



**Q.** I have three children all under the age of 5 years. I'm trying to teach them at home while they're young. Can parents increase their children's IQ and make them smarter?

What exactly is IQ? Are White children smarter than Black children?

A. There are those who insist that you can't raise a child's IQ because it is fixed at birth and others insist that you can. It is clear in the research that you can change your child's academic or intelligence *performance*. We have all heard about abuse cases where parents locked children away in cages for years and the children suffered physical, mental and nutritional abuse. If tested right after they were found, these children would score in the extreme low intelligence range because they did not receive the emotional, cognitive, nutritional or language support needed to grow in these areas. They received no stimulation. However, if they were tested for IQ a few years later after receiving schooling, love and support, there would be an increase in their IQ scores. So IQ performance and scores can change given the right stimulation and training.

## What is IQ?

I.Q. (intelligence quotient) in general, is an assessment of your ability to think and reason. IQ score is a standardized way of comparing this ability with the majority of people the same age as you are. A score of 100 means that compared to these people in your general age group,

you have basically an average intelligence. Most psychologists would say those scoring in a range of 95 to 105 are of a normal intelligence or have an average IQ. \*The majority of people have an IQ between 85 and 115.

The first intelligence test was created in 1905 by Alfred Binet and Théophile Simon to determine which French school children were too “slow” to benefit from regular instruction. Binet came up with the idea of mental age when he noticed that children are increasingly able to learn difficult concepts and perform difficult tasks as they get older. Most children reach the same level of complexity at about the same time, but some children are slower reaching those levels. A 6-year-old child who can do no more than a 3-year-old has a mental age of 3. Wilhelm Stern divided the mental age by the chronological age to get a “Mental Quotient.”

Mental Age/Chronological Age = Mental Quotient

A 6-year-old able to do only what a 3-year-old can do has a Mental Quotient of .5 or  $\frac{1}{2}$  (3 divided by 6). Lewis Terman later multiplied the Mental Quotient by 100 to remove the fraction and the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) was born!

Mental Age/Chronological Age X 100 = Intelligence Quotient

The 6-year-old with the Mental Quotient of  $\frac{1}{2}$  has an IQ of 50.

**IQ and Exposure!**

If a child has never seen, read about or been told that something is a 'bridge' then he/she will not know what it is. He or she will get an incorrect answer on IQ testing. The **reason** a child does not know something is key! A child with a learning disability that impedes his ability to remember and learn new things will get an answer wrong because of his disability. A child who has not been exposed to things can be easily told that this item is a bridge. This doesn't mean that the LD child can't learn what a bridge is, it may just take him longer and a different method to learn it. One can also conclude that a family's finances and education level can greatly affect a child's development intellectually. More educated parents know they need to stimulate their child's intellect and financial benefits provide the means for them to do it. Parental lack of knowledge, lack of an opportunity to increase knowledge and poverty do not make their children less intelligent than their peers.

### So Are White Kids Smarter Than Black Kids?

If you study enough history you know the answer to this question is no! There have always been Black inventors, scientist, engineers, doctors and lawyers. Many who did not receive any acclaim for their work until recently. However, there is still a tremendous achievement gap between white and black youth academically.

E. D. Hirsch wrote a fantastic book, ***Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know***, many years ago. He taught college at a predominantly White college and its nearby Black college. He couldn't understand why his White students scored better on tests than his Black students when he found them equally intelligent. He conducted a research study and found that his Black students lacked the literacy and vocabulary skills of the White students. Basically, they lacked exposure. They lacked the understanding of word meanings and lacked the higher literacy (reading comprehension) skills needed to perform well on tests, even though they had

studied and learned the information taught in class.

For example, one of the things we do when we read is visualize what we are reading in our brains. This helps us to understand what we are reading. If a test question stated, "The trees plie as they move to the strong current of the wind." Followed by the question, "What did the trees do?"

A. touched the ground

B. broke in two

C. bent and straightened

D. swayed back and forth

To answer this correctly you have to know what a plie (plee-ay) is. A plie is a ballet dance position where dancers bend at the knees while keeping their backs straight. If you've never taken ballet or read a book with pictures about a plie you may have difficulty answering this question. This does not make a student less intelligent just less experienced.

## **So How Do I Improve My Child's IQ?**

There is a lot of information about this topic so I chose to condense and share Dr. Phil's list with you:

### **1. Create an Empowering Internal Dialogue**

An internal dialogue that is negative promotes failure. Depressed thoughts depress energy, action and the ability to think clearly. They shake your child's faith and create doubts about what he can really achieve. A positive internal dialogue can dramatically enhance intellectual performance. As a way to eliminate negative self-talk and build self-confidence, teach your child how to practice positive responses. For example:

*I'll do the best I can, and that will be the best I can do.*

*I studied hard for the test, so I should do well.*

*I worked hard on my homework.*

*I'll be OK; I can do this.*

### **2. Practice Controlled Breathing Exercises with Your Child**

Research shows that schoolchildren can increase their grades if they do breathing exercises prior to tests or assignments; these exercises also reduce test anxiety. Controlled breathing increases oxygen flow to the brain, which in turn boosts memory, concentration and problem-solving abilities.

### **3. Perform Mental Gymnastics**

Playing games that stimulate the mind, particularly those that make use of strategy, will build verbal skills, plus improve powers of concentration, perception and reasoning. Here are some recommendations for brain-building games you can do as a family: Chess, Checker, Crossword Puzzles, Cryptograms, Word Jumbles, Scrabble and Mathematical puzzles.

#### **4. Increase Opportunities for Verbal Interactions as a Family**

Engaging your children in conversation helps develop their language and vocabulary skills, particularly between the ages of 16 and 26 months, when a child's language is developing very rapidly. What emerges from these interactions will be children who feel valued and are smarter, better adjusted and more intelligent.

#### **5. Encourage Repetitive Reading**

It's no big news flash that reading to your children helps nurture a love of language and promotes bonding "both of which optimize a child's intellectual potential. It also helps toddlers enhance memory, improve attention span and build vocabulary.

#### **6. Create a Stimulating Environment**

In *Family First*, Dr. Phil explains 15 ways to create a mentally stimulating environment for your child. The following selection from the book can help develop your child's ability to process information.

- Hold your baby frequently.
  
- Use expressive facial gestures.
  
- Have your child read age-appropriate stories out loud from newspapers or magazines.
  
- At least once a week, take your children to the library, where they can read on their own or attend storytelling groups.
  
- Take your children to appropriate cultural events throughout the year, such as plays and concerts.
  
- Travel to new places, including local museums.

□ Use dinnertime for mental stimulation.

## **7. Introduce Music and Rhythm into Your Child's Life**

Even if your children aren't musically oriented in terms of singing or playing an instrument, introducing music and rhythm into their world may enhance many aspects of their academic performance.

## **8. Active Body, Active Mind**

Physical activity, including playing sports, boosts blood flow to all parts of the body, including the brain. When the brain is supplied with freshly oxygenated blood, concentration, thinking speed and complex reasoning are all enhanced. Children who are physically active perform better in school " a finding that has been confirmed by more than 50 years of research.

## **Nourish Young Minds**

The importance of nutritional balance with foods that provide a high yield of vitamins and minerals cannot be overstated when it comes to enhancing your child's mental capabilities. Better-nourished children simply function more effectively on a cognitive level. In a well-publicized study of one million schoolchildren enrolled in the New York City school system, IQ scores improved by 14 percent after additives, dyes, artificial flavorings and color were removed from their lunches! Visit <http://drphil.com/articles/article/189> for more information.

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## **ASK LISA-ANNE May 2013**

Written by U.S Immigration News

Monday, 06 May 2013 20:53 - Last Updated Monday, 06 May 2013 20:56

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