

Pointers For Parents

Research Confirms Importance Of Vision To Learning

(NAPSA)—According to a recent study, vision problems may have a greater effect on children's school performance than poverty and low socioeconomic status.

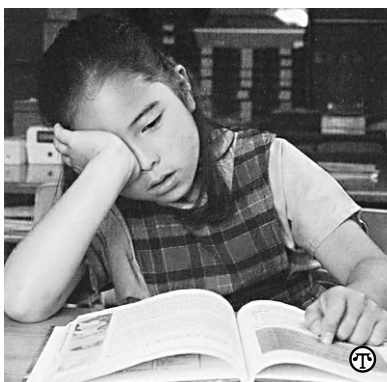
The three-year study by W.C. Maples, O.D., FCOVD, a researcher and professor at the Northeastern State University College of Optometry, found that visual perceptual and eye movement abilities are strong predictors of academic scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, a standardized test for measuring academic ability.

Preliminary results of this study were reported during a special conference presented through the Harvard University Graduate School of Education entitled "How Vision Impacts Literacy: An Educational Problem That Can Be Solved." The conference focused on how functional vision problems can interfere with learning and the increased incidence of these problems among inner city children. It also dealt with the social, emotional and educational consequences of undetected and untreated vision problems.

"Our research found that a child's vision status is a more significant factor than poverty in predicting academic performance," reported Dr. Maples. "This is significant because many vision problems that affect learning are easily treatable with glasses and/or vision therapy. Improved visual ability can lead to improved performance in the classroom."

Race and socioeconomic status are generally thought to be significant factors correlated with a child's performance in the classroom. However, studies have also shown that vision problems are more prevalent in minority and low socioeconomic groups.

"The results of this and other studies underscore the importance of every child being visually ready



For many children, vision therapy can help them overcome problems that might lead to poor academic performance.

to learn," stated Dr. Nancy Torgerson, president of the College of Optometrists in Vision Development (COVD).

"Parents who see their child struggling in school should seek a comprehensive visual evaluation as early as possible," Torgerson added. "The tragedy is that learning-related vision problems often go undiagnosed and untreated. Most often these problems are not related to how clearly the child can see the board at the front of the classroom, but how effectively their eyes and brain can acquire and process what they are seeing. Fortunately, effective treatment in the form of vision therapy and special glasses is available to give children the visual abilities they need to succeed."

COVD is embarking upon a nationwide public education program to raise parent and teacher awareness of learning-related vision problems and their treatment and to provide resources for locating developmental optometrists for local evaluation and treatment.

Parents and teachers can call the COVD Information Hotline at 888-268-3770 or log onto the COVD Web site www.covd.org for more information.