



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

**TO:** P-12 Education Committee  
Professional Practice Committee

**FROM:** Jhone M. Ebert  
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**SUBJECT:** Vision Health Month

**DATE:** October 4, 2018

**AUTHORIZATION(S):**

### **SUMMARY**

#### **Issue for Discussion**

The Department is once again highlighting October as School Vision Health Month to raise awareness of the importance of providing students access to vision health care. Department staff will provide an update on this year's activities.

#### **Reason for Consideration**

For information.

#### **Background Information**

Research shows that 1 in 4 school-age children have a vision disorder, and that fewer than 13 percent of children aged 3-6 years with amblyopia ("lazy eye") receive treatment. A report from Prevent Blindness America, *Children's Vision and Eye Health*, details why vision health matters:

Vision plays an important role in children's physical, cognitive, and social development. More than one in five preschool-age children enrolled in Head Start have a vision disorder. Uncorrected vision problems can impair child development, interfere with learning, and even lead to permanent vision loss; early detection and treatment are critical. Visual functioning is a strong predictor of academic performance in school-age children, and vision

disorders of childhood may continue to affect health and well-being throughout the adult years.

Further, the report notes, “Too many children with vision disorders have unmet needs for care, leaving them vulnerable to negative effects on learning and development. Racial and socioeconomic inequities in access to care are evident across a variety of measures and studies.”

The Department is encouraging all schools to promote eye health and safety during October. In support of this, it is directing schools to helpful resources available through the New York State Center for School Health at [schoolhealthny.com](http://schoolhealthny.com). The resources available include a flyer to help spread awareness about vision health (see Attachment A) and [Vision Screening Guidelines for Schools](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/documents/VisionScreeningApril2018.pdf) (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/documents/VisionScreeningApril2018.pdf>).

In addition, the Department is taking the vision health message directly into high-needs school districts by sponsoring eye clinics for students in Schenectady, Camden, Amsterdam, and Rome. As with last year’s inaugural event, the clinics are a Department partnership with VSP Global (VSP), the New York State Optometric Association, and the New York State Society of Opticians.

Using portable equipment donated by VSP, volunteer, licensed optometrists will provide children with free, comprehensive eye exams. Children who need eyeglasses will choose from sample frames donated by VSP, and volunteer, licensed opticians will return to the schools after the event to fit the glasses. At last year’s clinics, volunteers conducted 152 comprehensive eye exams and provided 54 eyeglasses to students in need. Further, VSP distributed 250 “Sight for Students” gift certificates to extend the free program to more students.

Attachment A



NEW YORK STATE  
SECOND ANNUAL

# *School Vision Health*

AWARENESS EVENT

*October 2018*

The New York State Education Department, the New York State Board of Regents, the New York State Optometric Association, and the New York State Society of Opticians continue to highlight the critical role proper vision plays in children's physical, cognitive, and social development.

All New York State schools are encouraged to partner with local eye care professionals to assist students with obtaining complete eye examinations and eye glasses when needed.

Schools are also encouraged to promote eye health and safety during October. Please visit [www.nysed.gov](http://www.nysed.gov) for school vision health resources.

