

Is “good enough” at school really “good enough?”

Some parents who have recently left our program simply tell us that their child is now doing "good enough" in school, and that they no longer need our program. To some degree this is fair enough. The parents' goals were to reach at or near grade level and nothing more. Their child improved from being more than two years behind and unable to complete their homework, to being at or above grade level by our measures and getting an A in school. Yet what does grade level mean, and is it "good enough" for our children's futures?

Relative to the Common Core

We measure grade level in The Learning Path by a student's overall score in relation to the Common Core standards. Typically most students are 1-2 years behind grade level when they start our program, and we often see an improvement of 2 grade levels in 1 year. In fact we have seen an improvement of as many as 4 grade levels in 1 year with some of our students. So we know our program works in relation to the new and more difficult Common Core standards. Nonetheless it is important to remember that our children will be competing for jobs in a global marketplace. Simply meeting the Common Core standards might not be enough.

Getting Ahead of Grade Level?

Ideally we would like to see our students love learning and push themselves to be 1-2 years ahead of grade level. At this point, school truly would be easy and enjoyable. Concepts introduced at school would not be the first time our students see them, and they would be able to more deeply and easily understand them as they learn them for the second time. Homework would be a breeze, and they would have more time for sports, reading, socialization, and other activities. The best Colleges are looking for students who not only achieve the best grades, but are well rounded. By necessity, these students must find school to be fairly easy in order to have the time to become well rounded.

International Competition will be more important than Domestic

Even our best students though will have to compete with students from China, India, and the rest of the world. This is not only true of the later labor market, but for getting into local Universities who increasingly depend upon the higher fees paid by international students. Not only do international students have generally higher test scores, but the University would prefer to get the greater revenue they bring.

The standards in China and India are not only more demanding than here, but there are also many more students. To give you some idea, there are more Honors students in India than there are students in the USA. Even if we were to take the extreme step of locking these people out of US Universities (we'd then have to pay more taxes to sustain our public Universities) and the US job market (not a good idea for the US economy), we can't avoid the fact that our children will still be competing for jobs with international students. When Microsoft could not get enough US Visas for its workers, it simply opened a new office in Vancouver, Canada and located them there. Highly paid and highly educated work tends to be information based, and this can be located anywhere. The global marketplace for labor that our less well educated children will face will be much more difficult than anything we ever faced. In contrast our well educated children will reap huge rewards from the global marketplace, enjoying fantastic new opportunities.

Better Education = Global Opportunities

We want to position our children to benefit from these global opportunities, and education is the best way to do so. The new Common Core standards are good, but simply meeting them is not going to be good enough to compete in the global market. We need to look beyond the USA and ensure that our children are meeting the best international education standards. The only caveat here is that the best international education standards need to promote innovation, as this is the bedrock of the global economy. Apple makes all its money from innovation, not manufacturing (sent to China for a very low profit margin). There is real truth in Apple's expression of "designed in California, assembled in China." Design is where the money is, but it can also be relocated anywhere.

How does The Learning Path help?

The Learning Path offers families a way to push their children's learning further than just meeting the local standards. We want our students to move ahead of the Common Core standards and embrace a love and curiosity for learning. Parents need to invest in their children's future, not simply meet the most minimal of standards demanded by their local public school.

