



VISUAL BEHAVIOURS – WHAT TO WATCH FOR!

We can overlook visual behaviours that could suggest an undiagnosed vision challenge, some serious. Children with vision problems may not complain because they do not know what others see, and they can develop adaptive behaviours to accommodate. The following signs may indicate a vision challenge. When observed, the teacher should consult the child's parents/guardians to discuss an eye exam with an optometrist or follow-up with the child's medical doctor or pediatrician.

- diagnosed or suspected physical disability or learning challenges; comorbidity rates for visual challenges with some diagnoses can be high.
- chronic eye irritations – watery or red eyes or red, encrusted, or swollen eyelids; frequent sties
- eyes that are not well-aligned -- this requires timely medical evaluation and possible treatment
- frequent complaints of feeling unwell or many absences
- excessive blinking, squinting or uncontrolled eye movements
- rubs, pokes at or presses on eyes
- covers an eye when reading or looking at something; puts head down; removes eyeglasses
- complains of double vision or blurring during or after reading
- inefficient eye-hand coordination
- frowns or exhibits other facial peculiarities when looking at near or distant objects
- struggles with bright lights; slows movements when traveling from bright lighting to dim lighting (e.g. from outdoors to indoors; when the classroom lights are turned on after watching a video)
- benefits from increased lighting to visually discern information
- struggles to visually discern small print/visual target accurately
- moves the body or the visual target close to or far from the eyes
- looks at visual target with unusual body postures (e.g. rigidity, stooping to visual target); uses adaptive viewing strategies (e.g.

visual target held up to one eye or the side of one eye; sits close to the tv or screen); uses an unusual head position (e.g. head tilt); moves head, instead of eyes, when reading

- reading skills are impacted - slow reading rate, loses place when reading, uses finger to track across the reading line, doesn't read to the end of the line, frequent regressive reading behaviours, skips lines, omits words (especially small words) or letters within words, substitutes words causing miscues; compromised reading fluency and poor comprehension; difficulty remembering what was read
- difficulty writing, cutting, or tracing on a line
- prints uphill or downhill or has poor spacing between letters and words
- persistent reversals when labelling or printing letter(s)
- poor spelling
- discrepancy between spoken and written outputs
- struggles to accurately copy from the board or another source
- Math errors from misaligning the numbers in columns for computation; missing reading a computation sign (e.g. - + × ÷) or an exponent (2^{-3}) or chemical superscript or subscript, etc.
- difficulty following instructions, especially visual directions
- challenged to complete tasks on time or experiences increased anxiety while working; short attention span; notable avoidance behaviours
- nervousness, irritability, restlessness, or unusual fatigue after maintaining visual attention
- poor eye-hand coordination with gross motor skills (e.g. catching/throwing/bouncing a ball, reaching to tag a classmate)
- awkward physical movements; miscalculates distance between objects or misjudges steps up and down; invades personal space; bumps into things
- misses objects on one or both sides of the body or on the ground or above
- routinely demonstrates colour confusion, including colouring something the "wrong" colour