

启发儿童智慧的奥秘18

However, abacus and mental arithmetic have become increasingly common among children in the past decade, even appearing on television in the form of challenges in talent shows such as Wu Teng Chiang seven or eight years ago. Many parents send their children to learn these skills. Consequently, an increasing number of elementary school children are attaining levels; even a level five or six is not surprising.

Due to the transition of abacus and mental arithmetic from a traditional career skill to a unique talent, its learning age has gradually shifted downwards; the majority of students learning abacus and mental arithmetic are elementary school children, who have less pressure from schoolwork, and even many kindergarteners K2 and over or any preschooler who can write 1234 learn these skills.

Although not many children study abacus and mental arithmetic for long periods of time, those who are able to go along with the subjective and objective requirements throughout the learning process make profound progress. Take Wan Ting for instance. She reached level nine in mental arithmetic by the time she was in the first grade, level ten in the second grade, and had no higher level left for her to pass. Therefore it became evident that the traditional ten-level standard was no longer compatible with the demands of the era.

In order to allow children to "live and learn and better themselves" and to increase their interest in learning, the Children's Abacus Calculation in Taiwan started designing a special level test for high level child geniuses, so that children who had reached level ten could be evaluated by new standards, solving the "not enough levels" problem. This new standard, however, has only been designed to level fifteen.

Staying at level ten for three years, Su Wan Ting took the special test held by the Children's Abacus Calculation during the first semester of fourth grade (November 5, 1995), and passed

"level thirteen," setting the highest record nationwide. Her level even surpassed her age-- ten and three months.

A year later, on November 12, 1996, the fifth grader challenged herself to a higher level, signing up for the same special level test held by the Children's Abacus Calculation. This time, Wan Ting aimed to pass the highest level--level fifteen. The most thrilling part of the test on that day was the special level test; all eyes were on Su Wan Ting as she finished answering fifty problems and each one correctly, in two minutes. Just as level fifteen was about to be reached, an incident happened.

The strict and careful judges, who were normally just, ruled Wan Ting's last problem as incorrect. "Weird. All the numbers are right," the crowd was murmuring, as the judges circled the error. As it turned out, the judges felt that on Wan Ting's last problem, one of the apostrophes was too far away from the number so that it was impossible to identify the location of the apostrophe and thus the problem couldn't be ruled as correct. As a result, Wan Ting failed to pass level fifteen, but still moved to the higher level of level fourteen, still the highest record nationwide.

On the way home from Taipei that day, though Wan Ting was a little depressed and her parents kept praising her on having done a great job, she still had high morale and told her parents in a firm tone, "Next year, I will be more careful and serious, and pass level fifteen as my graduation present so we can all be happy together!"