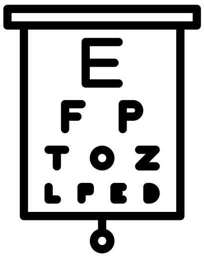
WHAT Schools might miss... VISION



When we think about vision in the classroom, most of us picture an eye chart on the wall. If a child can read the letters from twenty feet away, we check the box: *vision is fine*.

But here's the thing — vision is so much more than eyesight.

In reality, classroom learning relies on a complex set of visual skills that go far beyond 20/20 acuity:

- **Tracking** – the ability to smoothly follow a line of text without losing place
- **Convergence** – the ability to aim both eyes at the same spot, especially at near-point for reading
- **Focusing** – the ability to shift quickly between near and far
- **Visual discrimination** – noticing subtle differences in letters like b and d
- **Visual memory** – holding an image in mind long enough to compare or recall it later

If these skills are underdeveloped, a child may appear distracted, lazy, or resistant — when in truth, their brain and eyes are working overtime just to get the words in focus and in order.

What schools might miss is that these skills aren't just "given", they develop through movement in the early years. Crawling, vestibular movement such as rolling, spinning, balancing, all of these experiences wire the brain for coordinated eye movements. When those early movement experiences are skipped or shortened, the visual system may not be ready for the demands of reading and writing.

A Closer Look at Eye Tracking:

Eye tracking is the ability to smoothly follow a line of text without losing your place. It is a **visual motor skill**.

Why is Eye Tracking important to learning?

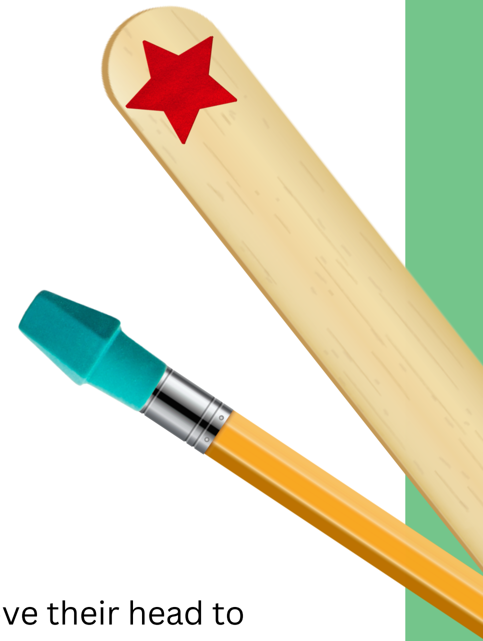
If **Horizontal Eye Tracking** is not mature, a student may:

- Skip small words such as is, the, was
- guess at words by looking only at the beginning letter(s)
- read the word horse as house or hose

If **Vertical Eye Tracking** is not mature, a student may:

- need to use a ruler to track down the page
- reread the same line multiple times
- skip entire lines of text

A Simple Parent/Teacher Friendly Way to Assess Eye Tracking:



Materials:
- Tongue depressor with a sticker or pencil eraser

Ask Child to **“watch the item”**.
Slowly move the item along the horizontal plane. Note if the student wants to move their head. If they do move their head, rest a finger on their chin but do not correct them verbally to keep their head still.
Repeat along the vertical plane.

What to Watch For...

As you move the item, watch closely to see if they want to move their head to track, their eyes track smoothly or make small skips, jumps, or move ahead or behind the tracked item. Watch carefully at the midline and edges of the eyes. Mark what you see below.

Digging Deeper After completing the activity once, ask them to answer simple questions, or list animals at the zoo, count by 3s, etc., while you move the item to track. This places a cortical task on top of the pre-cortical task of tracking and will give insight into if the cortical (“smart/thinking”)brain is doing the work of the pre-cortical (“automatic”) brain.

If a student’s eye tracking is mature at the pre-cortical level of the brain, their eyes will track smoothly, like a knife through butter.

What I Saw...

Eye Tracking - Horizontal

Smooth Tracking	Skips at Midline	Jumps at Edges	Ahead of tracking item	Behind tracking item	Moves Head
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Eye Tracking - Vertical

Smooth Tracking	Skips at Midline	Jumps at Edges	Ahead of tracking item	Behind tracking item	Moves Head
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

It's not just what they see, it's how their eyes work together.

Checked anything other than Smooth Tracking?

That's a sign of possible visual–motor gaps that could be holding your child or student back.

A targeted Movement Plan can help strengthen these skills — and unlock easier, more efficient learning.

- Parents: Book a FREE Screening
- Educators: Book a FREE Discovery Call

Contact Us

Send any questions you have to: → **jessie@forstonlearning.com**