



Do the grades that a student achieves in K-12 matter later in life?

Students are often told of the importance of good grades, and how applying themselves in school now will only help them later in life. To investigate statements like this, and provide data driven evidence of the importance of a B.C. K-12 education, the B.C. Ministry of Education has partnered with Statistics Canada to investigate students' post graduation outcomes. Linking B.C.'s anonymized student data to Statistic Canada's Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform¹ (ELMLP) enables tracking longer-term student success outcomes such as post secondary transition, employment, and earnings trends for cohorts of K-12 students.

To compare a student's grades with earnings later in life, graduating student's lifetime grade point averages (GPA) were tracked against student median earnings each year after their high school graduation. This initial investigation was done for the graduating student cohorts of school years 2003/2004 – 2005/2006 (graduating classes of 2004-2006). The results in Figure 1 below show that the hard work achieving good grades, and forgoing working right out of school for the further pursuit of postsecondary education, pays off in the long run.

Starting one year after high school, the median annual earnings are quite similar across all GPA levels. Moving ahead to 5 years after graduation, the highest median earners are those students that achieved a GPA in the 50-69% range. However, this is likely due to the students that graduated with higher GPAs, forgoing work for higher education. At 8 years after high school graduation, most students have attained university degrees and have started their careers. At this time trends start to reverse and annual earnings begin to align more as expected with GPA levels.

At 12 years after high school graduation, the final year that income data is available, the median earnings of students that had achieved a 90+ GPA in K-12 was almost 50 percent or \$20,000 per year higher than those with an average K-12 lifetime GPA below 50 percent. Growth in earnings each year

¹ For more information on the ELMLP see <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/about/pia/generic/educationlabour>

looks to be tightly linked to a student's K-12 GPA. It is expected that those earnings will continue to grow at a higher rate relative to lower GPA levels now and as well into the future; justification for (higher grades, and) higher education.

FIGURE 1: MEDIAN ANNUAL EARNINGS, GRADUATING CLASSES 2004-2006, BY CUMULATIVE K-12 GPA

