

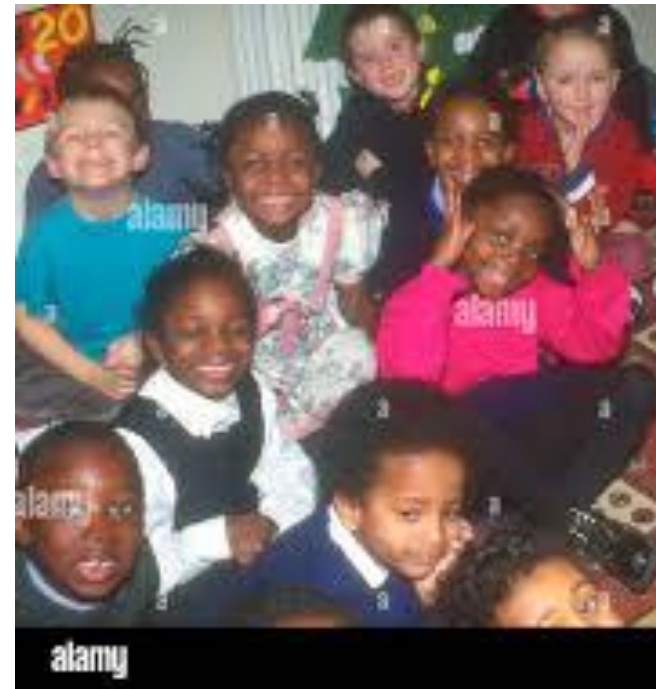
**A SHARED VISION: COLLABORATION IN GLOBAL EYE CARE**



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# Detection of Vision Problems Among School-Going Children & Teacher Education

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# OBJECTIVES

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- Adoption of the “child first” approach
- Highlight the need for early identification of vision problems amongst school-going children
- Introduce teacher-led early identification of vision problems
- Provide the information on eye care tips for children
- Educate parents on their responsibilities in supporting their children’s visual needs.
- Build sustainable partnerships



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# ADOPTING A “CHILDREN FIRST” APPROACH

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- **To encourage early and age-appropriate Screening:** Every child is assessed before vision problems affect learning or development.
- **Ensures that all children’s visual needs are prioritized:** No child is excluded due to location, socioeconomic status, or disability.
- **School posters to empower the teachers in identifying children with vision problems affecting learning or development:** Children are supported by an informed network of adults.
- **School posters to educate children:** to raise awareness of visual anomalies and reassure children that vision difficulties do not define their ability



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# SCHOOL DROPOUT RATE IN SOUTH AFRICA

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- South Africa has poor educational outcomes and high rates of grade repetition by international standards, and even compared to other developing states, as recorded in numerous studies
- The dropout of learners from schools is attributed to various factors, including **learning disabilities**, health problems, the education system, or social, economic, and political framework



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# DROP OUT RATES: STREET CHILDREN

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- Children with uncorrected vision issues often struggle with reading, writing, and seeing the board.
- These challenges can lead to **falling behind in class**, poor grades, and academic frustration.
- Over time, this may cause students to feel incapable or discouraged, increasing the risk of **disengagement from school**.

## Mislabeling and Behavioral Issues

- Vision problems can mimic learning disabilities or attention issues.
- A child who can't see well may become **restless, inattentive, or disruptive**, leading to behavioral referrals or suspensions.
- This mislabeling can erode self-esteem and school motivation.



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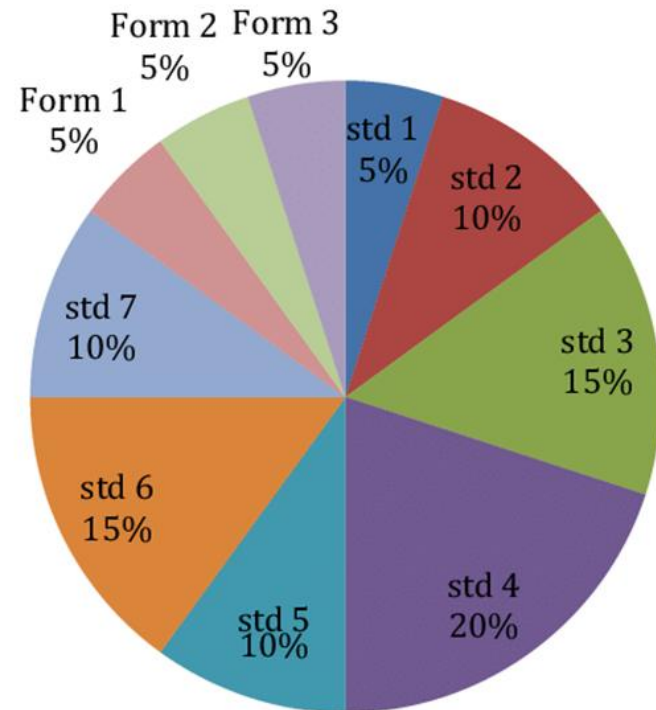




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The General Household Survey (GHS) 2023: Education insights. Available at: <https://zerodropout.co.za/the-general-household-survey-ghs-2023/>.

### Level of dropout at primary and junior school



# THE ROLE OF VISION IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

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- Vision is Foundational for Learning
- 80% of learning is visual in the early school years.
- Reading, writing, board work, and computer use all rely heavily on good visual function.
- Children with vision problems may struggle academically and be misdiagnosed with learning or behavioral issues (e.g., ADHD).
- Poor vision can affect a child's confidence, participation in sports or group activities, and ability to form relationships.
- Children may withdraw socially or act out due to frustration with undiagnosed vision problems.



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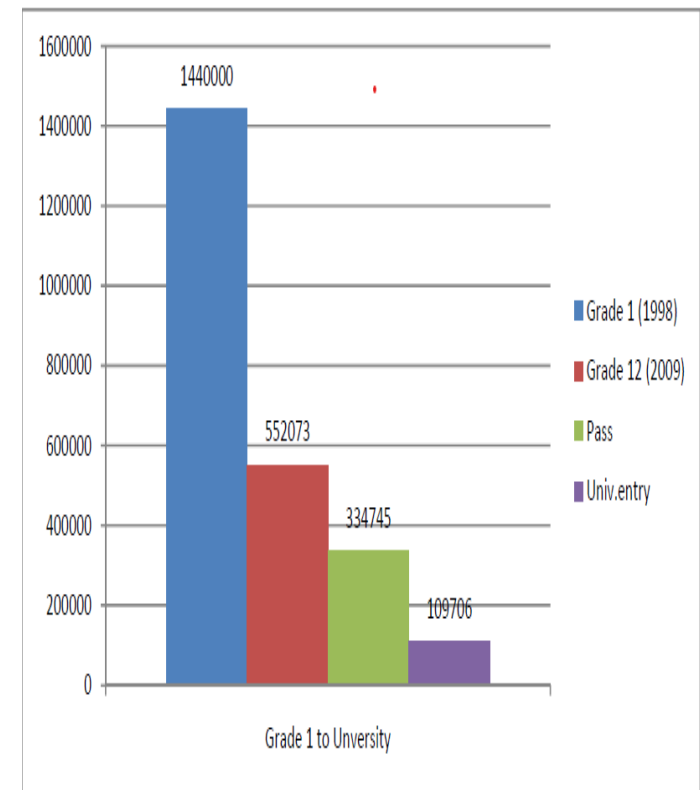




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## GRAPH 1: PROGRESS RATE FROM SCHOOL TO UNIVERSITY IN SA

- Of the 1.4 million children who enrolled in grade 1 in 1998, only 552 000 made it to matric in 2009.
- Close to a million children are swallowed into this big dark hole every year.
- Only 109 000 of learners who wrote matric qualified to study at university.



National Senior Certificate (NSC) Examination Results 2023. Pretoria: Department of Basic Education. Available at: <https://www.education.gov.za> (Accessed: 25 March 2026).

# COUNTRIES INVOLVING TEACHERS IN IDENTIFYING OR

Country	Screening Model	Role of Teachers	Follow-up / Referral
India	Large national school eye health programmes	Teachers trained to conduct basic visual acuity screening using eye charts	Students with suspected problems referred to optometrists or eye clinics
Pakistan	School-based screening programmes supported by NGOs and health services	Teachers screen students and identify symptoms such as headaches or difficulty reading	Referral to eye care professionals for full examination
Kenya	School eye health programmes using digital tools	Teachers conduct initial screening and may use smartphone apps for vision checks	Children referred to visiting eye health teams or clinics
Ghana	Integrated school health programmes	Teachers trained to detect vision difficulties and conduct simple screening	Referral through school health services
South Africa	School health policy programmes	Teachers help identify students showing signs of visual difficulty in class	Referral to school health nurses or optometrists
United Kingdom	National health service school screening	Teachers mainly observe learning behaviours that may indicate vision problems	Screening usually conducted by orthoptists or school nurses
Australia	Community and school-based screening programmes	Teachers identify learning or reading difficulties that may indicate vision issues	Referral to optometrists or school health services

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## Key comparison

- In many **low- and middle-income countries**, teachers often perform **basic vision screening** due to limited healthcare access.
- In **high-income countries**, teachers typically play an **observational and referral role**, while health professionals conduct screening.



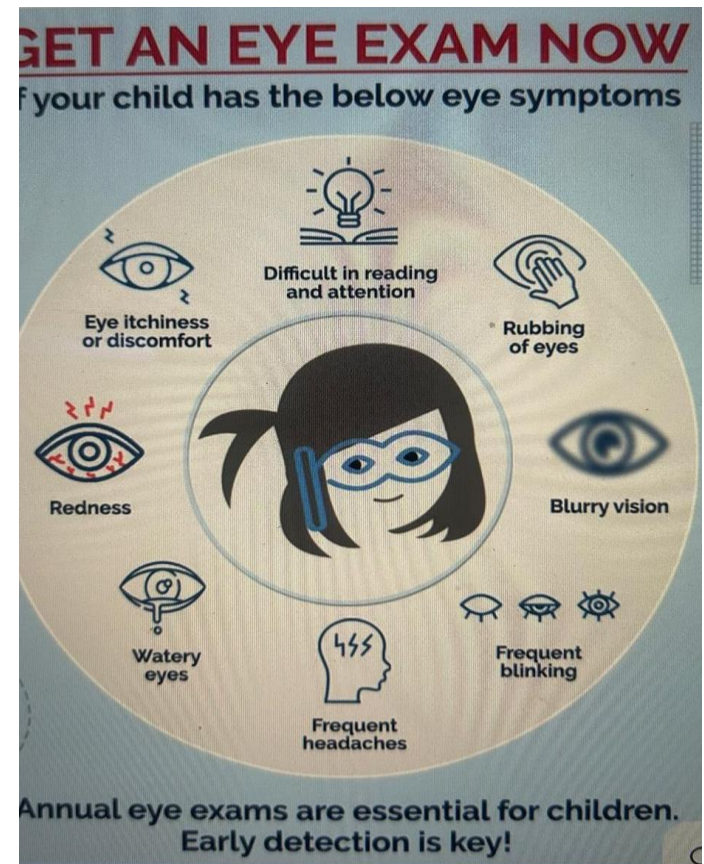
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# POSTER 1: FOR TEACHERS

## IDENTIFYING VISION PROBLEMS IN LEARNERS

Look out for learners who:

- ◆ Move closer to the board
- ◆ Frequently copy from classmates
- ◆ Lose place while reading
- ◆ Close one eye while reading
- ◆ Squint often
- ◆ Complain of headaches
- ◆ Avoid reading tasks
- ◆ Show sudden academic decline
- ◆ Have a short attention span during visual tasks





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## WHAT TO DO:

- ✓ Observe and document signs
- ✓ Inform the school health coordinator
- ✓ Notify parents/guardians
- ✓ Refer for vision screening
- Early identification improves academic performance and confidence
- **No learner should be left behind because of poor vision.**



# OBSERVATION CHECKLIST FOR TEACHERS

- Frequently loses place when reading
- Skips words or lines while reading
- Uses finger or marker to keep place when reading
- Complains of headaches or eye strain
- Rubs eyes frequently or blinks excessively
- Holds books very close or sits very close to the board
- Squints or tilts head to see better
- Reports blurred or double vision
- Difficulty copying from the board
- Slow reading or avoids reading tasks
- Short attention span during near tasks (reading, writing)
- Complains that words move or appear blurry on the page
- Poor concentration during visual tasks
- Becomes easily tired during reading or writing activities



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# EYECARE TIPS FOR CHILDREN

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- Myopia progression in young people is increasing at an alarming rate worldwide, bringing with it a host of health risks and related costs.



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# IMPROVING SPECTACLE COMPLIANCE

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- Normalize glasses in classroom
- Address myths
- Seat students appropriately
- Prevent teasing or bullying



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# DIGITAL EYE HEALTH & PREVENTION

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- 20-20-20 rule
- Encourage a few hours of outdoor time daily
- Limit prolonged screen exposure
- Promote ergonomic reading posture



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# SIMPLE PARENT TAKE-HOME FLYER

## DOES YOUR CHILD SEE CLEARLY?

Your child may need an eye check if they:

- ◆ Sit very close to the TV
- ◆ Hold books very close
- ◆ Complain of headaches
- ◆ Rub their eyes often
- ◆ Squint when looking far away
- ◆ Struggle with reading
- Vision problems are common and treatable.
- Glasses can help your child:
  - ✓ Read better
  - ✓ Focus better
  - ✓ Feel more confident



# REFERRAL & FOLLOW-UP SYSTEM

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- Parent notification
  - Link to vision centers/hospitals
  - Spectacle dispensing
  - 3-month compliance monitoring



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Referral pathways utilized by school health nurses are crucial for several reasons:

- **Holistic Care:** They ensure that students receive comprehensive support, **addressing not only physical health but also mental, emotional, and social needs.**
- **Early Intervention:** Effective referral pathways allow for **early identification** and intervention of health issues, which can prevent more serious problems later on.
- **Collaboration:** These pathways **facilitate collaboration among various healthcare providers, educators, and families**, ensuring a coordinated approach to a student's health.
- **Access to Resources:** Connects students and families to necessary resources, such as counseling, specialized medical care, or community services.
- **Education and Awareness:** Referral pathways to educate students and families about available health services, promoting proactive health management.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** They provide a framework for tracking outcomes, enabling health professionals to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and make necessary adjustments.



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# STAKEHOLDER ROLES IN A SHARED VISION MODEL

- Policy Makers – Policy, funding, integration
- Education Sector – School implementation
- NGOs – Training & outreach
- Eye Health Professionals – Diagnosis & treatment
- Teachers & Parents – Daily monitoring & support



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# MONITORING & EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

% of students screened

% referred

% received spectacles

- Academic improvement indicators
- Spectacle compliance rates



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## **SUSTAINABILITY & SCALE-UP STRATEGY**

- Integrate into annual school health programs
- Train master trainers
- Public-private partnerships
- Budget allocation in health & education sectors



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# THE CASE FOR INVESTMENT

- Low-cost, high-impact intervention
- Improves educational attainment
- Enhances productivity long-term
- Supports equity in child health



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# KEY TAKEAWAYS & CALL TO ACTION

- Early detection improves learning outcomes
- Teachers are frontline identifiers
- Partnerships drive sustainability
- Clear vision is every child's right



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