

The Rush to Find Gifted Intelligence



Just about every parent will tell you that they want a better life and more opportunities for their children. Many are willing to relocate to areas known to have superior schools. They even adjust their own lives to be able to chauffeur their children to extra tutoring and extracurricular events to enhance their child's later chances of getting into the best colleges.

For some parents the preparation begins very, very early. As a matter of fact **kindergarten may be the touchstone to the future**. Many parents who believe their child is gifted are having them tutored and tested. All this in preparation for the application process to pre-K, kindergarten and first grade gifted programs or gifted oriented schools.

Dr. Rosalind Chait Barnett, senior scientist at the Women's Studies Research Center, Brandeis University and Caryl Rivers, journalism professor at Boston University are co-authors of "*Same Difference: How Gender Myths Are Hurting Our Relationships*." Through their published works, they are trying to correct some of the perceptions surrounding testing for giftedness and different rates of gifted development between girls and boys.

The May 31st article in the New York Times, "Gender Gap for the Gifted" reported that within the NYC gifted kindergarten programs girls were outnumbering boys at 56% – a 1% increase over the 2008-2009 year. While these statistics suggest that girls are shifting the intellectual waters, Barnett claims **one of the real issues is the testing itself**.

In Colorado, applicants to gifted programs begin by submitting

writing, math and drawing samples for early pre-kindergarten and first grade. However, the Gifted Development Center in Denver reports a **growing gender disparity among parents who bring their children in for testing**. From 1979 to 1989 57% of children tested were males and by 2008 it has **risen to 68%**. The inference is that parents here are favoring their sons over their daughters.

Here's what actually happens.

- On average girls in their early years generally outscore boys at any age
- Media has overly promoted the idea of greater cognitive skills of girls over boys
- Data from the federal Educational Resource Center shows only a slight IQ difference between girls and boys tested for giftedness
- Boys with giftedness potential may lag by 1 – 2 years but catch up by middle school

Why all the emphasis on testing?

Parents are willing to invest in their children and believe identifying giftedness early is important. Nevertheless, there is **another problem associated with IQ testing children younger than age six**. Scientific research shows that **IQ testing results are unstable that early** and are without meaning in forecasting future success according to Janet Hyde, math and verbal achievement expert from the University of Wisconsin.

She is also supported by Po Bronson, author of *"Nurture Shock: New Thinking About Children."* Bronson argues that **current IQ testing at age 5 is a poor judge of future performance and testing results a few years later may not remain consistent**.

While parents are anxious to identify and support their child's intellectual skills, there are numerous training and testing facilities willing to support that endeavor. Dr. Barnett says that in attempting to label children by early

testing is counter to research showing that **intellectual development unfolds in its own time**, and there really isn't a gender differences where girls will dominate or boys will be left behind.

This means that maybe everyone can let children just be kids a little bit longer and allow them to grow up with a sense of natural curiosity and wonder about the world before they start their educational career track.

By Joyce Hansen

Source: Left Behind? Actually More Boys Take 'Gifted' Test by Rosalind C. Barnett and Caryl Rivers, WeNews Tuesday, June 15, 2010