

# EQUALIZED INTELLIGENCE

The American public schools have made a concerted effort to close the achievement gap that persists between advantaged and disadvantaged students.

This effort has been ongoing for more than 50 years without any universal and significant results. The gap has not been reduced.

In the beginning, some commentators suggested that the advantaged students had greater achievement because they were inherently smarter. That speculation – called the Bell Shaped Curve – has been discredited. There is no evidence to suggest that advantaged students have an inherent advantage in terms of their genetic intelligence.

If the advantaged students are not inherently superior in intelligence, then it must be an experiential advantage that accounts for the difference – advantaged students must have superior experiential differences that account for their advantage in achievement.

This was the rationale for the creation of Head Start, which was begun in 1965 and significantly upgraded in 1981. Head Start was designed to give economically disadvantaged students the experiences that emulated economically advantaged students before entering public schools.

Head Start proved to be a popular, but disappointing program. It was popular, in large part, because it provided government-supported child care services for many families who needed them.

It was disappointing because the learning experiences that it has provided have not made an appreciable difference in closing the achievement gap.

Another major emphasis in the gap-closing effort has been nutrition - an obvious source of difference between economically advantaged and disadvantaged students. Head Start itself had a nutrition component, and public schools have provided free lunch and free breakfast to students whose families qualify in terms of household income.

The most extensive (and most costly) component of the gap-closing effort has been special teaching. Any student who fell significantly behind in achievement transferred to special teaching in the form of smaller classes and special curricula.

This is the Special Education aspect of the effort; it is the core component designed to address the differences in achievement. It has remained for more than half a century as the defining difference in the American public schools.

There are singular, anecdotal evidences of success, but overall, by all measures, it has been a failure. The gap in achievement has not been reduced; it is essentially the same as it was in 1965.

Where do we go from here?

We need to start with a recognition that the public school system has been tasked with one of the most important responsibilities in social polity – to create learning equality for all students.

Second, we need to define the parameters of the task. We need to acknowledge that the gap cannot be attributed to an inherent advantage in terms of genetic intelligence.

And this implies that pervasive differences must be due to experiential differences – that early childhood experiences in the advantaged environments provide a superior mental repertoire for learning.

Third, we need to define the most effective means of equalizing that repertoire in the most formative years of the educational process. Head Start was an effort to produce this equalization, but its methods were ineffective.

It is almost impossible to emulate an advantaged family environment:

- 7-days-a-week
- 24-hours-a-day
- a ratio of 2 adults to 1 or 2 children

with a Head Start program that operates, at maximum:

- 5-days-a-week
- 5-hours-a-day
- a ratio of 2 adults to 15 or 20 children

Aside from the child care aspect of the program, the design was flawed – emulation (i.e. informal education) is both inefficient and ineffective as a means of teaching. In fact, emulation is only used as a formal instructional method in situations like internships where the learning is so complex that it cannot be formulated for didactic instruction.

So, if we are to equalize the learning opportunities for disadvantaged students, we need an efficient and effective method for equalizing their mental repertoire for learning before they begin learning content curriculum.

SOI testing and training provides that opportunity with a program that tests disadvantaged students to reveal their learning weaknesses, and a follow-up program to develop the weakest abilities through direct abilities training. We can best equalize their mental repertoire for content learning.

Direct abilities training is the key. By training learning abilities one at a time, the training is highly focused and free from the confounding influence of extraneous factors.

This is the most effective and efficient method of equalizing their abilities to learn and thereby equalizing their opportunities to learn.