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Help get the word out about children's vision care. Join the Back-in-School Program.

Western Washington Case Studies

The stories below are from optometric physicians and children in Western Washington. They illustrate the need for complete eye examinations – measuring sight acuity as well as eye health and vision perception. The case studies also demonstrate the need for parents to continue to ask questions relating to vision when a child's schoolwork suffers.

Nate, age 9, 4th Grade	Drew, age 12, 5th Grade	Bobby, age 10, 4th Grade
<p>Problem: Nate was very bright, creative, curious, and eager to learn. Yet he experienced difficulty learning to read which affected his self-esteem and caused him to "hate reading." Nate was lucky to have excellent teachers who helped him improve his reading skills so that he read at grade level with excellent comprehension. However, his reading was still labored and very slow. He noted that sometimes the words blurred and became double.</p> <p>Evaluation: A developmental vision examination revealed convergence insufficiency (poor eye teaming skills that make it difficult to keep both eyes on target). This made it hard to maintain clear, single vision, especially at the near distance necessary for reading and writing. Nate was also unable to move his eyes smoothly and accurately. His eye movements were jerky, he often lost fixation and his focusing skills were compromised. Reading required enormous effort just to keep his eyes physically on the words.</p> <p>Solution: Nate is now in the final stage of his vision therapy program to help him learn the visual skills necessary to read comfortably and efficiently. As his visual skills developed, his reading improved dramatically. He received an award at school for making the most improvement during the year. By the end of the year, he tested at a 6th grade reading level. Best of all, Nate now reads for pleasure.</p>	<p>Problem: Drew had symptoms of a learning disability as he struggled with reading. He had difficulty concentrating and his comprehension was low. He skipped lines, often lost his place when reading, omitted letters, numbers and phrases and failed to recognize the same word in the next sentence. Drew reversed letters and words in writing and copying from the board to his paper. He also had physical symptoms. His eyes hurt and he tired easily. His head turned as he read across the page. His writing was uphill or downhill on a page and he used his hand to control spacing and alignment. A learning specialist referred Drew to an optometric physician.</p> <p>Evaluation: After a comprehensive eye examination, Drew's optometric physician determined he saw "20/20" but had eye tracking, teaming and focusing difficulty. He was also slightly farsighted.</p> <p>Solution: With the help of glasses for reading and vision therapy, Drew is excelling. In the 5th grade, all of his marks are A's and B's. He is captain of his hockey team, plays drums, and loves to read. He lists "The Lord of the Rings" among his favorite books. The most dramatic difference is that he no longer comes home from school exhausted. He has energy to finish his homework, reads for fun and is involved in sports. Drew is very happy to be able to do things easily again.</p>	<p>Problem: In the 4th grade, Bobby avoided near work because it hurt his eyes and made them tired. It was difficult for him to recognize and spell words on grade level. He experienced word reversals and lost his place when reading. As he continued to read, comprehension became more difficult.</p> <p>Evaluation: Bobby's optometric physician diagnosed poor eye teaming due to a vertical imbalance and poor eye movement control as a result. Because it was hard for him to hold his eyes together as a team, his eyes could not move smoothly along a line of print to give his brain the information it needed. His optometric physician referred him to a behavioral optometrist for vision therapy.</p> <p>Solution: The vision therapy involved a series of exercises designed to help his brain learn to hold his eyes together so that they could work as a team horizontally and vertically. He also learned how to move his eyes smoothly across a page so he no longer lost his place and no longer experienced reversals while reading. For 12 weeks, Bobby diligently did his eye "exercises" once a week at the doctor's office and for 30 minutes each night at home. By the end of his vision therapy program, his reading improved by 3 grade levels. Now Bobby doesn't have to struggle with reading and schoolwork and can get on with having more fun!</p>

