



Dates to Remember

Mark your calendar with these important dates for Charlottesville and Albemarle County schools.

First day of school: August 25

Winter break: December 20-January 3

Spring break: April 4-8

Last day of school:
June 10 if no make-up days;
Last possible day is June 13 for city,
June 17 for county

Eye Exams for a bright new school year

We asked Dr. Joe DiGirolamo, an optometrist at Primary Eyecare, what parents need to know about eye exams. His advice? Schedule an exam before school starts to help children have a bright-eyed beginning to the school year. Here's why:

Vision impacts learning. Approximately 80-90% of classroom learning occurs through our eyesight. The American Optometric Association recommends eye examinations 6 months, 3 years, and 5 years old (before kindergarten), then as recommended by your eye doctor.

Eye doctors offer thorough exams. Ocular functioning such as eye tracking and improper eye movements may be the cause of academic problems even if there is no need for prescription eyeglasses. Many children with academic problems related to vision will result in 20/20 on screening tests at school and in pediatrician's offices and appear to have "normal" eyes, so having an exam done by an eye doctor is highly recommended.

Early exams help focus on the big picture. Conditions like dyslexia, ADHD, and other learning disabilities are often elusive diagnoses since each child will manifest symptoms differently. A thorough vision, eye health, and visual system analysis is critical to fully understanding the underlying learning problems. Your eye doctor will communicate with the other healthcare providers to better arrive at an accurate diagnosis.

Strong vision helps sports performance. Ability to perform athletically is largely governed by visual abilities. The majority of the information that we receive and process while participating in sports comes from our eyesight. Beyond our normal visual acuity on the eye chart, superior athletes also display exceptional depth perception, peripheral vision, eye-hand coordination, and visual tracking. Regardless of whether an athlete has a need for eyeglasses or not, wearing proper eyewear, such as protective goggles, when playing sports, can prevent 90% of sports-related injuries, according to the American Optometric Association.

Dr. Joe's new book, "The Big Family Eyecare Book," will be released this fall.

