

For Immediate Release

Newark Public Schools Launches Vision Care Initiative:

Helen Keller International and Vision To Learn to Provide Vision Screenings, Eye Exams and Glasses to PK-8 Students

Newark (June 1, 2017) — More than 25,000 Newark Public Schools students will receive free vision screenings, eye exams and glasses in the 2017-2018 school year, through a collaboration between Helen Keller International's ChildSight® Program and Vision To Learn. Through this effort, launched today at Speedway Academies, Vision To Learn will serve the needs of elementary school students in Pre-K through 3rd Grade and Helen Keller International will serve students in 4th through 8th Grade.

"We're delighted to help serve children in Newark. The glasses students receive will help them succeed in school and in life," said Vision To Learn Founder and Chairman, Austin Beutner.

"The driving force behind ChildSight® – that a simple pair of eyeglasses can have a truly profound impact on a student's life - is incredibly compelling," said Kathy Spahn, President and CEO of HKI. "Too often, parents and guardians are struggling to make ends meet; that we can remove barriers to vision care and provide a vital health care service to their kids in the school setting is truly gratifying."

This partnership is being launched with support from the Overdeck Family Foundation. Vision To Learn's work is also supported with funding from the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, and the Rathmann Challenge Grant. Helen Keller International's ChildSight® program is most recently funded by The Hearst Foundation, Inc., Lydia Collins deForest Charitable Trust, Reader's Digest Partners for Sight Foundation, The Starr Foundation and Wilf Family Foundations.

"Overdeck Family Foundation is thrilled to support this important initiative in Newark. Every student deserves the eye exams and glasses they need to excel at school," said Overdeck Family Foundation Chair Laura Overdeck.

Helen Keller International and Vision To Learn will work with Newark Public Schools to provide vision screenings to every child in the district's Pre-K through 8th schools. The organizations will travel to schools and provide each child who did not pass the screening with an eye exam. If the child needs glasses, he or she can choose their very own style and frame, and the glasses will be provided to the child at school within three weeks, all free of charge.

Students with untreated vision problems often struggle at school, and are less likely to achieve reading proficiency by third grade, putting them at greater risk of dropping out.

"I want to thank Vision To Learn, Helen Keller International ChildSight and the Overdeck Family Foundation for their partnership and commitment to serve students throughout Newark," said NPS Superintendent Christopher D. Cerf. "Students in need of glasses, who don't have them, are at a significant learning disadvantage. Eyeglasses distributed today and throughout this initiative will be one of the most important tools to creating a better educational experience for our students."

At today's program, each student adorned their new eyewear as they walked the red carpet as part of an eyewear fashion show.

Speedway Academies is the pilot school served by this program; over the past month, every student at Speedway – 576 total - received a vision screening. 127 students were provided eye exams from VTL and HKI, and will receive glasses. The centerpiece of Thursday's kick-off event was having over 100 of students receive their glasses for the first time.

New York Giants defensive tackle Jay Bromley surprised kids and staff by attending the event and helping hand out glasses to the kids. Bromley, a Syracuse University graduate said, "I wouldn't be in the NFL without my glasses."

Also joining today's program were Newark City Council President Mildred Crump, Deputy Mayor for Education Toni Baskerville Richardson, and NPS Board Member Flohisha Johnson.

About Vision To Learn

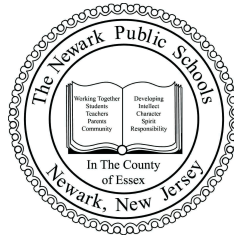
Vision To Learn began operations with one van in Los Angeles in 2012, and now serves students in low-income communities in over 180 cities from Honolulu to Baltimore. Vision To Learn serves the needs of the hardest-to-reach children in low-income communities; more than 89% of kids served by Vision To Learn live in poverty and 87% of kids of color. Since its inception, Vision To Learn has helped screen over 430,000 students, provided almost 85,000 with eye exams, and over 65,000 with glasses, all free of charge.

UCLA research shows that Vision To Learn improves grades for children who receive glasses from the program and improves the learning environment for the entire classroom and school. The UCLA research can be found at <http://visiontolearn.org/impact/ucla-study-impact-analysis-of-vision-to-learn/>.

For more information, please visit visiontolearn.org, e-mail ahollister@visiontolearn.org or call (310) 893-2336.

About Helen Keller International & ChildSight®

Helen Keller International's programs are built on strong partnerships with governments, civil society, the private sector, and communities in 20 countries across Africa and Asia, as well as here in the United States. Reaching millions, and delivered efficiently, HKI's strategy is designed to have lasting impact by strengthening families and health systems. Respected for the range and rigor of their work, HKI is a top-rated charity, founded in 1915 in New York, New York.



ChildSight®, a program of HKI, brings free vision care services and prescription eyeglasses to children in underserved communities in California, Connecticut, New Jersey, New York and Ohio. Launched in 1996, ChildSight® - New Jersey serves students in Newark, Patterson and East Orange. To date we have screened over 180,000 students and provided more than 30,000 pairs of free prescription eyeglasses to children in need in the State of New Jersey. Learn more at www.hki.org/childsight.

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