words in the textbook are blurry and hard to read, much of a student's efforts will be spent making sense of a blurry world—not on the lesson or task at hand.

Studies indicate vision is the key element (almost 80 percent) of the learning process during a child's first 12 years. For children who have undetected vision problems, the joy and discovery of classroom learning can quickly become a burden and something to avoid.

The American Optometric Association and the Vision Council of America encourage parents to avoid possible future problems in the classroom by taking their children to the eye doctor. An examination assesses whether the eyes see clearly. "Vision screenings play a helpful role," notes Dr. Wesley E. Pittman, president of the AOA, "but they should not take the place of a comprehensive eye exam from an eye doctor."

During an examination, the eye doctor makes sure the eyes are able to work together, to focus properly, and to move together. These eye functions are necessary for activities such as moving across a page of print or following a ball, and for healthy, productive learning in the classroom.

Undetected vision problems are easily overlooked by parents, teachers, and children themselves. Children assume that what they see is what everyone sees—even when it's blurry. If your child exhibits any of the fol-



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lowing behaviors, consider making an appointment for a comprehensive eye exam:

- Loses place while reading
- Avoids close work
- Holds reading material closer than normal, brings it closer while reading, or shifts it often
- Tends to rub eyes
- Has headaches
- Turns or tilts head to use one eye only
- Makes frequent reversals when reading or writing
- Uses fingers to maintain place when reading
- Omits or confuses small words when reading
- Consistently performs below potential.

Ensure that your children can make the most of their five senses in the classroom. Make an appointment for an eye examination now. Please visit the American Optometric Association Web site at www.aoa.org, or the Vision Council of America Web site at www.checkyearly.com for more information.