
Gaining Accurate Assessments of High Levels of Giftedness

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One unique problem for parents of highly gifted children is the impossibility of gaining accurate information about the level of their children's abilities, given the low ceilings on modern tests. Most children receive tests that generate only deviation IQs: group IQ tests, WISC-R, WPPSI, Kaufman ABC, McCarthy Scales, Stanford-Binet Revision IV. None of these tests can capture the full range of abilities of the extraordinarily gifted because the children's abilities extend beyond the upper limits of the tests.

Seven of the children in the Maine group who had been tested on the WISC, WISC-R, WPPSI, or K-ABC intelligence tests scored between 139 and 155, with only two scoring above 145. They were then given the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (Form L-M), which has a higher ceiling than these tests and yields a mental age from which a ratio IQ score can be derived. On this test, these same children scored between 169+ and 194. One child's score showed a discrepancy of more than 50 points between the K-ABC and the Stanford-Binet L-M—143 as opposed to 194; another had a similar discrepancy between the WISC (139) and the Stanford-Binet L-M (187+). In the Colorado group, similar discrepancies were found for the six children who had been tested on both the WISC-R and the Stanford-Binet L-M. Only one child in the 170+ range scored above 150 on the WISC-R, and another scored as low as 135.

Since the Stanford-Binet Revision IV (S-B IV) was released in 1986, many psychologists have abandoned the "old Binet," (the Stanford-Binet Form L-M). However, the S-B IV is generating dramatically lower scores for the entire gifted range. Discrepancies between scores on the new and old tests average 13.5 points at the low end of the gifted spectrum. Children who scored 135 on the L-M version scored 121 on the S-B IV (Thorndike, Hagen, & Sattler, 1986). When discrepancies exist between instruments, professionals are likely to believe the lower scores and to assume that the parents are just trying to boost their own egos by claiming that their children have higher abilities.

Because none of the current instruments properly assess the full strength of the abilities of exceptionally gifted children, alternative methods of evaluation

must be sought. In the *National Report on Identification* (Richert, 1982), the consensus of the national task force was as follows:

it was recognized that new instruments and methods need to be developed for identification of gifted students in specific populations, such as disadvantaged, ethnic minorities, students with limited English-speaking ability, *exceptionally gifted students* and handicapped students. (pp. 77-78, italics added)

This recommendation is already being implemented with all of the specific populations listed except one—the exceptionally gifted. In this case, an old method of identification is more appropriate than newer methods. Our recommendation is that when a child obtains three subtest scores at or near the ceiling of any current instrument, he or she should be retested on the Stanford-Binet Form L-M. Ratio IQ scores should be computed for all children who score beyond the norms in the manual (using the formula on p. 341 of the Stanford-Binet Form L-M manual), and perhaps for those who score above 155 on the 1972 norms, because at some age levels the highest score in the norm table is 158 (Terman & Merrill, 1973).

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