



Considerations Regarding the Practice of Academic Redshirting

What is Academic Redshirting?

Academic redshirting refers to the practice of delaying a child's entry into kindergarten for a year, usually with the intention of providing them with an advantage in terms of age and maturity compared to their peers. While the intentions behind redshirting are often well-meaning, it's important to be aware of potential drawbacks that can arise.

The History of Academic Redshirting:

The roots of academic redshirting can be traced back to the intricate interplay of educational policies, parental expectations, and societal norms. Historically, age cutoff policies in school systems have inadvertently incentivized parents to consider redshirting, seeking to position their children among the oldest in their class to provide academic and athletic advantages. The practice was further popularized following the 2008 publication of the book *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell. Over time, this practice has become ingrained in the educational landscape, driven by a desire for perceived academic advantages.

Boredom: A Looming Challenge:

One significant danger associated with redshirting is the potential for boredom among children. Research highlights that redshirted children, being older and more advanced, may find themselves disengaged and unchallenged in early academic settings. Boredom at this crucial stage can hinder a child's enthusiasm for learning and lead to behavior difficulties, setting the stage for potential long-term consequences.

The Illusion of Easy Success:

While redshirted children might initially shine due to their age-related advantages, studies suggest that this early success may not translate into sustained academic achievement. Researchers have found that any initial benefits tend to diminish over time, raising questions about the long-term impact of redshirting on a child's ability to navigate more challenging academic terrain in later years.

Missed Opportunities for Growth:

One of the inherent risks of redshirting lies in depriving children of the valuable experiences that come with overcoming academic challenges. Early education serves as a foundation for developing resilience, problem-solving skills, and a passion for learning. Redshirted children may miss out on these formative experiences, potentially leaving them ill-equipped to face the academic demands that await them in subsequent stages of their education. Research has shown that children who aren't sufficiently challenged in earlier grades may struggle to adapt to more demanding academics in later stages, leading to decline in academic performance as well as negative self-esteem.

Montessori Planes of Development and Academic Redshirting:

In Montessori education, the distinction between a first and second plane student revolves around the child's developmental stages and learning needs. The first plane, encompassing ages birth to 6 years, is marked by a focus on sensorial exploration and the development of basic skills. Students in this stage are naturally curious, absorbent learners who engage in hands-on activities to understand their immediate environment. In contrast, the second plane, spanning 6 to 12 years, witnesses a shift towards abstract thinking and a desire for intellectual exploration. Students become more social, seeking connections beyond the family and forming a broader understanding of the world. The lower elementary curriculum adapts to meet these changing needs, emphasizing collaborative projects over individual instruction, an emphasis on critical thinking, and a deeper exploration of subjects.

CONCLUSION SENTENCE

Impact on Curriculum and Educational Equity:

Equity concerns surrounding academic redshirting become more pronounced when coupled with the demographic trend that often sees redshirted students being predominantly white and from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. Shifting curriculum expectations to align with the abilities of older students, who are already more likely to come from privileged backgrounds, can exacerbate existing disparities in educational outcomes. Younger children who did not delay entry face comparisons to classmates much older than themselves. Similarly, redshirted students may face higher expectations due to their older age, which can lead to added stress and pressure to perform academically, socially, or athletically. Teachers are forced to differentiate for an even broader span of ages and abilities, creating difficulties in lesson planning and instruction.

Navigating Alternatives:

Parents concerned about their child's readiness for kindergarten can explore alternative approaches. Enrichment activities, individualized education plans, and ongoing communication with educators provide avenues for support without resorting to redshirting. These alternatives foster a dynamic learning environment that challenges children appropriately, ensuring a balance between engagement and growth.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, while academic redshirting might seem like a beneficial strategy, it's crucial to consider the potential pitfalls, both short-term and long-term. We encourage parents to make informed decisions regarding their child's education and to engage in open dialogue with their teacher to provide the best possible support.

Sources and Further Reading:

Deming, David, and Susan Dynarski. (2008) "The Lengthening of Childhood." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 22.3: 71-92.

Frey, N. (2005). Retention, social promotion, and academic redshirting: What do we know and need to know? *Remedial and Special Education*, 26(6), 332-346.

Graue, M. E., & DiPerna, J. (2000). Redshirting and early retention: Who gets the "gift of time" and what are its outcomes? *American Educational Research Journal*, 37(2), 509-534.

Lincove, J. A., & Painter, G. (2006). Does the age that children start kindergarten matter? Evidence of long-term educational and social outcomes. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 28, 153-179.

Martin, A. J. (2009). Age appropriateness and motivation, engagement, and performance, in high school: Effects of age within cohort, grade retention, and delayed school entry. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 101(1), 101-114.