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Philanthropy

Vision To Learn Diligence Trip Report John Carroll Nalle Elementary School - Washington, DC October 18, 2023

Program Visited

- Mobile vision clinic at John Carroll Nalle Elementary School - Washington, DC

Focusing Philanthropy Staff

- Parnia Banki

Vision To Learn Staff

- Pete Silberman- Chief Growth Officer

Executive Summary

The goal of the visit was to observe the mobile clinic in action at a school for the first time. This location was selected based on timing and proximity to other programs I was visiting.

Background

Vision To Learn is a national nonprofit providing vision screenings, eye exams, and glasses to children in low-income communities—at no cost to the children or their families. They use mobile vision clinics, staffed by licensed doctors, to deliver critical vision care services directly to students at schools. A recent Johns Hopkins study shows that children provided with glasses did much better in school, and the impacts were greater than more costly measures such as lengthening the school day, providing computers, or creating charter schools.

Key Observations

The VTL mobile clinic returned to this school for the fourth day so that students who were absent/ unavailable on previous days could be examined.

Students were walked to the “clinic” by a school administrator in groups of 3-4. Only one student was admitted at a time and others waited outside. I observed the process, sitting in front of the van next to the optician.

The Eye Exam

The student is first welcomed by the optician seated in front of the van. The optician tries to put the student at ease by making small talk and asking about brief family history. Questions include “does anyone in your family wear glasses”? “Do you have trouble seeing the board or your textbook”? The optician then uses the autorefractor machine to get a rough idea of the prescription. Next, the student



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looks through the Fundus camera as the optician photographs the back of the eye- this is an eye health check. The optician then hands a printout of the photograph and the RX estimate to the optometrist.

The student then moves to the back of the van which looks just like an optometrist's office, complete with Phoreptor machine and reading charts. The student is seated and asked to read the vision charts. Next, they look through multiple lenses while being asked is #1 better or #2, #3 or #4 etc., until the precise prescription has been determined.

The student now returns to the optician and is shown multiple cases filled with fun, colorful and fashionable frames- primarily donated by Warby Parker. The student is encouraged to try on multiple pairs -guided by the optician- until they find their favorite. The optician inputs all students' information into Sparta, VTL's new health record database and medical billing system. The student is never asked for medical insurance information.

VTL returns to the school 3 weeks later to deliver the glasses, make sure the frames fit appropriately, and show students how to care for their new glasses. The teachers and parents are notified that the student now has glasses and needs to be reminded to wear them.



