

A Surprising

By Lynn F. Hellerstein

DAVID IS A BRIGHT 8-YEAR-OLD, but he used to struggle to keep up with his third grade work, scoring below age level in reading and writing skills. He often used his finger or marker to keep his place on the page when reading, since he frequently lost his place and did not track well. David often complained of headaches after school. His handwriting was so sloppy that he would often have to stay in from recess to re-do his work. He disliked school and was beginning to think that he just wasn't "smart enough" to be there.

Developmental vision evaluation revealed that David could see well (20/20), but he was more farsighted than most other children. He also had eye tracking, focusing, eye teaming and eye/hand coordination difficulties. After a doctor prescribed glasses for reading and David went through eight months of weekly vision therapy sessions, his teacher reported that he had made excellent improvement in school. He would now read on his own, and his handwriting became more legible. David's mother stated that his self-confidence had blossomed. He no longer "hated" school.

LISA IS AN EXCELLENT FIFTH-GRADE STUDENT. She is diligent and works hard in school. Though she has good reading ability, she used to dislike reading because the print would become blurry and sometimes double. Even though she is above grade level in reading, she avoided more advanced books, as the print size was "too small".

Her evaluation showed that Lisa had a "convergence insufficiency." This is an eye teaming difficulty that can result in double vision, blur or discomfort at near. With two months of weekly optometric vision therapy sessions, Lisa learned how to accurately and efficiently coordinate her eyes. Her reading accelerated and she started reading books on her own, completing the new Harry Potter book in three days. Her mother wished she would have found out about Lisa's visual problems much sooner, but was grateful that she could treat them now.

THE ABOVE TWO EXAMPLES SHOW HOW VISUAL SKILLS AND VISION PROCESSING PROBLEMS MAY GREATLY IMPACT A CHILD'S PERFORMANCE, AND THAT BEHAVIORAL AND EMOTIONAL BAGGAGE THAT ACCOMPANIES LACK OF PERFORMANCE CAN ESCALATE.

SOLUTION for Struggling Kids

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF LEARNING-RELATED VISION PROBLEMS

Vision problem	Symptoms & possible effect on function/behavior
REDUCED VISUAL ACUITY/SEEING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blurred vision • Squinting • Holds objects close • Avoids visual tasks • Discomfort when involved w/visual tasks
BINOCLAR VISION (EYE TEAMING) DISORDERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intermittent double vision • Discomfort and eyestrain for visual tasks • Fatigue, headaches, inattention • Difficulty with eye-hand tasks • Difficulty with depth perception • Cosmetic issue, eyes look crossed or "wall-eyed"
OCULAR MOTILITY (EYE MOVEMENT) DISORDERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive head movement when reading • Frequent loss of place when reading • Need for a marker • Miscalls words • Skips lines • Poor copying skills
ACCOMMODATIVE (FOCUSING) DISORDERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discomfort and eyestrain for visual tasks • Blurred vision • Rubs eyes • Fatigue & inattention
VISUAL PERCEPTION (PROCESSING) DISORDERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion of likenesses and differences of letters/words • Unable to selectively attend to appropriate visual stimulus • Ignores details during visual tasks • Tends to use other senses to make what should be visual discriminations • Poor reading comprehension • Sloppy drawing skills • Difficulty with copying and writing

HOW DO YOU FIND A DOCTOR WHO TREATS CHILDREN WITH LRVP?

Ask your family eye doctor the following questions:

- Do you do near point testing?
- Do you do academically related vision testing?
- Do you provide vision therapy or refer to a doctor who does?
- For more information, check the following websites: covd.org, 3dvision.com, oep.org, pave-eye.com/vision

HERE ARE IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- One in four school-age children have vision problems
- 20/20 does not mean perfect vision. This test does not evaluate visual skills such as focusing at near, depth perception, double vision, eye teaming skills or visual processing skills
- An estimated 10 million children suffer from vision problems
- All children should have their first vision evaluation by age one and again prior to entering school.
- Children should be visually evaluated by an optometrist or ophthalmologist every year throughout their school years.

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