

WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT 20/ 20?

Three common myths when your child struggles

Taryn was undergoing her third vision evaluation. Her mother reported she was struggling and slow with reading. Her first grade year went okay but second grade was another story. As an educator, Taryn's mother was perplexed. Taryn's eyes were frequently tired and irritated while doing homework, yet two previous eye doctors had told her parents her eyes were fine and she was able to see 20/ 20. That was eight months earlier....

This family's story is surprisingly common. Most children with learning-related vision problems are 20/ 20. Does this surprise you? In fact, neither myopia (nearsightedness) nor distance visual acuity appears to be associated with learning difficulties. The American Foundation for Vision Awareness states that one out of four school-aged children have vision problems that impair academic performance. This rises to six of ten children labeled with learning problems.

...Now, Taryn reports words jump off the page and often words or letters are switched. She has made occasional C's but works very hard to get A's and B's. This *specialized visual evaluation* exposed numerous problems rather quickly. While looking at the eye chart with one eye covered, objects appeared larger and closer with one eye but smaller and further with the other. While following an object she involved her head dramatically and she repeatedly lost fixation. When approaching her face along the midline with a slow moving object, it went double at approximately two feet away. No wonder she was experiencing difficulty reading while holding it about one foot from her face.

This frustrating story illustrates three of the most common risks parents take (almost always without awareness). First, is the myth that 20/ 20 means normal vision. It is ONLY possible to understand our visual system's ability to acquire, process and integrate information by specialized testing. A few minutes testing distance visual acuity has little relationship to learning. This is like recording a 120/ 80 mm Hg blood pressure and concluding the cardiovascular status is normal.

20/ 20 DOES NOT MEAN NORMAL VISION

Related to this is the insurance driven eye examination (which is limited to health, structure and acuity). Doctors can be successful provided the patients are processed at a high volume. Provider networks are structured to compliant doctors with lowered payments reflecting efficiency not effectiveness. The most common reason a child struggles is due to an undetected vision problem. If the purpose of insurance is the

transfer of risk but the problem remains overlooked, who bears the consequence of the risk? Certainly not the insurance carrier. Millions of our children are handled this way.

INSURANCE IS NOT ON YOUR TEAM

Less obvious is the third reason: vision screenings (even with good intentions) are ineffective regardless of who does them. Over half of the children in our country never receive a professional vision evaluation, largely due to the fact that the pediatrician or school nurse said vision has checked out to 20/ 20. Many parents are left falsely assured and go no further. Our vision is the bridge and connection between our movement abilities and our language abilities. You cannot process nor execute written not spoken language without the use of vision. Our children's entire potential and well-being are influenced by their visual abilities. G.K. Chesterton said, " It isn't that they can't see the solution. It is that they can't see the problem."

VISION SCREENINGS ARE INEFFECTIVE

Taryn's life is better. Because of optometric vision therapy, homework is easier. Optometric findings are normal. Adverse behaviors have disappeared. In short, life is good. This family was lucky enough to discover and travel the better path. Many others are on the wrong one. How about you? How is your present strategy working out for you? If it isn't, maybe your child's visual development should be checked by a developmental optometrist.

For over two decades, Dr. Mark Roberts has helped children in difficulty. To enhance your world through vision therapy, visit www.drmarkroberts.com, call 336-218-0491 or email visdevmnm@aol.com