

## [Special Education Law Blog](#)

*A special education legal resource discussing case law, news, practical advocacy advice, and developments in state and federal statutes and regulations. Postings include insight and sometimes humor from Charles P. Fox, a Chicago, Illinois attorney who is also a parent of child with special needs, and other guest authors.*

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### **IQ Testing for Nonverbal Abilities Yields Dramatically Improved Scores for Children with Autism**

One of the single greatest factors in determining the direction of educational planning for children with special needs is their IQ. The profound tragedy for many children is that accurate and reliable testing for IQ is either not readily available or it is misapplied.

The testing focuses on what are the learning deficits--memory, processing, or "intelligence" in a variety of forms; goals, accommodations/modifications, and curriculum all should be designed in consideration of these factors. IQ testing also tends to set the bar of expectation and tracking. Is the child achieving to his or her "level" is an implicit and pervasive issue at IEP meetings. However, if the compass needle of the IQ testing points in the wrong direction the whole IEP proceeds down the wrong road.

At the [recent conference](#) of the [American Association for the Advancement of Science](#) it was reported that "people with autism are more intelligent and able to function better than previously believed." The problem is that incorrect testing such as the WISC has been applied. The results of tests like the WISC is that as many as 75% of children with autism have been labelled mentally retarded which may be an overstated number. The problem with the WISC is that it is a verbally based test, and most children with autism have severe verbal deficits. While the WISC is a valid instrument which is widely used, it may not be useful for children with autism, according to this report.

This report recommends the [Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices](#) ("SPM"). This test has been found to be valid and reliable over a period of years. The [Coloured Progressive Matrices](#) are for younger children and the Stanford Progressive Matrix is for children 6-16 years of age. The advantage of this test is that is nonverbal in nature. According to the report from the American Association for the Advancement of Science, improvement of 30 standard points have been demonstrated which could move a child's designation from the range of mental retardation to the range of average intelligence.

The point of testing is to properly identify a child's needs and strengths and to create an individualized IEP. In the event the testing is wrong, the plan that is built around that testing will tend to miss the mark. Parents need to carefully examine the testing that has been applied to their child, and determine if new or additional testing may be required. The SPM may be applicable or another IQ test that evaluates nonverbal abilities such as the Leiter-R or the CTONI. These are critical questions that must be examined. This recent report puts a much needed spotlight on this issue not only for children with autism, but for all children who have special needs.

Posted by Charles Fox on February 21, 2006 at 05:00 AM in [Autism](#), [Diagnostic Testing](#) | [Permalink](#)