Schools really *can* solve the black-white test score gap.

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What Influences Student Scores?

Environment
- Genetics
- SES
- Parenting methods
- Mother’s education level

Schools
- Teacher quality
- Class size
- Summer programs
Is the gap due to genetics?

- How do we know that the gap isn’t due to genetics:
  - The gap fluctuates over time for society, and for students.
  - Rigorous interventions do affect “IQ” at every stage of life.
  - Social policies create and maintain inequalities.
  - US is more unequal than other countries.
How Big is the Gap?

• Based on NAEP (1996) scores, black students score lower than white students by:
  – Reading:  .69 SD
  – Math:  .89 SD
• Other authors commonly cite the gap at .6 SD.
• The tests are not flawed; the skill differences that the tests measure are real.
• The gap fluctuates overtime.
How did schools close the gap?

• Two categories of changes between 1970-80s:
  – Civil Rights-War on Poverty:
    • Desegregation/national changes in attitudes
  – School-based changes
    • Increase in school funding
    • Pupil-teacher ratio declined
• By the late 80s black gains were .6 or .7 SD greater than white gains during the same time period.
How do schools exacerbate the gap?

• The black-white gap widens after kids enter school
• Black students who enter school with mean test scores will finish school with:
  – Math scores are .34 SD below the mean
  – Reading scores are .39 SD below the mean
• Each year, black students with the same initial scores fall behind:
  – .03 SD in math
  – .07 SD in reading and vocabulary
What can’t we measure?

- Unobservable aspects of schools explain 25% of total tests score variance
  - Teacher enthusiasm/effectiveness, school climate, peer ability
Are school effects are cumulative?

- A narrow definition of SES explains 30% of the gap.
- A broad definition of SES explains 66% of the gap.
  - Mother/father’s education level
  - % disadvantaged in mother’s school
  - Student-teacher ratio in mother’s school
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