



Press Release  
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Farrnbacher Memorial Fund &  
 E.J. and Marjory Ourso Family Foundation  
 of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation

**Health Centers in Schools Unveils Advanced Vision Screener Machine  
 at Westdale Heights Academic Magnet of East Baton Rouge Parish Schools**

[PHOTO ATTACHED]

**Baton Rouge, LA** –Yesterday, Westdale Heights Academic Magnet Elementary School hosted a **vision screening clinic** for **East Baton Rouge Parish School System (EBRPSS)** students. The clinic used the plusoptiX S09, the most up-to-date technology for vision screening—a virtual optometrist.

This school year, the EBRPSS will host both vision and hearing screening at all school campuses served by **Health Centers in Schools (HCS)** staff. HCS screens students in grades Pre-K, K, 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, and 10, which equates to about 23,000 students of the over 43,000 enrolled in the school district. Louisiana mandates vision and hearing screening for students during these grade levels; HCS also screens grade 2 because by the age of 9 if certain vision issues are not corrected, a child may lose his or her sight in that eye.

Speakers at the event were Michael Hilton, dean of students of Westdale Heights Academic Magnet; Diane Atkins, associate superintendent of Instructional Support Services of EBRPSS; Sue Catchings, CEO of Health Centers in Schools and member, Rotary Club of Baton Rouge; and Sandra Adams, Board member of HCS and member of the Rotary Club of Baton Rouge. Mrs. Adams commented, “Those of us in Rotary who learned about this new technology were very supportive about granting funds to HCS to provide the new vision screeners to help ensure students can see well to be able to read, stay in school, and get the best education possible to help the future of the Baton Rouge community.”

**The Rotary Club of Baton Rouge Foundation** awarded a grant of \$10,000 to HCS for purchase of two **plusoptiX S09 Vision Screener** machines. Grants of \$20,000 from the **Every Kid A King Fund**, \$7500 from the **Farrnbacher Memorial Fund**, and \$7000 from the **E.J. and Marjory Ourso Family Foundation** of Baton Rouge Area Foundation were also awarded to HCS for new machines. With these updated machines, vision screenings can be done much quicker and more accurately, ensuring all students’ eye problems are detected and treated. Additionally, **Rotary District 6200 of Louisiana** provided a \$2000 grant to HCS to purchase new manual eye charts for both distance and near vision screening to replace out-dated and worn charts.

The plusoptiX S09 allows “an easy and efficient vision screening method to screen both eyes simultaneously in 0.8 seconds or less for children beginning at 6 months of age.” The accuracy and detailed output that this machine provides was previously only available from an eye specialist. The best demonstration of quality school-based health services provides the “best” vision and hearing screenings in school so children can read—the key to a good education.

If a child fails a screening test, HCS sends notices home with the students and referrals are made for follow up. In some cases, eye exams and glasses are available at school through a vision provider partnered with HCS. Parental consent is required for the actual eye exam to be conducted on a child, so completed forms must be returned to the child’s school.

The main objective of HCS is to provide all students in the selected grades with improved vision screening to ensure they can see well and be ready to learn. To learn, children must have good visual acuity (to learn to read) and they must be able to hear letter sounds. The best demonstration of quality school-based health services provides the “best” vision and hearing screenings in school so children can read—the key to a good education.

Since 2004 HEALTH CENTERS IN SCHOOLS (HCS) has provided school health services and wellness to over 43,000 East Baton Rouge (EBR) parish public school students in grades K-12. HCS operates 8 full-service school-based health centers (SBHCs) and 82 sites with school nurses (including 18 full-time sites)—providing medical and mental health services. In the 2011-12 school year HCS logged 114,549 total student encounters.

For more information on Health Centers in Schools, call (225) 343-9505 or visit [www.SchoolHealthatHCS.org](http://www.SchoolHealthatHCS.org). For more information about the East Baton Rouge Parish School System, call (225) 922-5400 or see [www.ebrschools.org](http://www.ebrschools.org).

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**PHOTO Below:**

Mechelle McKee, Karla Espinoza, Tenia Brooks and Chacity Simmons, all school health assistants (SHAs) (*front left*) from Health Centers in Schools (HCS) use the new plusoptiX S09 Vision Screeners to test the vision of fifth graders (*on right*) from Westdale Heights Academic Magnet of the EBR Parish School System, while Shanon McLaughlin, RN, HCS clinical nurse manager, and Ruby Hampton, SHA (*back left*) look on.

