

Guest Blogger Jenny: Rebuttal To NYT "Redshirting" Op-Ed-Part 1

Description



To Redshirt Or Not? The Debate Continues

On Sunday, *The New York Times* published an op ed piece entitled, "Delay Kindergarten at Your Child's Peril." The subject of this rather alarmist headline was redshirting, the practice of delaying a child's entrance into kindergarten for a year.

Redshirting has been discussed on this blog in the past, with Christina weighing in on how she redshirted her daughter, whom she felt would benefit socially from the delay (proven correct), but didn't redshirt her son, who's consistently one of the youngest kids in his grade, but is doing great. Redshirting, though, has a much more sweeping reputation, as a practice done to ensure a leg up on the competition; the assumption is that delaying kindergarten, especially for boys, gives them an academic and social advantage.

Of course, an advantage is only an advantage when you're the only beneficiary. When the so-called "advantages" of redshirting hit the mainstream, upper middle class parents took to it with a vengeance. The result was kindergarten classrooms stuffed full of boys the size of 40 year olds. The redshirting "advantage" thus became a level playing field, albeit one with bigger players. Estimates of redshirting vary between 10 and 20 percent of kindergartners, depending on the source. That's sizable.

Now, of course, the backlash has begun regarding redshirting. The authors of the aforementioned op ed piece are two academics, Sam Wang and Sandra Aamodt, who, it so happens, have recently co-authored a book. The subject: "Welcome to Your Child's Brain: How the Mind Grows From Conception to College."

Congratulations to them on their hard work, since publishing is one tough, competitive business. And what better way to gain traction on their book sales than with an inflammatory op ed piece about a now commonplace educational practice?

Call me a cynic, but I suspect that Wang and Aamodt wrote this piece because they couldn't afford a 1/3 page ad in *The New York Times* celebrating their book. The headline alone is enough to send any parent who redshirted her child, for whatever reason, into fits of worry and anxiety.

Yet, when I read their piece, and looked at the so-called evidence for this inflammatory headline, it didn't really hold up. The one study cited in the piece was a large scale one (that means a large sample, which adds to credibility) held at 26 elementary schools. Sounds good so far. But, the schools were in Canada. Now, I know next to nothing about the Canadian school system and teaching methods, not to mention all the other social differences between our population and the Canadian one that was studied here. What I do know is that, without

discussing these things, it's difficult to compare the two school populations. The authors even made the pronouncement that, because the youngest fifth-graders in the study tested five points higher in IQ than fourth graders of the same age, that school makes children smarter. Without knowing the measurement methods for said IQ, or the class and affluence backgrounds of the kids, or the sample size, this is a ridiculous statement.

In the end, there's plenty of things that can influence your child's IQ. Apparently, breastfeeding increases it (or lack of breastfeeding lowers it. Whatever). First born children tend to have higher IQs than younger siblings, by a whopping (sense the sarcasm here) three points. But that doesn't mean that your kid will be an idiot because you didn't breastfeed (remember: there was a whole generation that was formula fed, and many of them turned out all right), or that you should only have one child because the rest will be "inferior." That would be ridiculous, right?

Just like it's ridiculous to make sweeping generalizations about kids and redshirting. While there might not actually be a "success advantage" in redshirting, as was previously thought, it might benefit your child in other ways. You're the only one who can look at your child and decide what fits them best. Maybe being the oldest in a class would help them socially. Conversely, perhaps being the youngest in the class fits their competitive side. Just use your instincts and decide. Because, whatever you do, depending upon the frantic advice of "experts" shilling books probably isn't going to help your child, although it will definitely help the authors' bottom line.

Coming Soon- Part Two : Jenny discusses how her daughter was redshirted (sort of) upon her move from 3rd St. Elementary to Mirman School.

Jenny Heitz has worked as a staff writer for Coast Weekly in Carmel, freelanced in the South Bay, and then switched to advertising copywriting. Her daughter started 4th grade at Mirman School this year. She previously attended 3rd St. Elementary School. Jenny has been published recently in the Daily News and on Mamapedia, The Well Mom, Sane Moms, Hybrid Mom, The Culture Mom and A Child Grows In Brooklyn. She now writes about gift ideas and products on her blog, [Find A Toad](#).

Don't miss school event information, guest posts and more! Like Us On [Facebook!](#)

Category

1. Beyond The Brochure

Tags

1. Guest Blogger Jenny Heitz

Date Created

September 28, 2011

Author

admin