

Testimony Regarding Colorado  
Senate Bill 09-244

By Tasha Aper, M.A.

Thursday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Good afternoon. Thank you for the privilege to speak in support of this critical legislation. I have a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology and have had the pleasure of working as an autism treatment provider for the past 6 years; serving many children and families affected by autism in Colorado.

As you may have heard today, autism is generally a lifelong, neurodevelopmental disability causing impairments in communication and social interaction as well as repetitive behaviors or problematic restricted interests. Although not a core deficit, a side effect of untreated autism is frequently mental retardation and diminished IQ. With Early Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy, however, individuals with autism can make significant gains in communication and intelligence as well as social competence. Early meaning treatment begins at or before 3 years of age, and intensive meaning 25 or more hours per week of ABA therapy.

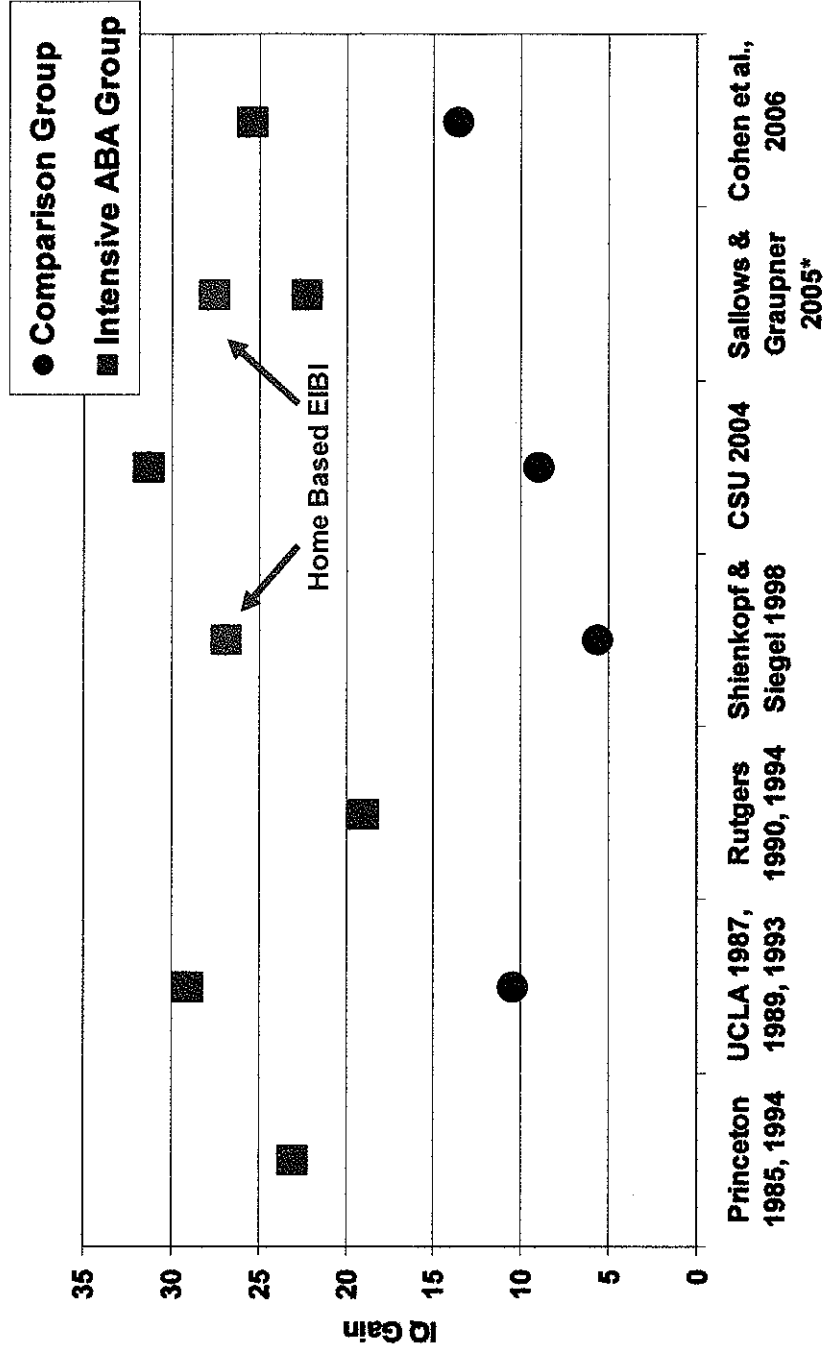
Individuals with an IQ below 80 are unlikely to participate in regular education classrooms. This means that, without Early ABA, many children with autism will always require extensive special education services and, subsequently, never live or work independently as adults. This has profound fiscal implications for the State of Colorado.

Approximately 20 years of research from varied and reputable academic institutions across the US demonstrate significant improvement in IQ as a result of Early ABA. Language, a core deficit in autism, correlates significantly with IQ. I am providing you with data highlighting several of these group studies that show an average gain of about 25 IQ points when children receive early, intensive ABA therapy.

I'd like to draw your attention to figure 1. This shows that individuals in the treatment groups achieved substantially higher IQ's than those who received less treatment or alternate treatment. Figure 2 shows that the outcome IQ's for individuals in the treatment groups were no longer in the mentally retarded range. Sadly, individuals who did not receive Early ABA typically remained mentally retarded.

Such gains in intellectual functioning are critical. They can mean the difference between an individual who will require extensive, state-funded services for the rest of their life and one who will flourish in a regular education classroom and lead an independent and productive life including meaningful employment.

# IQ Gain by Group



**Fig. 1** Children who received Intensive ABA treatment achieved substantially higher IQ's than people who got less or no treatment

# Intensive ABA Group Outcomes

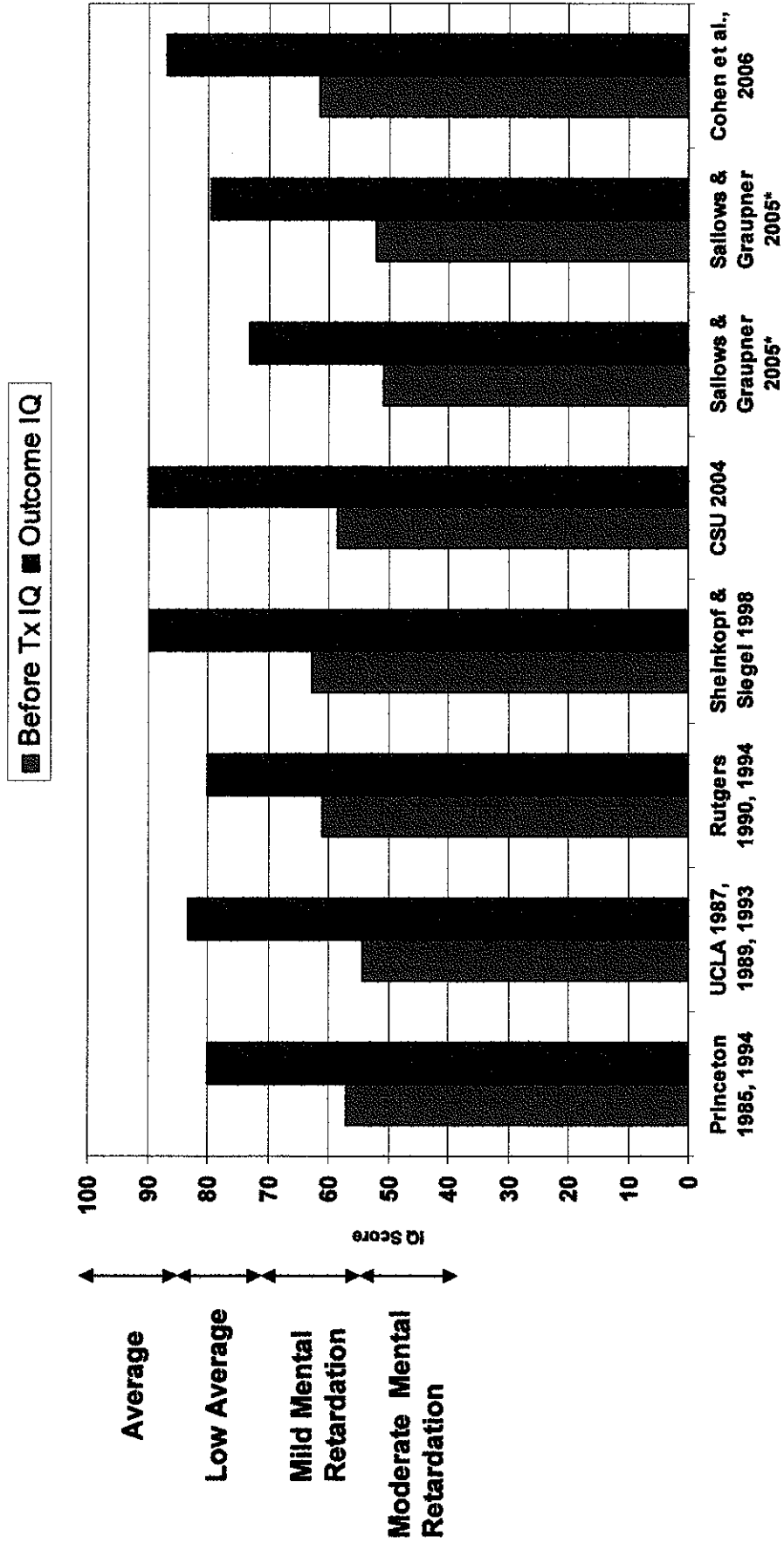


Fig. 2. Individuals who received Early ABA were typically no longer mentally retarded after treatment.