Unlike many mathematicians we have studied in our class, there is very little information available concerning the early education of J. Ernest Wilkins, Jr. We do know that Wilkins, Jr. was enrolled in Willard Elementary School in the Chicago area and finished at the age of ten. He proceeded to attend Parker High School and graduated at 13. That year, he became the youngest person to ever enter the University of Chicago.

Wilkins was more than just a bright child. At 13 months he could recite the alphabet and only five months later he spoke intelligently. When he was three, Wilkins could do basic arithmetic, such as addition and multiplication. In grammar school, he made a 163 on the Stanford-Binet IQ test and was classified as a genius.

I was unable to find any evidences of racial discrimination experienced by Wilkins in his early education. His elementary and secondary schools were most likely segregated, and the quality of education, if similar to that of other black elementary schools in the United States at the time, was below that of their white counterparts. Most likely, the greatest reason that this did not affect Wilkins’ academic success is the education and affluence of his parents.