

How to raise a genius: lessons from a 45-year study of super-smart children

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“What Julian wanted to know was, how do you find the kids with the highest potential for excellence in what we now call STEM, and how do you boost the chance that they’ll reach that potential,” says Camilla Benbow, a protégé of Stanley’s who is now dean of education and human development at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. But Stanley wasn’t interested in just studying bright children; he wanted to nurture their intellect and enhance the odds that they would change the world. His motto, he told his graduate students, was “no more dry bones methodology”.

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“Whether we like it or not, these people really do control our society,” says Jonathan Wai, a psychologist at the Duke University Talent Identification Program in Durham, North Carolina, which collaborates with the Hopkins centre. Wai combined data from 11 prospective and retrospective longitudinal studies², including SMPY, to demonstrate the correlation between early cognitive ability and adult achievement.

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On a muggy August day, Benbow and her husband, psychologist David Lubinski, describe the origins of SMPY as they walk across the quadrangle at Vanderbilt University. Benbow was a graduate student at Johns Hopkins when she met Stanley in a class he taught in 1976. Benbow and Lubinski, who have co-directed the study since Stanley’s retirement, brought it to Vanderbilt in 1998.

Read the whole story: [Nature](#)