

Understanding the WISC Test

Its impact in the Classroom

Under each heading an indent explains how a test result impacts a child in the classroom by a low score in these areas. I am grateful to "Bob" for the following interpretations:

WISC Verbal subtests:

Information-

Measures long term memory, child is asked information questions like how many cents are in dime; things that most kids are exposed to, and checks if they can recall them.

Kids who cannot retain information are going to have to review work more often or it will evaporate. And they'll need to study for tests, instead of just walking in and whipping out a written tests as do their friends. They need to use aids to recall information, such as studying with graphic patterns, boxes and circles and triangles grouping data according to how it fits into the topic. Grid/calc for times tables in grades 4-7, the longest and most boring single piece of memory work.

Similarities-

Measures logical/abstract reasoning. Child has to tell similarities between 2 things, some concrete such as (dog/rat) and some abstract (beautiful, ugly).

Arithmetic-

These children have trouble with concepts in any subject. You see it right away in grade 2 when doing place value for regrouping. Explaining moving a group of 10 leaves them with a blank stare. And doing integers (negative numbers) in grade 7---forget it. But they can learn the operations even if the concept is missing, by teaching the procedure. Same in language arts, inferences and generalizations will be hard, but plot development and themes and characterizations will be OK. So they have to be walked through inferential work.

Measures math reasoning. Child does oral problem solving.

These kids of course have trouble with problem solving. You ask a grad 2 or grade 3 kid--"if the farmer sold 5 cows for \$100.00 each, how much money did he make? And the kid looks at you and says, "do ya add or subtract?" They don't have a clue. And the heartbreak is, problem solving is the only reason to teach math! The only way to really help these kids seems to be to use flow charts to organize the known from the unknown.

Vocabulary-

Measures expressive vocabulary. Child is asked for definitions of words.

Their work appears immature and brief, as though a younger kid did it, and some teachers want to hand it back to be redone. But the teachers have to know that they should accept it even if it looks like this, if the child has made a good effort. The kids need help thinking of ways to say things, and the new game Taboo is great for that.

Comprehension-

Measures knowledge of appropriate social behavior and judgment. Child is asked what he would do in certain situations, like "What would you do if you came upon a child lying hurt in the street,"; and why certain things are so.

These children are the ones who are always in trouble for doing the wrong thing, like fighting, because they aren't good at social situations. Or they are "nerds" because they can't learn the cool behavior. They need help dealing with situations, and we find they need an example of how to handle every type of situation, because they don't generalize. The fighters need to be taught how to stay out of trouble. For instance, it is better to call someone a name than to throw a punch. The "nerds" need to learn what to say when a certain thing happens so they don't sound goofy.

Performance Subtests:

Picture Arrangement-

Measures visual sequencing. Child has to put story cards in the correct order to show how a story progresses.

Picture Completion-

Measures alertness to visual essential details. Child is shown a picture with a missing piece and must find the missing element in the picture.

Object Assembly-

Measures visual-spatial organization. Child works puzzles.

Seems to affect mostly representational math like geometry. These children need to memorize the formulas.

Block Design-

Same as Block Design. Child does parquetry, fitting colored blocks together to match a picture.

Coding-

Measures fine-motor speed. Child has to copy designs from a legend into the corresponding number.

These kids are slow to finish written work. They need extra time, and if it's very serious, in the upper grades it is helpful for them to learn to use some abbreviations, and keep several words in their heads when copying. They often become better typers than writers, and for the very severe they often learn shorthand in 2-3 weeks, and then they can write as fast as the teacher can talk. But if they can't read their shorthand they're cooked, because no one else can read it for them.

Digit Span-

Measures short term memory.

They forget directions, and need them chunked, and later repeated.

IQ-

A poor verbal IQ means a general language disability, and a poor performance IQ means a general visual-spatial disability.

Average IQs are 90-110. Gifted is usually over 130. Mentally retarded (DH) is under 50