

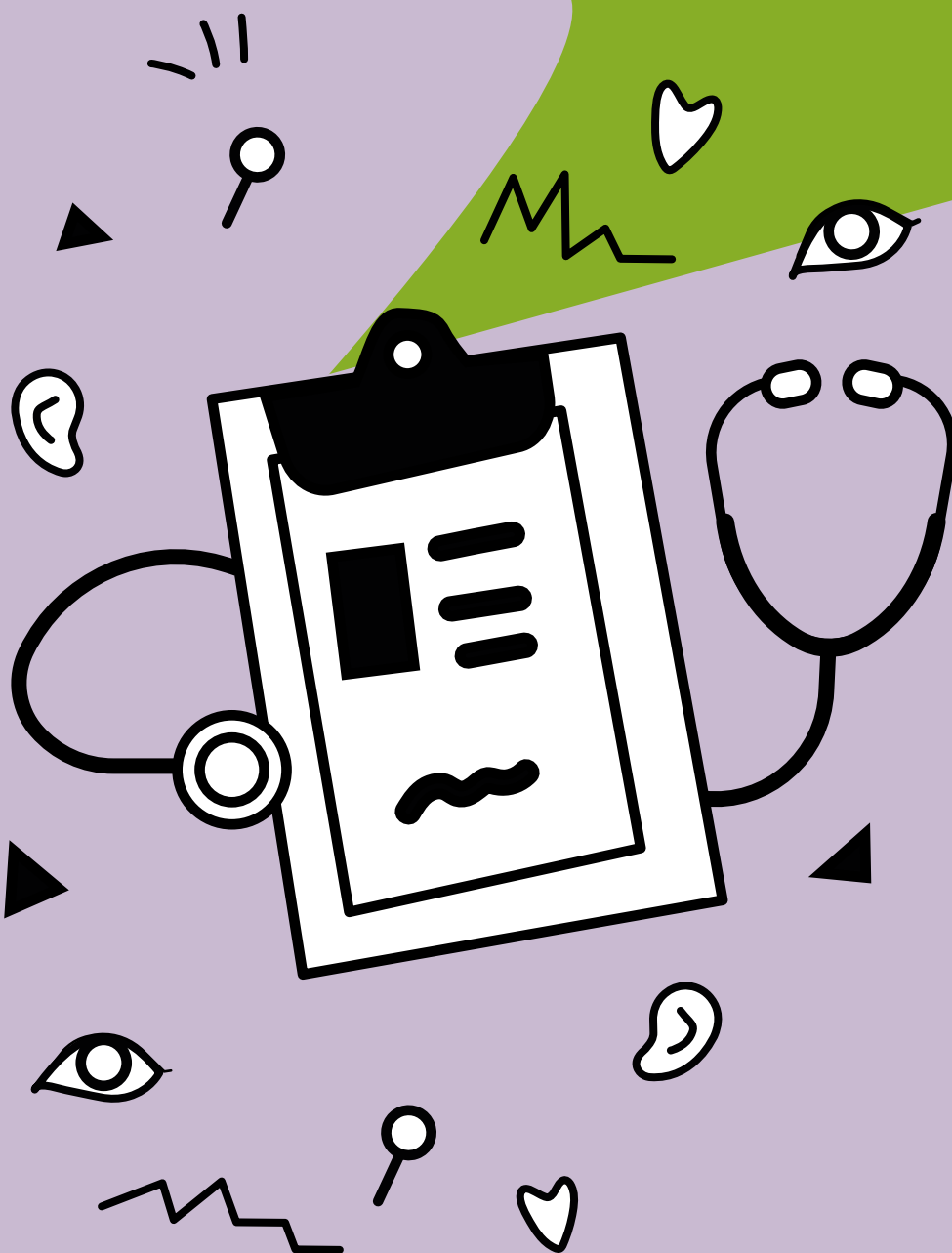


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Health screenings and better sanitation for more inclusive schooling

Success stories from GIZ Pakistan



**HEALTH
SCREENINGS
CHANGE
LIVES**

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Since 2019, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH supports the Elementary & Secondary Education Department and the partners in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, to reduce barriers to access education and health services. As a fundamental human right, access to education is key to refugees and host communities alike.

Our work enables participatory planning for inclusive education in the province while promoting school enrolment and improving the learning environment in schools by strengthening the role of inclusive Parent Teacher Councils.



Health screenings for improved learning in schools

Success Story: Government High School Sufaid Dheri, Peshawar

Imagine sitting in a classroom which is sparsely lit. A room that leaves everyone just a little space. A room where the tiniest rustle mixes to a constant noise that forces you to the strongest concentration. And now, imagine that a part of your body is impaired. Your eyes cannot see sharply; your hearing is weak; your legs or arms hurt and draw attention away from the teacher's blackboard. Children in Pakistan are facing this every day. It is time to tackle these challenges and work on inclusive schooling concepts.

Government schools in Pakistan often teach up to forty students per class. It makes it impossible for teachers to pay special attention to individual children, let alone find out which students have health problems that could be responsible for the low learning outcomes.

Uncovering hidden disabilities

After the Parent Teacher Council (PTC) members of the Government High School Sufaid Dheri participated in the project's inclusion and gender seminar, they implemented a two-phase strategy. With this, they aim to uncover hidden disabilities and health issues of the students while also identifying infrastructural changes to improve their learning experience.

Phase 1: Health screening

The PTC members consulted ophthalmologists, ear specialists, physical therapists, and other relevant doctors to examine the students. As financially distressed families of the host communities and Afghan refugees find it difficult to visit the doctor, many of the children who were examined had not previously undergone a preventive medical checkup.

Phase 2: Addressing the children's needs

"We came across some children with low vision in the school who have not been noticed by teachers or parents before. The screening finally uncovered their struggles. With the project's help, the students with hearing or vision problems were provided with glasses or hearing aids. The children can now participate much better in the lessons."

Mr. Hafeez ur Rahman, PTC member

The children whose health condition indicates a disability receive further care and a referral to a specialist doctor. One measure of the school is direct support in the form of better seating in the classroom. What sounds trivial makes a big difference for children with visual and hearing impairments. Further, students with walking disabilities are given seats near the classroom door to shorten the distance to and from the seat. The infrastructure improvements such as more accessible washrooms or barrier-free entrances add to the inclusive experience at school. Assistant devices like glasses and hearing aids eventually lead to a successful learning experience that impacts many children's future.

Inclusion for a better learning experience

Inclusion starts small. Teachers and PTC members are now capacitated to identify main health issues and are able to accommodate students with impairments for a better learning experience. These changes help the children feel more comfortable right away. They motivate and encourage children to stay in school, engage in classroom and move towards a better future.



Better vision, better opportunities

Success Story: Government Girls High School Khat Kale,
Nowshera



In November 2022, 15-year-old Nabeela, along with twenty other students at Government Girls High School in the Khat Kale village, Nowshera, participated in a vision and hearing screening. Little did Nabeela and her parents know that this screening would reveal a significant issue with her eyesight, one that could be resolved through a simple surgery.

Nabeela was under-performing in her studies for some time. She rarely responded to questions from her teachers, and despite three years at the school, her performance was not satisfactory.

The members of the Parent Teacher Council (PTC) of the school suggested that children with noticeable learning delays should undergo a health screening. Therefore, Nabeela got her eyesight tested for the first time in her life.

An important discovery

The vision screening consists of two parts. The first is the reading test, which is performed on a simple reading board. The second is the measurement of the eyesight. With the help of various devices and lenses, the doctor can detect abnormalities in the eye. It already became clear at this point that Nabeela's vision was extremely limited.

“We were shocked when we came to know that she cannot see clearly. We immediately visited a doctor who recommended a surgery.”

Mrs. Rafaqat, Nabeela's mother

To obtain a more specific diagnosis, Nabeela was referred to the eye clinic of the local tertiary care hospital Qazi Hussain Ahmed Medical Complex. Further tests confirmed that Nabeela was suffering from cataract, one

of the leading causes of avoidable blindness in Asia and worldwide. Timely management and early treatment can save the patient's vision for a lifetime.

New doors of opportunities are opening up

Nabeela underwent surgery on both eyes. After a three-weeks recovery period, her vision improved significantly. From that moment on, she could do things that were not possible before.

“After the successful eye surgery, my vision has greatly improved, allowing me to perform formerly difficult activities like sports, outdoor activities, reading, or watching TV.”

Nabeela Khan

The attentive PTC members in the school and the health screenings have opened new opportunities for Nabeela.

“It was the diagnosis at the screening that saved my daughter from permanent blindness.”

Mr. Jan Nisar Khan, Nabeela's father

“Screenings can aid in the early detection of vision issues, even in the absence of symptoms. Timely diagnoses make prompt intervention and treatment possible, which may help prevent or manage vision problems more successfully.”

Ms. Asiya, Education Officer, Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP)

By today, 1,233 children have undergone health screening in the districts of Peshawar, Nowshera and Haripur, including 76 children from the Khat Kale Girls School.



Closing the gender education gap, one toilet at a time

Success Story: Pirpai No. 3 State Primary School, Nowshera



The lack of toilet facilities and inadequate sanitation at schools poses numerous challenges. It increases the likelihood of students skipping school or dropping out, especially when girls do not feel safe using the facilities and children with disabilities cannot access them. Girls-only and accessible toilets provide privacy and safety and draw the much-needed attention to closing the gender education gap.

The members of the Parent Teacher Council (PTC) of Pirpai No. 3 State Primary School in Nowshera were confronted with a similar situation at their children's school. The school, previously only attended by boys, now accepts girls as well. Furthermore, the school also has six children with disabilities amongst its students. Back then, the school's toilets were gender-neutral and only the toilets for the faculty members were separate.

After participating in the gender and disability training, the members of the PTC began to develop the school's disability action plan. The goal was to serve all students equally. And so, the lack of separate toilets for girls became one of their concerns.

“One of the goals of the PTC is to advocate for the interests of the school and the children. The PTC members identify problems and take responsibility to solve them.”

Mr. Sartaj Ali, Principal

Action for carefree school days

Recognising the pressing need for change, the PTC sprang into action. Together with the support of the principal, the five gender-neutral toilets were reworked. Through their efforts, separate washrooms were created for girls, boys, children with disabilities, and teachers.

“When building toilets, the disability aspect is often not considered. As a person with a disability, I understand the children's problems, and I am glad we were able to change the situation for our students.”

Mr. Shah Hassan, PTC member

The gender-segregated toilets resulted in significant improvement in school attendance rates. Students, especially girls and children with disabilities, experienced less mental stress when using the facilities. Accessible toilets provided girls with a safe and hygienic experience, especially during menstruation.

“We feel secure and less hesitant while using the toilet because it has now been tagged and is used by girls only.”

Shah Meena, 3rd grade student

“I always faced discomfort whenever I used the toilet. They were not disability friendly. I am really thankful to the Head Teacher and the PTC members for their prompt response and the construction of an accessible washroom.”

Zarin Khan, 4th grade student

Till date, the project has constructed accessible toilets in nine schools.

A small device for more equal opportunities



For many children, entering school is the most exciting experience of their childhood. The feeling of entering a classroom, meeting the teacher for the first time, and finally learning to write, count and read are memories to cherish for a lifetime. But eight-year-old Ayesha started first grade with a big challenge. Her speech was riddled with stuttering, and her weak hearing did not allow her to follow the class.

Ayesha could not understand the teachers' instructions. It was difficult for her to make friends and learning at home was only possible when she managed to copy the texts from her classmates after the lessons. This was often accompanied by being mocked and ridiculed by her classmates. Ayesha's parents knew about their daughter's hearing problems. But due to the family's financial situation, they could not afford to buy a hearing aid for her or cover the medical costs incurred.

Vision and hearing screening

On November 16, 2022, Ayesha received promising news. She was one of the students participating in the vision and hearing screening initiated and conducted at the Government Girls Primary School Tehkal Payan in Peshawar.

"We believe that comprehensive health screenings are essential for identifying health issues early on and providing students with the care and support they need to thrive both inside and outside the school."

Mr. Husan Taj, Principal

The doctor who examined Ayesha clarified that her stuttering was due to her severe hearing disorder in both the ears. And he explained that this could be solved through a hearing aid. As advised on that day, the family went to see an ear, nose, and throat specialist afterwards. The specialist treated Ayesha's ear to prepare it for a hearing aid.

The beginning of a new journey

Ayesha was excited when she learned that a hearing aid could improve her hearing and speech. After receiving the device, her school life changed for the better.

"After I received my hearing aid, my school life changed. In the past, I could hear and understand only half of my lessons. Now, with my hearing aid, I can hear the teacher more clearly and understand the lessons. I have also made some friends which I lacked in the past."

Ayesha Bibi

Hearing aids are often critical to improving the learning outcomes of children with hearing problems. A classroom is a challenging listening environment where it is important to understand the teacher's voice and focus on learning. Ayesha's teacher noticed significant changes in her behaviour and academic performance since she received her hearing aid.

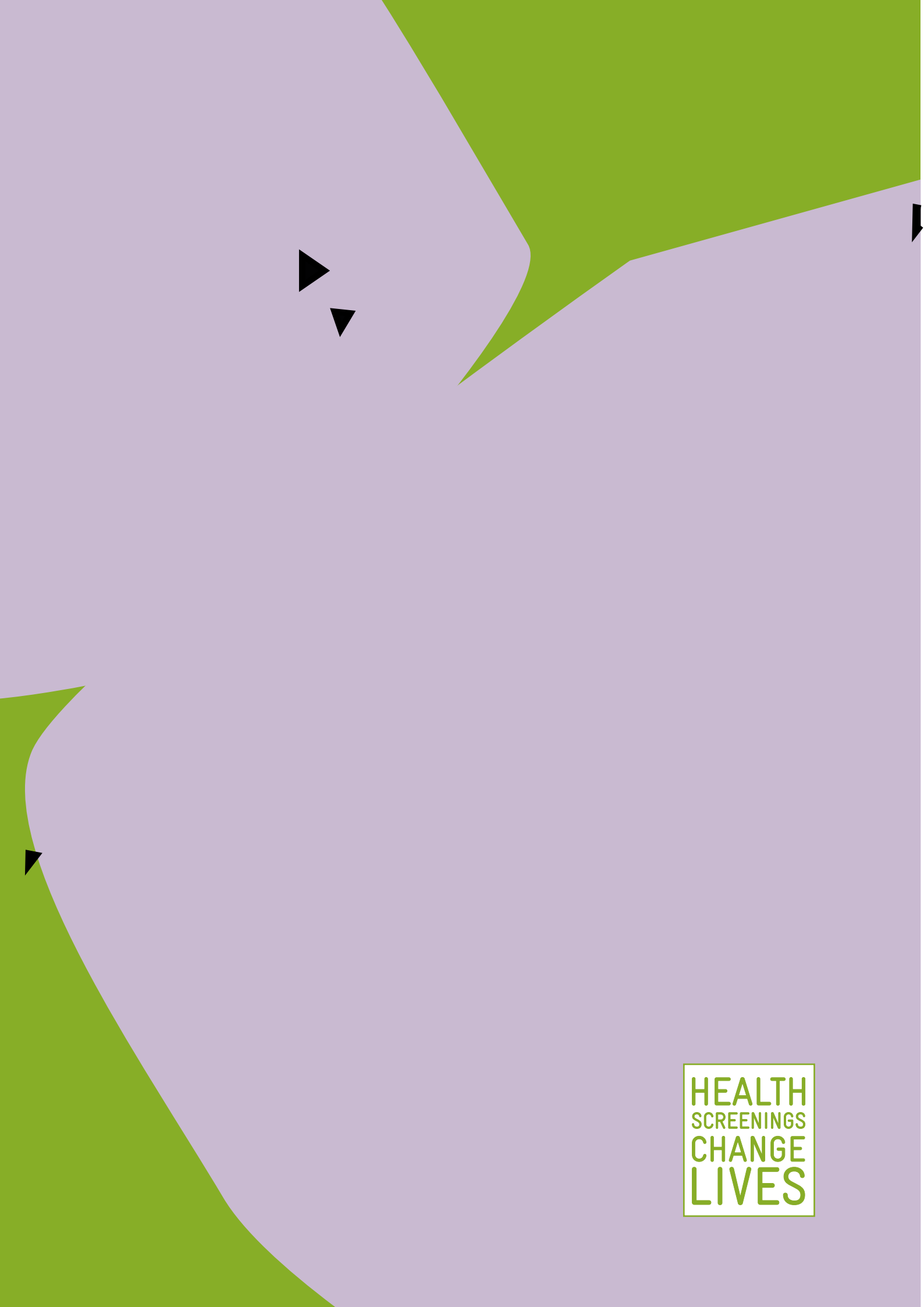
"Ayesha used to struggle to follow the lessons and would often miss important information, which sometimes resulted in frustration. She was quiet and reserved in class and did not interact with her peers. Now she is much more engaged and enthusiastic about learning, and she participates in class discussions and activities."

Ms. Saeeda Jan, Ayesha's teacher

The school's health screenings take place every six months to ensure all newly enrolled students can participate in the vision and hearing screenings.



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