



SABIS®



# THE VALUE OF AN EARLY START TO EDUCATION

*Is there any real value in sending your child to Kindergarten or is it just a waste of money?*

*8-minute read*

*Education for a changing world.®*

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## “When Should Kids Start School?”

This is perhaps one of the most debated questions in the world of education today. Compulsory school-starting ages vary significantly around the world and range from 3 to 7 years of age, with 6 years of age being the most widely adopted for the beginning of Primary School. “Early Childhood Education” is a term that refers to any learning or education that is offered to children before they enter Primary School (Grade 1). In schooling systems around the world, it is also referred to as Kindergarten (KG), Pre-K, Preschool, or Nursery.

Early Childhood Education is, in some countries, optional. Traditionally, kindergartens and preschools mostly provided child-minding services rather than any significant learning or “education”. Consequently, parents who did not need to rely on such services opted to keep their children at home. However, at the beginning of the 1980s, interest in Early Childhood Education (ECE) emerged from research on children’s early development showing that their experiences in the early years are critical for later academic achievements and overall well-being. **Today, there is strong and consistent evidence that a high-quality Early Childhood Education impacts children’s academic development and their emotional and social well-being more powerfully than any other phase of education.**

That is why SABIS® believes that there is great value in parents opting to enroll their children in a high-quality ECE (KG) program that provides the foundation for their success in school and later in life.

## High-Quality Early Childhood Education

Before assessing and understanding what a “high-quality early childhood education” is, it is important to first understand early childhood development.

### Understanding Early Childhood Development

Children grow rapidly in the first 5 years of their lives in four areas of development: physical; language and communication; cognitive skills; and social (emotional) skills.

Physical development is an important area of child development that includes children's physical growth, as well as their increasing ability to control the muscles of their bodies. These are often referred to as **gross and fine motor skills**. A well-designed early childhood educational program should include activities that enhance these skills.

Additionally, being able to speak clearly and process speech sounds, to understand others, to express ideas and interact with others are fundamental building blocks for a child's development. Research suggests that **good communication, language, and literacy at a young age have the highest correlation with outcomes at school.**



**Cognitive skills** refer to how children think, explore, and figure things out. It is the development of knowledge, skills, and problem-solving which help children understand the world around them.

**Emotional/social development** in young children is equally important. Children's relationships with adults and teachers as well as their friendships with their peers provide a powerful context within which they develop social skills and understandings.

### **Elements of a High-Quality Early Childhood Education**

A high-quality Early Childhood Education (KG) program should support this physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development. It should offer indoor and outdoor spaces, teaching materials, and equipment for children to play as well as qualified staff who provide the positive interactions, attention, and guidance to children in their care. Additionally, the curriculum is a key determinant of a high-quality ECE program and needs to be carefully designed to ensure that children are actually learning. Otherwise, it is a complete waste of money. That is why it is important for parents to always ask: *“What will my child learn?”* and *“How will my child learn?”*

**A high-quality ECE (Kindergarten) provides positive interactions, attention, support, and guidance as well as a variety of enriched play experiences and learning opportunities in a safe environment.**

### **The SABIS® Early Childhood Education Program**

The Early Childhood Education (ECE) program, also known as the KG program, that is offered in all SABIS® schools has been carefully developed with the knowledge and expertise of early childhood development experts and backed by over 135 years of excellence in the field of education. A thematic curriculum includes concepts such as literacy and numeracy, science, communication, world languages, and arts. There is also time carved out for active, creative, and imaginative play and countless opportunities for children to develop lifelong friendships.

The SABIS® goal is to provide a safe and caring learning environment that helps improve children's self-esteem, instills a positive approach to learning, and introduces the value of education to children. By fostering good learning habits, working to improve their attention spans, and nurturing positive bonds with adults and peers, the SABIS® Early Childhood Education (KG) program ensures that children are “school-ready” and well-equipped for a smooth start to Primary School.

### **COVID-19 Pandemic: The Fear Factor**

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and despite the overwhelming research on the benefits of an early childhood education, both in the short and long-term, some parents are hesitant to send their children to Kindergarten. This could be either because of the fear that their child may contract the COVID-19 virus or because of the



likelihood that they would have to take classes online at some point of the year due to government-mandated lockdowns. These fears can and should be addressed.

Operating guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic—such as the number of children allowed in each classroom, regular temperature checks, enhanced sanitization, face masks, and limiting family access to the school building—can all contribute to minimizing the risks of the spread of the virus and create a safe and healthy space.



And although we know that children learn best through in-person experiences, widely accepted research shows that, by age 3, children are able to learn through screens. Additionally, participating in school, albeit it virtually, helps children develop a routine. The reduced curriculum, which focuses on essential learning, allows for shorter lessons of approximately 30 minutes each, with regular breaks and time for creative play. And besides, online learning at ECE (KG) level is only a temporary solution.

## Conclusion

Early childhood education is more than just preparation for primary school. It aims at the holistic development of a child's communication, social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs in order to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and well-being. Today, there is significant evidence that children who have access to a high-quality Kindergarten education reap the benefits of superior language, intellectual, and physical development as well as more advanced social skills. And although the current health risks posed by COVID-19 are real, they must be balanced with the scientific consensus that children need to be around other children and adults to thrive. And this is consistent with advice from the American Academy of Pediatrics<sup>1</sup> stating that we need to do everything possible to allow children to safely resume in-person learning.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://services.aap.org/en/news-room/news-releases/aap/2020/pediatricians-educators-and-superintendents-urge-a-safe-return-to-school-this-fall/>