

Should You Wait A Year Before Your Child Starts Kindergarten?

Description



“Redshirting” refers to the athletic practice of holding a player back a year to give them time to grow and develop skills

A recent article in the *Los Angeles Times*, “On The Question Of When To Start Kindergarten, There’s No Easy Answer,” raised several issues to consider if you’re grappling with the decision to “redshirt” your child or hold him/her back a year before starting kindergarten. This is a growing trend, according to the article.

According to the *L.A. Times*, schools are placing more emphasis on academic achievement, standardized testing and parents are increasingly focused on kids’ emotional needs. The article points out that research on the question of whether or not to hold a child back before starting kindergarten is mixed. Some experts believe there are benefits to a child being one of the oldest in his/her class, while other research shows few benefits to “redshirting” and even discovered some kids who are older than their classmates exhibit behavioral problems.

So, what’s a parent to do? First, understand that in L.A. the vast majority of top private elementary schools want kids who are close to 6 years-old (or already 6) when they start kindergarten. According to Sharon Lynn Kagan, co-director of the National Center for Children and Families at Teachers College in New York, education experts focus on the following when assessing a child’s readiness for kindergarten. Physical well being and motor skills, social and emotional development, language skills, approaches to learning and cognition (source: *L.A. Times*)

For some families, “redshirting” isn’t a question because their child’s birthday falls at a time where they have no choice but to wait because they miss a school’s cut-off date. But, for families like mine, where both my kids have July birthdays, we could have gone either way with many schools having a Sept. 1st cutoff date. After talking with our preschool director, we decided that my daughter would stay an extra year at preschool with most of her preschool classmates. She entered kindergarten at age 6. She is one of the oldest in her class at The Willows School, but not the oldest.

My son, who is also born in July, was not “redshirted” and he is the youngest in his class. When we considered whether he was ready to start kindergarten at age 5, we factored in his maturity and overall readiness. He was also at a preschool where kids did not stay an extra year because most of them went on to public school where the kids generally begin kindergarten a year earlier than private school. So, we enrolled him in the Willows DK program at age 4 and he entered K at age 5.

Now that Iâ€™ve been the parent of a daughter who was red-shirted and a son who was not, here are my thoughts on the issue.

- If youâ€™re applying to private elementary schools, recognize that these schools want kids who are older. When the schools tell prospective parents, â€œgive him/her the gift of timeâ€ they are saying wait another year until the child is older and more mature. The schools are looking beyond kindergarten to every grade level your child will enter. If the school has a concern about a childâ€™s readiness, they may wait-list him/her.
- My daughter was shy and reserved. My husband and I, and the preschool director felt she needed the extra year at preschool for emotional and social development. Her preschool had a full class of kids her age, so she would not have been among 3 year-olds her last year. Iâ€™m very glad we made the decision to â€œredshirtâ€ her.
- My son is the youngest in his class. There are kids in his class who are a year older than he is. And, if a kid repeats a grade, you might have a kid who is 18 months older than your child.
- Iâ€™ve also observed that age doesnâ€™t determine how well the child does academically. There are kids a year older than my son who struggle in school. There are kids almost a year younger than my daughter who do extremely well.
- Trust your instincts and the opinion of your preschool director. Thereâ€™s nothing wrong with keeping your child at preschool for an extra year. Kindergarten will be there waiting for him/her.
- In terms of behavioral problems, I havenâ€™t noticed a correlation with age at The Willows. Discipline problems seem to happen with kids on both the younger and older side in my kidsâ€™ classes.
- If your child is the youngest in the class, consider that there will probably be kids bigger than your child (unless your child is big for his/her age). The bigger kids may dominate the sports activities (or try to) and may try to use their size/age to their advantage. I knew my son wouldnâ€™t be bothered by this stuff, but some kids are and itâ€™s up to parents to think about this issue as you make the decision to â€œredshirtâ€ or not.

To read the *L.A. Times* article, click [here](#)

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Author

admin