

Kindergarten to Grade 3 - The Most Important Years

It has been shown that students who can read at grade level by Grade 3 are far more likely to graduate from high school than children who cannot. [The study](#) that showed this used available statistics to point to how surprisingly early our children diverge in academic success. Having worked with thousands of children over the years, the results are not surprising to us at The Learning Path. It is far easier to set a young child onto a path of academic success than it is to change the academic course of an older child.

Graduating from high school is far too broad a brushstroke as an indicator for academic success. Ideally we could see statistics in relation to how reading well in Grade 3 leads to better grades in high school, and better opportunities for College. Unfortunately limitations in data likely prevent this. Nonetheless, the results of this study clearly point to a deeper issue: **the most important years of your child's education are Kindergarten to Grade 3!** We know that many of you do not agree. Our experience has shown that many parents think that Elementary is mostly about play and socializing, with a little reading and numeracy along the way. By Grades 4 and 5 it's time to get a bit more serious as our kids get ready for much more important Middle School, which will lead to even more important High School. This is simply wrong. The early Elementary years are the most important when it comes to your child's future academic success.

Invest the Least for the Most Rewards

The irony is that the investment and time required to set your child onto a path of academic success in preschool to Grade 3 is relatively minimal and easy. Ask any parent of a high school student who is struggling at school, and they will tell you of the great expense they've gone to help their child. They will have spent \$50 or more per hour (for many hours) on tutoring that simply gets their kids through, and their dependence on tutors for academic survival never seems to wane. Tutoring in Middle and High school rarely changes the course of a student's academic career. That course was set in the early Elementary years.

Our Primary Responsibility as Parents

As a parent, it's crucial that you take the time to invest in your child's early education. The most important thing you can teach them is reading, reading, and more reading. Don't read yourself? Our children are mirrors of us. If you don't set a good example of reading, it's much more likely that your child won't enjoy reading either. Stuff your child's room full of books and share your library with them. Read to your child every night before they go to bed. Do everything you can to inspire a love for reading in your young child - skip the video games and limit the TV. The first thing you need to do is create a supportive reading and learning environment at home, one where all video screens take a back seat to books. If your child is already a video game addict, exchange video game time for reading time. Just get your kids to read!

Books have never been cheaper - public libraries are always having sales where the sometimes unused books go for \$1 each. Search Amazon and www.abebooks.com to find used books for almost any title, and often for little more than the cost of postage. There are few things more important for you to do as a parent than ensure your child is reading well by Grade 2, and anyone can afford at least a few books. We're happy to make recommendations on book titles.

Learning for the Joy of it

Those parents who realize how important early education is, sometimes go a little too far. Remember that learning should be fun, a natural extension of play and exploring at this age. Keep the hard focus to a minimum, as most young children will lose focus after a half hour.

Brief Sprints Every Day, or at least every Weekday

The best way to ensure your young child learns to read well is to focus on reading (and some writing) skills for about half an hour every day. If weekends are too hard, you can skip them. The important thing is to setup a regular routine that incorporates learning but also allows for all the play your child needs. The Learning Path is an expert in setting up such a program. Even if you cannot afford our services (and we aren't expensive), we will be happy to help you figure out your own. It mostly takes some

discipline and diligence. Teaching your child to read well from an early age is the best possible thing you can do to help your child succeed in their life.

