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Good Vision Important for Classroom Success

Few parents realize that one in four children have undetected vision problems that can affect their child's ability to learn and thrive in school

PORTLAND, OR, Aug. 5, 2008 – A new study shows 60 percent of children identified as “problem learners” actually suffer from undetected vision problems. According to the American Optometric Association’s 2008 American Eye-Q® survey, only 39 percent of adults understand that behavioral problems in their child can be an indication of vision problems.

That’s why the Oregon chapter of the AOA, the Optometric Physician’s Association, reminds Oregon parents to have their child’s vision checked before they head back into the classroom this fall.

“Good vision is critical for many classroom tasks - from reading books or seeing a blackboard to viewing a computer screen,” said Dr. Patricia Gates, O.D. Coos Bay. “Without healthy vision, students can face unnecessary challenges not only in the classroom, but also to their mental, physical, social and emotional well being. “

The American Eye-Q® survey further shows that 87 percent of respondents didn’t know that one in four children have a vision problem. These problems can lead to headaches, fatigue and other eyestrain problems. Parents should be aware of the following symptoms that may indicate that a child has a vision problem:

- ✓ Loses his or her place while reading;
- ✓ Avoids close work;
- ✓ Holds reading material closer than normal;
- ✓ Tends to rub his or her eyes;
- ✓ Has headaches;
- ✓ Turns or tilts head to use one eye only;
- ✓ Makes frequent reversals when reading or writing;
- ✓ Rereads or omits words while reading
- ✓ Omits or confuses small words when reading;
- ✓ Consistently performs below potential.

“Ten million school children in America have vision conditions that can negatively affect learning,” said Dr. Gates. “Many parents rely on school screenings to check for eye problems, but that isn’t enough. Kids need comprehensive eye exams that will detect problems that a simple screening can miss, such as eye coordination, focusing problems, or moderate amounts of farsightedness and astigmatism.”

Early detection and treatment provide the very best opportunity to correct vision problems early on. Unfortunately, 57 percent of children did not receive their first eye exam until age five or older, according to the same survey. The OOPA recommends that a child’s first eye exam take place at six months of age. Unless problems are detected, the next exam should be at age three.

“Good vision doesn’t just happen,” Dr. Gates said. “A child’s brain learns how to use eyes to see, just like it learns how to use legs to walk or a mouth to form words. The longer a vision problem



goes undiagnosed and untreated, the more a child's brain has to overcompensate to live with the vision problem, instead of developing and learning normally.”

For more information on children's vision, please visit www.oregonoptometry.org or www.aoa.org.

About the survey:

The third annual American Eye-Q® survey was created and commissioned in conjunction with Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates. From May 17-19, 2008, using an online methodology, PSB interviewed 1,001 Americans 18 years and older who embodied a nationally representative sample of U.S. general population. (Margin of error at 95% confidence level.)

About the Oregon Optometric Physicians Association

The Oregon Optometric Physicians Association is a statewide organization comprised of Doctors of Optometry, college of optometry faculty, optometric students and industry-related associates. It advocates advancing the quality, availability and accessibility of eye, vision and related health care. It also works to represent the profession of optometry, to enhance and promote the independent and ethical decision making of its members, and to assist optometric physicians in practicing the highest standards of patient care. Based in Milwaukie, Oregon, the OOPA has nearly 400 members. For more information, visit www.oregonoptometry.org.

About the American Optometric Association (AOA):

The American Optometric Association represents approximately 36,000 doctors of optometry, optometry students and paraoptometric assistants and technicians. Optometrists serve patients in nearly 6,500 communities across the country, and in 3,500 of those communities are the only eye doctors. Doctors of optometry provide more than two-thirds of all primary eye care in the United States. For more information, visit www.aoa.org.

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