



Don Ryan/AP Photo

Getting a head start

Studies suggest that IQ scores and school performances of children from poor neighborhoods can be improved by enriching their daily environments at a young age. The teachers in this classroom try to stimulate further and enrich the lives of preschool children in a Head Start program in Oregon.



BETWEEN THE LINES

In Their Words

"The IQ test was invented to predict academic performance, nothing else. If we wanted something that would predict life success, we'd have to invent another test completely."

Robert Zajonc, psychologist, 1984

Assessing Adaptive Functioning

Diagnosticians cannot rely on a cutoff IQ score of 70 to determine whether a person suffers from intellectual disability. Some people with a low IQ are quite capable of managing independently, while others are not. The cases of Brian and Jeffrey show the range of adaptive abilities.

with the testing situation, or the bias of a tester.

Because of test inadequacies, cultural differences, and because of test bias, some people may receive the diagnosis of intellectual disability, then the diagnosis of intellectual disability.

If IQ tests do not always measure intelligence accurately, then IQ tests do not always measure intelligence accurately.

and people for whom English is a second language appear to be at a disadvantage in taking these tests.

Intelligence tests also appear to be socioeconomically biased. Members of cultural groups who live in poor, crime-ridden areas—a kind of know-how that may be needed for survival by people in these areas—often score lower on intelligence tests.

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age 6, Jeffrey received an IQ score of 60.

The teacher must work slowly and provide individual instruction for him. Tested at least he hurt himself or wander off into the street. Schoolwork is very difficult for Jeffrey has trouble dressing himself today and cannot be left alone in the backyard in a special stimulation program and given special help and attention at home. 5 and sat up, stood, and talked late. During his infancy and toddler years, he was from an upper-middle-class home. He was always slow to develop.

by his teacher, he received an IQ score of 60.

Brian comes from a lower-income family. He always has functioned adequately at home and in his community. He dresses and feeds himself and even takes care of himself each day until his mother returns home from work. He also plays well with his friends. At school, however, Brian refuses to participate or do his homework seems ineffective, at times lost, in the classroom. Referred to a school psychologist

may be more appropriate for Jeffrey than for Brian.

Several scales have been developed to assess adaptive behavior. Here, however, some people function better in their lives than the scales predict, others fall short. Thus to properly diagnose intellectual disability, clinicians should probably observe the adaptive functioning of each individual in his or her environment, taking both the person's background and the community's standards into account. Even then, such judgments may be subjective, as clinicians may be familiar with the standards of a particular culture or community.

Brian seems well adapted to his environment outside school. However, Jeffrey has limitations are pervasive. In addition to his low IQ score, Jeffrey has difficulty with challenges at home and elsewhere. Thus a diagnosis of intellectual disability