



# Health Barriers to Learning: Vision, Hearing, and Dental Health

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Professional Development

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# Today's Takeaways



Learn why vision, hearing, and dental problems are Health Barriers to Learning

Recognize signs of a health problem in your classroom

Promote a healthy classroom environment!

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Facilitator Notes: In this session we will... (read through the takeaways) click for bullet points.

Learn why vision, hearing and dental problems can affect a student's performance in your classroom. They may miss school because of these problems and fall off track.

You may be able to tell if a student has certain health problems. You may notice certain signs that indicate a vision, hearing, or dental problem even if a student doesn't tell you directly.

Monitoring students and engaging with parents about these issues play a role in improving both their health and performance in the classroom.

# Thinking Question

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How can a **vision problem** affect students in the classroom?

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Facilitator Notes: Ask the audience this question and allow a moment for thinking. Allow participants 1 min to give answers to the question. Feel free to let the participants shout out their answers or if this is a quiet group call on 1-3 parents to share their ideas.

# Vision Problems in the Classroom

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Most activities in school, like reading and writing involve seeing

If students have a vision problem, they may:

- Be unfocused during class time
- Read at a lower level and miss critical benchmarks
- Have decreased motivation to participate during class



## Thinking Question

How many school-aged children have a vision problem in the United States?



Nationally, about 20% of students, or 1 in 5, have a vision problem

Facilitator Notes: Ask the audience this question and allow a moment for thinking. Then click to reveal answer.

About 20% of school-aged children in the US, or 1 in 5 students, have a vision problem. The number could be greater in your school's neighborhood.

Image: <https://openclipart.org/detail/228880/diverse-kids>

# Activity

[What does it look like when a student cannot see and does not wear glasses?](#)

Facilitator Notes: Click on the link. It will bring you to a page of what it looks like a person is nearsighted (myopia). Then simulate when a person has perfect vision by entering 0.0 into all of the text boxes and pressing simulate.

# Signs and Symptoms

If you notice these signs in the classroom, a student may have a vision problem:

- Trouble paying attention
- Trouble reading the board
- Headaches or eye pain
- Taking longer than expected to complete classwork
- Squinting
- Asking to move closer to the front of the room
- Disruptive or withdrawn behavior



## Facilitator Notes:

Students may think the way they see is the way everyone sees. They may not know they are having trouble seeing so they may not say anything to you or their caretakers.

You may see some signs in your classroom that may indicate a student has a vision problem. (click through the bullets)

If you notice any of these signs, be sure to talk to the school nurse and the student's parents. This will help ensure the proper screening and follow-up steps are taken.

If a child has redness and tearing of their eyes in addition to vision loss, it could be a sign of an infection. The child should see a doctor right away.

# Vision Screenings

- Students should have their eyes screened every year
- Screenings may happen in school
  - Department of Health or Education teams
  - Your school nurse
- Screenings are painless
- Children with abnormal vision screens should be scheduled for a more comprehensive vision exam to determine if they would benefit from glasses

## Facilitator Notes:

Students can get their eyes screened during their well-child visits or yearly physicals.

Sometimes screenings happen in school. Depending on the type of school and grade of students, the Department of Health or Department of Education may come to your school to conduct screenings on students once a year. If your class is going to be screened, you can talk to parents to make sure their child is in school that day.

If you think a student has a vision problem, you can also refer them to the school nurse. The school nurse may be able to screen the child or refer the child to someone who can do the screening.

Screenings are not painful. Students may be asked to read letters from a chart or book. They may also be asked to look at an electronic screener that can detect a child's eyesight. Screenings show if a student **may** have a vision problem.

If a student is screened and needs a follow-up visit, they will need to see an



eye doctor. If the screening is done in school, you'll get paperwork to send home to parents. Make sure parents see and read this paperwork so they can seek treatment for their child. An eye exam will tell a family if the child has a vision problem and, if so, what specific vision problem. Once a problem is diagnosed, a child may be given glasses, an eye patch, or other instructions for treatment.

# Amblyopia

- “Lazy-eye”
- 3 out of 100 children in the US may have amblyopia
- It can be treated if found early!

<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/scah/scah-amblyopia-flyer.pdf>

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## Facilitator Notes:

Sometimes one eye is stronger than the other. One eye may not be communicating with the brain as it should be - causing it to be unfocused or not lined up correctly. The weak eye may get “lazy.” You likely won’t be able to tell your child has amblyopia unless they are screened and then treated. If it is not treated in time, it could cause blindness in the weak eye.

Amblyopia usually develops when a child is young. The earlier a student is screened and treated for amblyopia, the better. Screenings in Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and First Grade can help find amblyopia in time for treatment. A vision screening will help determine if students **may** have amblyopia. An eye doctor can then do an eye exam to confirm if the child has amblyopia.

Amblyopia can be treated if found early. An eye doctor may have a child wear an eye patch on the stronger eye, this way the weaker eye can work harder and learn to communicate with the brain properly. A child with amblyopia may also need to wear glasses.

## Classroom Tips:



- Refer the student to the school nurse and talk to a parent if you notice signs of a vision problem
- If students require follow-up after a school-wide screening, remind parents to fill out the proper paperwork and take their child to the eye doctor
- Remind students to wear their glasses in the classroom

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Facilitator Notes: Some students may be screened in school. If they require follow-up after a screening, a letter will be sent home to the parents and teachers and nurses will receive a list of the students' results. Follow-up with parents of students to make sure they take their student to get an eye exam. The school and local health department should be able to help you find locations in your school's neighborhood that provide eye exams.

Some students may need to wear their glasses all the time and some may need to wear them only when reading a book or looking at the board. If a student wears glasses, ask the student or parent when they should be wearing them and if they should be sitting in a specific area of the classroom.

## Thinking Question

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How do **hearing problems** affect a student in the classroom?

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Facilitator Notes: Ask the audience this question and allow a moment for thinking. Allow participants 1 min to give answers to the question. Feel free to let the participants shout out their answers or if this is a quiet group call on 1-3 parents to share their ideas.

# Hearing problems in the classroom



Any hearing loss may cause:

- Slowed or delayed speech and language development
- Slowed or delayed social development
- Misbehavior in the classroom

Students in elementary school who have hearing loss may be more likely to repeat a grade



Hearing problems in students can impact their development and school work. If go unnoticed and untreated, it could prevent students from being promoted at the end of the school year.

## Thinking Question

Why is it better to find a **hearing problem** early?

Facilitator Notes: Ask the audience this question and allow a moment for thinking. Allow participants 1 min to give answers to the question. Feel free to let the participants shout out their answers or if this is a quiet group call on 1-3 parents to share their ideas.

All newborns are tested for hearing. Sometimes problems develop in childhood and can then be treated. Hearing screenings help determine if a student may have a hearing problem. Screenings can help prevent problems from getting worse.

# Signs and Symptoms

You may notice the following signs in the classroom:

- Does not speak clearly
- Does not follow directions (you may think they are not paying attention or just ignoring you)
- Often says, “Huh?”
- Declining academic performance
- Has no reaction to loud noises
- Shows no response to your voice
- Complains of earaches, ear pain or head noises



## Facilitator Notes:

The signs and symptoms of hearing loss are different for each child.

There are some signs to look out for (click through the bullets).

If you notice a student with one or more of these signs (especially repeatedly), you should refer the child to the school nurse for a hearing screening. You should also talk to the student's parents or caretakers about the health problem.

## Classroom Tips:

- Refer the student to the school nurse and talk to a parent if you notice signs of a hearing problem
- Be mindful of students who have a diagnosed hearing problem
  - Communicate with their parents to figure out the necessary accommodations
  - Avoid activities with loud or piercing noises



Facilitator Notes: If you think a student has a hearing problem, they should be screened immediately. A student may need to visit an audiologist if a screening indicates the child **may** have a hearing problem.

If a student has a hearing problem and has to wear an aid device, monitor the student to ensure they are wearing it as prescribed. Like vision, they may also need to sit in a specific spot in the classroom to help manage their hearing condition.



## Thinking Question

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How does **dental health** affect a student in the classroom?



Facilitator Notes: Ask the audience this question and allow a moment for thinking. Allow participants 1 min to give answers to the question. Feel free to let the participants shout out their answers or if this is a quiet group call on 1-3 parents to share their ideas.

# Dental Problems in the Classroom

- If students are suffering from dental pain they may:
  - be unfocused in the classroom
  - have trouble eating and drinking
  - have slower speech development
  - be absent from school often
- Dental problems can be very painful for students and could lead to infection.



# Signs and Symptoms

Students with untreated dental problems may:

- Say their tooth hurts
- Experience pain when eating or drinking
- Be sensitive to extremely hot or cold food and drink
- Have visible holes in teeth
- Have brown, black or white stains on a tooth



## Facilitator Notes:

A student may not have any symptoms if a cavity is new or small. If you see or notice these signs repeatedly in a student, you should refer the student to the school nurse. You should also have a conversation with the student and his/her caretakers about the importance of dental health and visiting the dentist.

# Visiting the Dentist

- Children should go to the dentist at least twice a year
- Sometimes dentists may come to school to check student's teeth.
  - Remind parents to fill out the right paperwork and send their children to school on these days



## Facilitator Notes:

Dentists will clean a child's teeth and check for any cavities. The dentist may put a special sealant and fluoride varnish on a student's teeth that helps prevent future cavities from forming.

Some schools may partner with dental programs to provide dental exams in school. This is a great way to make sure students are receiving dental care. You can remind parents about this service. It often requires consent paperwork that allows the dentist to see and treat a student for any dental work.

## Classroom Tips:

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- Call a parent if students are complaining about tooth pain or if there are visible signs of dental problems
- Talk about keeping teeth healthy in the classroom. Students should learn to brush their teeth for two minutes, twice a day
- If you are having classroom snacks, avoid sugary foods and drinks



Facilitator Notes:

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Monitoring students and engaging with parents about these issues play a role in improving both their health and performance in the classroom.

## Questions?

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(old pic) Source:

<http://www.fda.gov/BiologicsBloodVaccines/ResourcesforYou/Consumers/ucm345587.htm#vaccines>

## Thank you!

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If you would like to see other vision, hearing, or dental health resources or find information on additional **Health Barriers to Learning**, please visit the **Healthy and Ready to Learn Resource and Training Center** at [www.hrl.nyc](http://www.hrl.nyc)



# WORKSHOP SURVEY

Thank you for taking part in our workshop! We would like your help in understanding how to improve the workshop, how much you learned, and if you think that you will apply what you learned in your work and life. Please take a few minutes to fill the following survey. Honest feedback is welcome!

1) What was the best part of the workshop?

2) What did you LIKE LEAST about the workshop?

3) How would you improve the workshop?

4) Please circle the number that best represents your knowledge and skills before and after this training:

### Why vision and hearing problems and dental pain are health barriers to learning:

BEFORE THE WORKSHOP					AFTER THE WORKSHOP				
Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very high	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very high
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

### Seeing signs of vision, hearing, and dental problems in the classroom:

BEFORE THE WORKSHOP					AFTER THE WORKSHOP				
Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very high	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very high
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

### Strategies to support screening and treatment of vision, hearing, and dental screenings:

BEFORE THE WORKSHOP					AFTER THE WORKSHOP				
Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very high	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very high
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

5) How likely are you to use the knowledge and skills that you learned in the workshop? (Please circle)

Not likely at all	Not likely	Neutral	Likely	Very likely
1	2	3	4	5

6) What challenges do you think you will have in using what you learned?

7) Any other feedback?