

Eye See...Eye Learn® Backgrounder



What is Eye See...Eye Learn®?

Eye See...Eye Learn® is a not-for-profit program designed to detect, diagnose and treat children with vision problems when they begin Junior Kindergarten, so that every child can see and learn to the best of his/her ability. Local Doctors of Optometry provide OHIP-insured eye exams for Junior Kindergarten students, and if prescribed, the child receives a free pair of eyeglasses donated by the program's eyewear partners.

Program Administrator

The Ontario Association of Optometrists (OAO), a professional organization, represents nearly 1,600 Doctors of Optometry in Ontario. The Association has dedicated more than 100 years to helping its members provide the highest standard of eye health and vision care for Ontarians while driving the profession of optometry forward. OAO strives to increase awareness and understanding of the role that Doctors of Optometry play in ensuring the health of their patients.

About the Program

- OAO launched the Eye See...Eye Learn® (ESEL) pilot program in Hamilton in May 2009; it then expanded to four more regions over the next two years.
- In June 2011, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care began a five-year funding agreement to expand the program across Ontario.
- The program originated in Alberta and is now running in several other provinces.
- Eye See...Eye Learn® as of July 1, 2015 is operating in all regions in Ontario in both English and French schools. More than 128,000 children are currently eligible for the program.

How ESEL Helps Children

- The program reduces barriers to accessing eye care by providing free glasses along with the OHIP-insured eye exam.
- Data from the participating regions shows that for **65%** of the Junior Kindergarten children participating in the ESEL program, it was their first eye exam.
- On average, 10% of children, who receive their first eye exam through ESEL, are prescribed glasses.
- 56% of reported children have been diagnosed with at least one eye health abnormality.

About Vision and Learning

- 80% of all learning is visual. (*Imus, HA. Visual efficiency. Hygeia, The Health Magazine. 1941:1-8*)
- 25% of school age children have a vision problem. (*Vision Loss in Canada 2011, National Coalition for Vision Health, www.eyesite.ca*)
- 5% to 10% of preschool children have an undetected vision problem. (*Robinson, Bobier and Martin, 1999/2000*)
- Approximately 60% of children with literacy problems have an undiagnosed vision problem. (*Vision Loss in Canada 2011, National Coalition for Vision Health, www.eyesite.ca*)
- Approximately 4% of Canadian children have some form of lazy eye (amblyopia). (*British Journal of Medicine, www.bmj.com Best Practices*)
- *"Uncorrected amblyopia may harm school performance, ability to learn, and later, adult self-image. Furthermore, uncorrected amblyopia may be a risk factor for future total blindness."* (*US Preventive Services Task Force, Screening for Visual Impairment in Children Younger than Age 5 Years, AHR Publication NO. 04-0541-A, May 2004*)

Corporate Partners

OAO acknowledges the generous support of its exclusive eyewear partners, Nikon Lenswear and OGI Eyewear. OAO is partially funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.