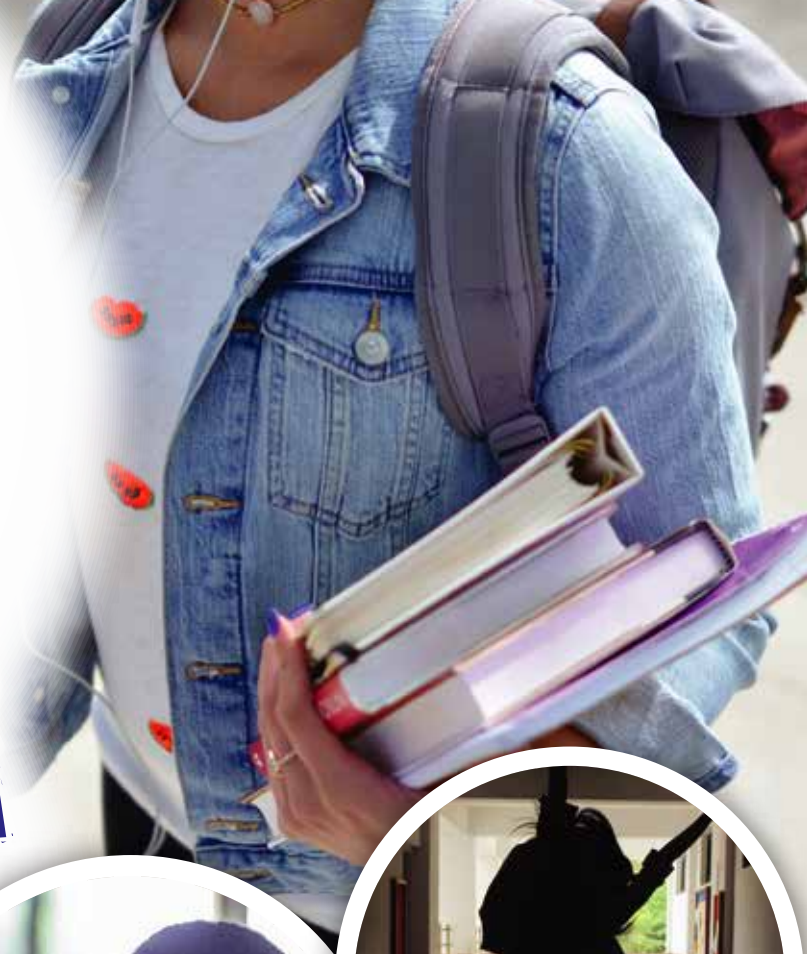
RIGHT TRACK
EDUCATIONAL SERVICES



LEARNING SKILLS ARE THE KEY

Do you want to know the key to academic success for your child?

- It's not a high IQ passed down the family tree.
- It's not the most prestigious private school's luxurious resources and facilities.
- And it's not the most highly-specialized teacher in a subject area.

The key to academic success is your child's solid foundation of learning skills, combined with a growth mindset, and a whole lot of grit.

When you receive your child's report card from the school, do you turn immediately to the "SUBJECTS" page, to scrutinize your child's marks? And then the class medians?

Do you obsess over one percent here and there compared to last term, or to other students?

Stop right there.

Instead, focus your attention on the report card section showing "Learning Skills and Work Habits."
This is where you'll find all the crucial information about your child!
The learning skills and work habits section in a report card represents a performance record & analysis of how your child interacts and copes academically, socially, and emotionally in the classroom.
This is tied to their emotional and social intelligence.

These skills provide a foundation from which your child can learn and demonstrate skills across all curriculum in all grades.

Here is a snapshot of some of the "Learning Skills and Work Habits" to which I refer — and I know you've seen them before.

(These were outlined by the Ontario Ministry of Education, but all schools & Boards have their own specific definitions of similar skills and habits:)

organization & time management: • devises and follows a plan and process for completing work and tasks. • establishes priorities and manages time to complete tasks and achieve goals. • identifies, gathers, evaluates, and uses information, technology, and resources to complete tasks.	**initiative & self-advocacy:** • looks for and acts on new ideas and opportunities for learning • demonstrates the capacity for innovation and a willingness to take risks. • demonstrates curiosity and interest in learning. • approaches new tasks with a positive attitude. • recognizes others and advocates appropriately for the rights of self and others.	**independent work:** • independently monitors, assesses, and revises plans to complete tasks and meet goals. • uses class time appropriately to complete tasks. • follows instructions with minimal supervision.
self-regulation & goal setting: • sets own individual goals and monitors progress towards achieving them. • seeks clarification or assistance when needed. • assesses and reflects critically on own strengths, needs, and interests. • identifies learning opportunities, choices, and strategies to meet personal needs and achieve goals. • perseveres and makes an effort when responding to challenges.	**collaboration, communication, & problem solving:** • accepts various roles and an equitable share of work in a group. • responds positively to the ideas, opinions, values, and traditions of others. • builds healthy peer-to-peer relationships through personal and media-assisted interactions. • works with others to resolve conflicts and build consensus to achieve group goals. shares information, resources, and expertise, and promotes critical thinking to solve problems and make decisions.	**responsibility:** • fulfils responsibilities and commitments within the learning environment. • completes and submits class work, homework, and assignments. • takes responsibility for and manages own behaviour.

AND, let's not forget 2 Learning Skills I believe also play a critical role to the success of your child: growth mindset and grit.

Growth Mindset (as described by Carol Dweck, PhD):

Growth mindset is the belief that one's most basic abilities can flourish through hard work and dedication, and that talent and "smarts" are just a place from which to start. It's the faith that one's starting point for talent is not an end point; where you start is not important. It's understanding that one must work passionately in order to accomplish great things, and that you start exactly where you are. Growth mindset = the ability to learn is not fixed! One's ability to learn can change with effort.

Grit (Psychologist Angela Duckworth describes it):

Grit is a combination of passion and perseverance. It is passion and perseverance for very long-term goals, and it's having stamina. Grit is sticking with your future, day in and day out, not just for the week, not just for the month, but for years… and working really hard to make that future a reality.
Teachers support kids' development of these skills and qualities throughout the school year, while teaching curriculum.

But teachers need YOUR HELP!

You can contribute to the development in these keys to academic success in many ways.

Support your learner at home.

Help him develop these key skills, strengths, and mindset!

HERE'S HOW…

1) Take the GRIT quiz together! (Find it here.)

- Introduce this quality to your child, and discuss areas in her life where she can be grittier.
- Celebrate the areas in life where she's got grit already!
- Make reference to grit in daily family life, when someone demonstrates grittiness.
- Celebrate your grittiness and encourage its growth in each other!

2) Take the Growth Mindset quiz! (Find it here.)

- Pay attention to your own growth mindset, as well as your kids'.
- Celebrate when you recognize growth mindset in your day to day life.

3) Role model good time management skills with your family.

- Plan backwards when preparing and scheduling things you need to accomplish. For example, if you have many chores to complete before a family birthday, prioritize the tasks and schedule them, working backwards from the party start-time.
- Create Daily To Do Lists the night before. As you complete tasks, cross them off! Reward yourselves!
- Have a family calendar on display, highlighting everyone's activities. Talk about what's coming up! Enjoy the anticipation of the fun stuff, and prepare for the mundane activities.
- Set expectations for homework sessions, wake up times (using personal alarms), and curfews. And any other routines. Pay attention to time.
- Be on time for everything. You can do this by "back planning" all the tasks you have to complete before a deadline. For example: get to doctor's appointment for 10am. List the things you have to do before the appointment, estimate travel time, provide some minutes for unexpected changes, and wake up in good time so you don't have to rush.

4) Teach your children to self-advocate from a very early age.

- Let your child do the talking when interacting with persons of authority such as doctors and dentists. (In these examples, it's advocating for their own health, after all!)
- Have your child order her own meal at a restaurant.
- Include your child in Parent-Teacher interviews, to listen, share goals and make other comments. Kids matter and should be present in these meetings.

5) Encourage independence.

- Whether you have a toddler, a primary school child, or a teen, there are many ways to do this.
- Show your student you believe she is capable of doing things on his own.
- Build chores around independence: walking the dog, or going to the store by bike to pick up a grocery, for example.
- Don't be afraid to have your child walk home from the bus stop, from school, or from a friend's house. Kids love to commute independently on the public transit, too. I dare you to try this!

6) Expect organization from your child or teen.

- Set expectations at home for contribution: chores, personal items, packing for trips, etc.
- Plan for next day the night before. Lay out clothes, pack lunches together, and organize backpacks. Think about what's happening during the next day or two with intention.

7) Let your child/adolescent solve problems.

- Resist the urge to swoop in and save the day when problems arise. Let your kids sort out their own problems.
- Watch them clean up their own mess, and make mistakes. Remain quiet!
- Show your children you believe they are capable of problem-solving.
- Be patient when problem-solving takes time.
- Step back and allow their persistence and resilience to grow.

8) Model effective communication skills.

- Encourage the use of "I statements" during conflicts, heated discussions or sibling spats.
- Use proper grammar and spelling when texting/emailing with kids.
- Expect children/teens to hand-write thank-you notes to relatives for gifts.

9) Make goal-setting a family ritual.

- Talk about personal goals, routines, and habits when opportunities arise.
- Set your own goals and work towards them, at New Year's and beginning of school terms. You can do this alongside your kids & adolescents, with them, to set an example.
- Reward yourselves for goals reached. Brainstorm rewards during the goal setting process, and based on good results or solid efforts, enjoy something special after hard work.
- Nurture internal motivation in your kids.

10) Encourage the practice of personal reflection.

- Talk with your family about experiences, trips, celebrations, hard work, sports events — any life event or endeavour — afterwards. Use open-ended questions. What was good? What could have been better? What do you think of…?
- In this context, the use of "I" is most appropriate when sharing.
- Identify areas of personal strength and weakness, concern or accomplishment.
- Touch on honest feelings, emotions, thoughts, and ideas.
- Keep this context non-judgemental, honest, open, and safe.

No matter what age or stage, you can make a huge impact on the development of your child's learning skills, growth mindset, and grit!

Find opportunities daily to model and reflect on growth in these skills and strengths.

With this foundation strongly in place, your child's success in academics will follow, no matter how complicated the learning material or problem.
You can play a big part in your child's academic success, without even cracking a textbook.

Enjoy the process and best wishes!

Book an Educational Consult call right here!
Call us at 416.207.9801 for a free phone consult.

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