

## Success stories

### **K. O. 10 years old**

"K has progressed tremendously in grade 4...the issues of attention and concentration have been addressed... school work has lost the frustration it had in grade 3."

### **G. R. 8 years old**

"This program has been life changing for G. We would recommend Vision Therapy to anyone who is diagnosed with ADD or having difficulty reading."

For more success stories visit our website,  
[www.calgaryvisiontherapy.com](http://www.calgaryvisiontherapy.com)

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# Children don't know they have a problem

Vision, understanding what you see, is learned in a series of predictable developmental steps, much like learning to walk. Children learning to walk, however, are able to imitate others. Visual development, on the other hand, is an entirely individual experience that does not allow comparing what a child sees with what another person sees. That's why so many children with severe vision problems never report them to parents or teachers. To such a child, double vision, blurred objects and the tiresome work they do when trying to read seems normal. After all, the fuzzy-looking view they see is "normal" to them!

Even before these visual symptoms appear, the youngster is attempting to cope with the visual stress. It is important to have a visual evaluation by Dr. Neufeld in order to get a protective program started before eye damage occurs. On occasions, stress-relieving lenses may be recommended (even if the person is "20/20") to reduce unwanted visual stress. This may be one of many recommended steps in a preventative program.

This makes it critical for parents and teachers to watch children for signs of vision problems. Do they see double images? Do distant objects seem blurry? Do they have to close or cover one eye to see well? (Check our website for additional signs and symptoms.) Delaying visual care for a youngster who needs it can increase the risk that permanent vision problems will develop. ✓



# VISION THERAPY

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Issue 02

## Teachers can help with identifying many vision problems

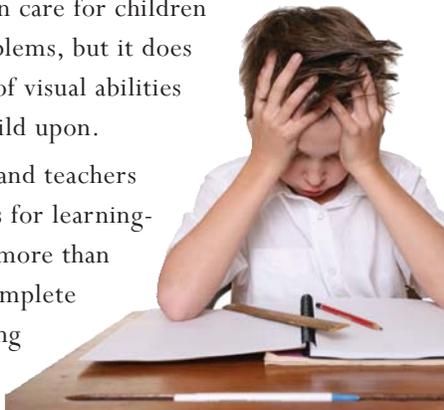
**M**any teachers suspect that some of their students have vision problems, but is there a way they can know for sure?

Teachers are in a unique position to observe children at work and play. This is important because children seldom complain about vision problems. To these children, the world has always looked distorted or blurred. Or they have always skipped words or lines while reading. They say, "It's always been this way."

These children can't see through another's eyes, so they have no "normal" vision to compare with their own. And since they often avoid uncomfortable visual tasks, they seem to be symptom free. Yet, children do reveal learning-related vision problems in their behavior. One of the most common is a child who fails no matter how hard he tries. In fact, increased effort actually interferes further with a child's ability to take in and use his visual information.

Providing appropriate vision care for children does not cure learning problems, but it does provide a solid foundation of visual abilities that a learning team can build upon.

Here is a checklist parents and teachers can use to "screen" students for learning-related vision problems. If more than two signs are checked, a complete visual information processing evaluation is in order. [v7](#)



### Vision problem checklist

- Headaches with near work
- When reading, head (instead of eyes) turns to follow lines of print across the page
- Requires a finger or marker to keep place while reading
- Displays short attention span while reading or copying
- Repeatedly omits small words while reading
- Orients drawings poorly on page
- Extreme tilting of head while working at desk
- Must touch things to assist if any interpretation is required
- Writes crookedly, poorly spaced; cannot stay on ruled lines
- Repeatedly confuses left-right directions
- Confuses the same word in the same (or next) sentence
- Unable to describe what has just been read
- Whispers to self (subvocalization) for reinforcement while reading silently
- Comprehension declines as reading continues; loses interest too quickly
- Blur when looking at near
- Words run together when reading
- Falls asleep when reading
- Skips/repeats lines when reading
- Difficulty copying from the chalkboard
- Clumsy, knocks over things
- Trouble keeping attention

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# Should an optometrist be included on learning teams?



Children with learning problems are often surrounded by a supportive team of teachers, special tutors, a psychologist, school nurse, pediatrician, and so on. But a significant amount of research on the connection between vision and learning disabilities now suggests the need to add one more member—the behavioral optometrist.

Behavioral vision care does not teach a child to read. Behavioral care can help children whose vision is inefficient to develop better visual skills, and to avert the consequences of visual stress.

The result is that the child is better able to utilize the reading and learning help provided by the rest of the helping team.

It's comparable to building a young gymnast's sense of balance and ultra-fine control of movement. Children with this special training are more likely to advance to more sophisticated gymnastic moves than those without.

Behavioral optometrists apply a scientific model that involves looking at the whole person. A person with vision problems often has difficulties with self-esteem that has been lowered by years of school failure.

Sometimes it's just that schoolwork is difficult, stressful and "too much work." Sometimes the child may exhibit 'flight' and flee from visual tasks due to the extraneous effort put on their visual system and may exhibit symptoms of a child with ADD.

A child whose vision limits his reading ability could benefit from the help of a special tutor after he has had

counter-stress lenses and optometric visual training. A child with physical problems may need the help of a pediatrician, psychologist or other specialist. Many parents and teachers are amazed to see a child who has been doing poorly at school improve once the child received effort-reducing lenses or visual training. Yet, these children have often had a lot of prior help from teachers. The visual intervention (vision therapy) simply provided the visual skills the child needed to be able to better put to use what was taught. Multidisciplinary cooperation is vital in many vision-related problems.

## How do you refer a student?

Provide the parent with our office name Calgary Vision Therapy, office phone number 403-242-1800, and website [www.calgaryvisiontherapy.com](http://www.calgaryvisiontherapy.com) and recommend that they contact us for an evaluation. Our office is the only office in Calgary that exclusively provides visual information processing evaluations and intensive in office optometric vision therapy services. NOTE: If the child has learning difficulties, it is imperative that the child be directed to the required service directly. On their own, they may stumble on an eye care professional which operates on the medical model (i.e. primarily looking for 20/20 and health eyes) who may not offer a referral to another eye care professional which will provide the essential required care.

*If you are not permitted to refer directly to a specific person or office, contact our office for additional suggestions around this unfortunate situation. vt*

# Visual training: Play, work or both?

When you walk into the behavioral optometric office, you'll find a fascinating place. In some rooms, you may see balls hanging from the ceiling, games, charts on the wall, a balance beam, pitch-back and funny red/green glasses. At first you might wonder if you've wandered into a child's playroom.

But, what looks like a playroom is really a professional office. The "toys" you see are an important part of visual training (also known as vision therapy). Visual training can help you and your family develop the important visual skills for other activities at school and work.

Some people have not yet learned the visual processing skills to do their school work, job responsibilities or favorite leisure activities as efficiently as they could.

Through no fault of their own, they may have missed a step in the vision development process. They may not have been exposed to the necessary visual experiences or learning opportunities. Visual training, administered under the professional guidance of a behavioral optometrist, can fill in the gaps to develop or reinforce visual skills.

Vision requires a series of events that involve your eyes, your brain and even your life experiences.

If the information entering your vision system is unclear

as it passes through your eyes (blurry sight), it will affect your ability to understand what you see.

If your processing skills (which include the ability to understand and relate to what is seen) are inefficient, you will not be able to fully process what you see, even if you have clear sight.

In either case, you will not get the most out of your entire visual system. Many people have a combination of both poor sight skills and inefficient processing skills.

Just a few of the visual skills you need are:

- Clearness of vision at near and far distances
- Eye movement skills
- Eye focusing skills
- Eye-hand coordination
- Visual perception, identification and memory
- Ability to focus and aim quickly from near to far and back

Each of these skills requires fine and precise control—control which can be improved through visual training.

If you have further questions about visual training or any other vision procedure, feel free to ask Dr Brent W. Neufeld or one of our vision therapists at Calgary Vision Therapy. [v](#)

## Visualization scores success in spelling

When someone asks you to spell a word for them, do you remember how each letter of the word sounds or do you visualize the word as it would look on a piece of paper?

Most people who are good spellers use the visualization method.

Fortunately, using visual methods to learn spelling is fairly easy and actually fun for most youngsters. Here is one method that works:

- Trace the letters of words to be learned on a chalkboard several times. Make the letters large and trace smoothly.
- Say the name of each letter while tracing it several times.
- Trace the letters again, this time without actually touching the chalkboard.
- Turn away and trace the letters in the air, just as if they were being drawn on the board. Be accurate while tracing the form of each letter.
- Finally, close eyes and trace the letters again.
- Can you (or your child) "see" the word while tracing it in the air? If "yes," the skill of visualization, specifically visual recall, is being learned.
- Now trace and read the letters of the word backwards, then write it out on paper again.

This process can help a poor speller do better. Give it a try.