

Guest Blogger Jenny: The Redshirting Dilemma That Never Ends (Part 2)

Description



The Redshirt Dilemma That Won't Go Away

Let me just say that I never intended to redshirt my daughter (delay her entrance to K by a year). She started preschool at just over two, mostly because she was dying for more stimulation. Her hunger for information and activity was strong and constant. And while she often didn't go with the social flow, she got along with other kids well enough that I knew she'd be fine socially.

Everything proceeded normally until fourth grade, when Anna transferred from Third St. Elementary to Mirman. It was a big transition, and Anna ended up one of the older kids in the class, although she has a late June birthday. The reason for the age jump is that, if your child starts out at Mirman, she will automatically skip kindergarten, because Mirman begins in Room 1, also known as first grade. This means that if your child is five, she's automatically been put ahead a year upon entry to Mirman. And, if you redshirted your child, she will be one of the older kids in a grade appropriate class.

All of this was fine with me. Anna was kept at grade level, although what they teach at Mirman is quite different from what she was used to at Third St. It wouldn't have been fair or appropriate to bump her up a grade, so that she was with the majority of the nine-year olds in Rooms 5. Plus, since redshirting at age five happens in every school, she was hardly the only nine year old in Room 4. So far, so good.

The challenge of this plan, though, is coming soon, upon matriculation to a middle school. Because most Mirman kids are a year younger than grade level, they stay at the school (unless they're staying through middle school) through 7th grade instead of 6th grade. Then, when they enter their new middle school, they enter in 7th grade.

Yes, you heard right: the majority of middle school matriculating Mirman students (try saying that five times fast) end up repeating 7th grade. Even though they're ahead academically, most students are behind socially because they were skipped ahead a grade. I guess the thinking is that they need to be on the same social age level as the other students in their grade.

This all makes sense for [Mirman](#) students who start out at age five at the school. But what about the redshirted kids, or kids like my daughter who have transferred in from other schools? Now, it seems, Anna will be redshirted for 7th grade, thus entering it a whole year older than her peers. As a child who has always enjoyed being surrounded by older people, I don't think this arrangement will suit Anna's personality at all.

So, I have this dilemma. Should I try and get Anna into a new middle school after 6th grade at Mirman, so that she enters 7th grade at her new school at the appropriate age? Seventh grade is the main point of entry for most private middle schools. Waiting until 9th grade means fewer spaces—so few spaces I could probably count them for all the top secondary schools on one hand. Should I just sign onto the program, trust the system, and have Anna stay at Mirman through 7th grade, and then have to repeat 7th grade (and the 7th grade tuition).

In the end, I might have to have Anna repeat 7th grade in order to get her into the middle/upper school of our choice. And that decision will effect her down the line, when we have a possibly surly adolescent living for yet another year under our roof, since she won't be entering college until the ripe old age of 19. Although this inadvertent redshirting might be a small price to pay for a truly excellent education, I do keep wondering if it's really all necessary. And I'll probably keep looking for a work around, too.

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](#).

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