

Kindergarten postponed: Examining parents' decisions and teacher opinions concerning school readiness

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In the United States of America, the practice of kindergarten redshirting i.e., of waiting to enroll a child into kindergarten until the year after the child was originally eligible, is becoming more common in today's schools. This study offers insight into the reasons why some parents elect to redshirt their child at the kindergarten level. A secondary focus was to determine the views of kindergarten teachers in regards to redshirting and to compare the opinions of parents and teachers in this area. Survey data was collected from 24 kindergarten teachers and 63 parents of redshirted children. The results show that parents who redshirt their child are more likely to consider their emotional concerns for their child. Alternatively, teachers are more likely to support redshirting when utilized for academic or maturational needs. Suggestions for researchers, parents, and educators are provided.

Keywords: school readiness, early childhood education, parenting

Many parents of young children wrestle with the question concerning their children's readiness for school: Do we send our child or do we wait? Although most parents choose to send their child to school in the school year that he/she becomes age eligible, a minority of parents decide to hold their child back with the hopes of preparing the child for a successful entry into school the following year. This practice, known as kindergarten redshirting in the United States, is endorsed by some school professionals and parents as a way to give a child an extra year of maturation and academic development prior to entering school. Many schools today expect students to be 'ready' for school upon entrance, rather than using the first year to acquire readiness for the higher expectations in later grades (Graue, 1993). Concern over this heightened expectation for five year old children in the United States to achieve has led many parents to withhold their child's entry into school for an additional year. Many parents believe that this action will improve their child's ability to meet the social and academic expectations of formal schooling (Dockett & Perry, 2003).

School districts across the United States vary on their entrance procedures. Although recommendations can be made through testing and by teaching professionals as to a child's 'readiness' for school, the determination for eligibility is primarily decided by the birth date of the child. While other strategies for determining school readiness have been tried, the National Association for the Education of Young Children endorsed only the use of age to determine if a

child should enter kindergarten by stating, *'The only legally and ethically defensible criterion for determining school entry is whether the child has reached the legal chronological age of school entry'* (NAEYC 1990, p 22). However, 27 states allow children to enter school before they reach age eligibility. So ultimately the decision to enroll a child the first year he or she is eligible is up to the parents.

Given this decision, parents are holding back their child's entry into school in surprising numbers. Research has found the prevalence of redshirting to be between 5% and 16% of all kindergarten students (Noel & Newman, 2003; Graue & DiPerna, 2000; West, Meek & Hurst, 2000). However, redshirting is more common in affluent communities and among white, non-Hispanic children (West, Meek & Hurst, 2000).

While parents are solely responsible for making this decision, it is unlikely that they are doing so without being influenced by outside sources. The perceived importance on high academic achievement from laws mandating standardized testing, the media, the local teachers and school administration and other members of the community can serve to sway a parent's decision to hold back their child (Diamond, Reagan & Bandyk, 2000; Graue, 1992). Raver and Knitzer (2002) propose that the key readiness factor parents and teachers should look at is that of social and emotional school readiness. They call for preschools to ensure the preparation of preschoolers in that domain, especially in students of lower socioeconomic status. However, research conducted by the Early Child Care Research Network (2007) at the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) found no relation between age of kindergarten entry and socio-emotional functioning.

The practice of delaying a child's entry into kindergarten has been shown to have some positive effects. In a nationally recognized study, West, Denton and Reaney (2000) found that kindergarteners who were among the youngest in their class had lower reading and mathematics skills than the students who were the oldest. Socially, they found that the older kindergarteners were able to attend to a task, listen for longer times, and showed greater enthusiasm for learning (Holloway, 2003). Research has shown that delayed entry students are less likely to be rated negatively on academic performance by their teachers than students who started kindergarten on time (Cromwell, 2005). Fredriksson and Ockert (2005) also found that German children in their study that started a year later performed higher academically and that these effects persisted into adulthood. The NICHD Early Child Care Research Network (2007) found similar results but concluded that the differences were small and that children's family and child care experiences should be more of a determinant on kindergarten readiness than age alone.

While research has shown some benefits to delaying a child's entry into kindergarten based on their performance in the primary grades, other studies have shown that those benefits do not seem to continue as students enter the third grade and beyond (Stipek, 2002; Graue & DiPerna, 2000; DeMeis & Stearns, 1992). In a study comparing reading achievement in third graders who were held back a year in kindergarten as opposed to that of third graders who were promoted through, it was found that the scores of both groups were indistinguishable from each other (Graue & DiPerna, 2000). Their research suggests that any academic benefit of redshirting students disappears by the time a child reaches the upper primary grades.

Research has also shown other detrimental effects caused by the practice. Students who are aware of the delay of their school entry have shown reduced self-efficacy and worry that they have failed in some way (Graue, 1993). Behavioral difficulties in adolescence have been shown to be higher in students who have been delayed in entering school (Cromwell, 2005; Marshall, 2003; Byrd, Weitzman & Auinger, 1997). Because many of these consequences become apparent in redshirted children many years after the decision has been made by their parents, a concern amongst educators and researchers exists as to the long term value of this intervention approach by parents.

Despite the existence of numerous research studies on the academic and social effects of delaying entry into kindergarten, only a few studies have been conducted to determine the parents' reasons for delaying entry for their children. Those that have been done generally consider the opinions of only one parent (Noel & Newman, 2003) or subgroups of parents, those who are also educators or affluent parents (Chance, 2000), rather than obtaining information from a variety of parents who are making such decisions.

In this study, a survey was administered to parents to gain further understanding of the reasons parents choose to delay their children's entry into kindergarten. This study aimed to answer the following questions: (1) Why do parents choose to delay their child's entry into kindergarten?; and (2) What are the perceptions of kindergarten teachers on the practice of redshirting kindergarteners?

METHOD

Participants

The participants of this study were parents and teachers of kindergartners from a district in the Midwestern United States. Socioeconomically, the population of the district's students ranges from lower to upper class with a low income rate of 22%. There are also numerous ethnicities represented, including Caucasian (76%), African American (13%), Asian American (4%), Hispanic (4%), and Middle Eastern (<1%). Although the majority of the students within the district are Caucasian, the diversity of its students is representative of the population in which it serves.

A total of 161 parent surveys were mailed and 84 were returned. Of the 84 parent surveys returned, 63 were completed by parents who had redshirted their child in kindergarten. Only these surveys were used in this study. A total of 41 surveys were distributed to the kindergarten teachers in the district. 24 surveys were returned and used in this study.

Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the items for rating the instrument. Based on standardized items, the questions in the instrument had a reliability coefficient of .712.

Data collection

Two 6-Point Likert scale surveys were created specifically for this study and were influenced by parental perspectives on redshirting as described in previous research studies (Chance, 2000; Noel & Newman, 2003). The parent survey asked parents to rank their opinion on reasons to delay kindergarten entry specifically as it applied to their own child's entry for his/her kindergarten year. It also asked them to provide demographic data. The teacher survey asked teachers to rank their opinion based on their professional viewpoint about delaying kindergarten entry. A space for additional comments followed each survey item, while a larger writing space was included at the end of the questionnaire to solicit more open-ended or elaborate responses to the survey items.

RESULTS

Child demographic data

The child demographic section of the parent survey provides valuable insight into the children who are referred to in this study. In regards to the gender of the child who was redshirted, the majority (71.4%) were male. Females represented 28.6% of the redshirted students. These findings are consistent with a report published by the National Center for Education Statistics (West, Meek & Hurst, 2000). The National Household Education Survey discussed in this report was sent to families nationwide in 1993 and 1995. It found that in 1993, 10% of boys experienced delayed kindergarten entry, while the same was true for only 7% of the girls. Two years later in 1995, the statistics changed slightly with 11% of boys being redshirted as compared to 6% of girls (2000, p. 3). This data implies that parents perceive their female children to show more of the qualities of 'readiness' to begin kindergarten on time than their male counterparts.

Another notable survey response is that all redshirted children had a birth month of March through September, with 82.5% falling in the summer (June, July and August) months. This data implies that had these children been enrolled into kindergarten 'on time', they would have been among the youngest students in their kindergarten classes. The possibility of these children having been the youngest in the previous year's kindergarten class is relative to the September 1st enrollment cutoff date established by the school district.

Parents' rationale responses

The second section of the parent survey asked parents to rank a list of 28 possible reasons for delaying a child's entry into kindergarten on a 6 point Likert Scale. Parents were asked to evaluate each statement and determine how influential each factor was in their decision to redshirt their child.

The responses to the survey items, while quite varied in some areas, did show some commonalities among parents. Table 1 lists a brief description of each of the 28 statements from the survey, and the mean score associated with that statement. A high mean (near 6.0) represents a strong agreement with a statement by parents, while a low mean (near 1.0) shows a deep disagreement. Statements are listed in order of ascending means, not the order as they appeared in the survey. Included in these findings are significant details on what parents felt were important in their decision making and what they considered unimportant or irrelevant. While a discussion on each of the survey items would be of interest, only the three items considered most important and least important by parents will be discussed.

TABLE 1
PARENT SURVEY RESPONSE—MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATION

Survey Items	Mean (SD)
Problematic experiences in preschool/daycare	1.48 (1.09)
Slower physical development	1.60 (1.15)
Recommendation by a kindergarten teacher	1.72 (1.28)
Avoid possible retention in the future	1.92 (1.49)
Classroom rules in kindergarten	1.94 (1.41)
Physical size of the child	2.05 (1.58)
Athletic advantage in junior or senior high	2.19 (1.49)
Slower academic development	2.32 (1.66)
Child expressed no interest in kindergarten	2.33 (1.74)
High student/teacher ratio in kindergarten	2.35 (1.61)
Professional research studies consulted	2.48 (1.64)
Recommendation by a preschool teacher	2.66 (1.83)
Recommendation by another parent	2.72 (1.87)
Academic advantage in kindergarten	2.87 (1.65)
Academic expectations in kindergarten	2.90 (2.04)
Academic advantage in elementary school	2.95 (1.78)
Academic advantage in junior or senior high	2.95 (1.79)
Child seemed immature	3.00 (1.70)
Desire for child to be a leader among peers	3.44 (1.82)
Child not emotionally ready for kindergarten	3.44 (1.93)
Desire for child to fit in or be equal to peers	3.44 (1.94)
Child not ready for a full day	3.50 (2.01)
Recommendation by another person (not teacher or parent)	3.70 (1.98)
Opportunity to gain more social skills before kindergarten	3.74 (1.90)
Delay was successful for child's siblings	3.75 (2.27)
Protect child from struggling academically	3.81 (1.99)
Child's birth date relative to September 1 st cutoff date	4.59 (1.86)
Increase child's self-confidence	4.65 (1.54)

The three most significant reasons for parents, who made the decision to delay their child's kindergarten entry, as measured by the highest means, were 'to protect my child from struggling academically', 'the child's birth date relative to the September 1st cutoff date' and 'to increase my child's self-confidence'. In their own way, each of these concerns is related to helping a child fit in academically and socially.

In wanting to keep their child from being too challenged by academics, parents showed concern for not wanting their child to be 'behind' or 'slow' in the subject areas of learning. This is a concern for many parents of school age children, as a stigma exists among those who are slow to learn new things compared to their peers. While this seems to be a fear for most parents, those who choose to delay their child's entry into kindergarten based on this concern are doing so with the expectation that an extra year of life experience will benefit the child academically. Simply being another year older than their peers may not achieve that result. However, academic benefits do become possible when coupled with attendance in a preschool facility with a pre-kindergarten curriculum in the year before kindergarten. This survey item with a mean of 3.81 was ranked higher than the item assessing the parents desire to provide their child with an academic advantage

over their peers while in kindergarten (mean of 2.87).

Another survey item that received a strong approval response from parents (mean of 4.59) concerned the child's birth date as it compared to the kindergarten cutoff date of September 1st. This survey result is backed up by the data presented earlier concerning the birth months of the children involved in the study. All of the students had a birthday in the months between March and September, which would put them in the latter half of their classmates in terms of age had they entered school 'on time'. The data shows that at either this point in their child's lives or later on as they enter high school or college, parents are concerned with their child being among the youngest in the class. Children who have birthdates near the cutoff date for kindergarten eligibility will achieve milestones after a majority of their classmates. Age may also be considered by parents to be a contributing factor to maturity, a lack of which would cause problems in school, both academically and behaviorally.

The leading reason for delaying a child's kindergarten enrollment for the parents in this study was to help increase a child's self confidence. This item earned a mean ranking of 4.65 on the survey instrument. It is apparent that the importance of having a confident child at the onset of their child's educational career is a high priority for parents. While it is unclear exactly how parents correlate waiting an extra year for kindergarten enrollment to a boost in self-confidence, it is likely they feel the self confidence of their child will be enhanced by an extra year to learn and mature.

Conversely, there were survey items which parents ranked low with strong disagreement. The three survey items with highest disagreement, as ranked by lowest means, are problematic experiences of the child in preschool or daycare, slower physical development of the child and delay recommendation by a kindergarten teacher. These items represent the topics that were the least influential in the decision to redshirt by the parent participants.

The fact that the survey item concerning problematic experiences of the child in preschool or daycare had the lowest mean of 1.48 could be interpreted two different ways. Parents may have ranked this survey item with a 'disagree' rating because their child did not have any negative experiences which caused concern for kindergarten 'readiness' in preschool or day care. Alternatively, parents may have felt that the negative experiences their child encountered in preschool were not serious enough to influence their decision to redshirt their child. Either way, it can be interpreted from the data that most parent participants did not feel that negative experiences in preschool would influence their child's success in kindergarten.

The survey item referencing the physical development of the child was ranked low by parents, with a mean of 1.60. This statement was intended to include both children with physical disabilities as well as children who were slower than their peers in developing their gross motor and fine motor skills. According to the survey results, parents do not relate their child's success in kindergarten with mastery of these kinesthetic abilities. It is possible that parents do not have an extensive knowledge of the types of gross and fine motor skills expected of the average five to six year old child and how those skills are all related to a successful kindergarten year.

A recommendation by a kindergarten teacher to delay their child's kindergarten entry was also an area in which parents did not highly consider in their decision making. This survey item earned a mean rating of 1.72 by parents. Although the reason that parents were not likely to seek a recommendation was not given; there are a few possibilities. It is likely that parents may not have personally or professionally known a kindergarten teacher whom they felt could give them a thorough recommendation. This could be especially true for the parents whose first child was the one being redshirted, who represent 36.5% of the survey participants. Parents of redshirted child with older siblings would have at the very least known the kindergarten teacher of their older child whom they could ask for a recommendation if they felt comfortable. School districts might seek to change this by offering the opportunity for parents to speak with kindergarten teachers about their

questions or concerns during kindergarten registration, typically held in the spring prior to kindergarten enrollment. Another possibility is that parents did not feel a kindergarten teacher would be able to give them a complete recommendation without knowing the child themselves or that the kindergarten teacher might not offer an honest assessment of the child's potential success in kindergarten. Either way, the opinions and recommendations of kindergarten teachers were not valued and sought out by a majority of the parent participants.

This does not mean that parents did not seek feedback concerning kindergarten delay from others. The survey instrument asked parents to assess whether or not they considered recommendations from a variety of individuals, including preschool teachers and parents of other children they knew. These survey items had a mean of 2.66 for preschool teacher recommendations and 2.72 for other parents. While still not high, they do seem to hold more value for parents than recommendations from a kindergarten teacher as discussed previously. The highest scoring item assessing the parents' tendency to seek out recommendations from other persons (not teachers or other parents) earned a mean of 3.70. The data implies that parents will occasionally seek recommendations from people that they know, but likely not those who are teachers or other parents. Of the parents who elaborated on their survey to define who this 'other' person was, the most common response was another family member such as a grandparent or aunt/uncle of the child. In seeking input concerning educational decisions for their child, the parent participants seemed to put the greatest influence in the recommendations from the people closest to them who knew their child the best.

An alternative source of information for parents, published research studies or articles on kindergarten redshirting, was also included on the survey instrument. Parents disagreed with the survey item asking if research studies on delaying kindergarten entry were a part of making the decision to redshirt their child with a mean of 2.48. The parents who participated in this study seem to be generally unconcerned with research study findings on the topic.

Teachers' rationale responses

The responses to teachers on the 15 redshirting rationale questions are provided in Table 2. The three scores with the highest means on the survey instrument are for the items, 'Not emotionally ready for kindergarten', 'Child acts immature for his/her age' and 'Delay recommended by his/her preschool teacher'. Two out of the three listed here relate to the overall maturity level of the child. A student who has temper tantrums or does not act in a mature manner tends to stand out from his or her classmates and can be inclined to have trouble with making friends, following classroom rules and playing appropriately. For these reasons, it is not surprising the teachers gave this survey item related to a child's immaturity a mean score of 4.63 (SD=1.14). A related survey item concerning the emotional readiness of a child earned a mean of 4.58 (SD=1.14). The most significant factor, according to teachers, in determining if a child should wait for entry into kindergarten was a recommendation to delay from a preschool teacher. This survey item received a mean score of 5.21 (SD=0.83), showing strong agreement from most teachers.

TABLE 2
TEACHER SURVEY RESPONSE—MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATION

Survey Items	Mean (SD)
Equal academic development to peers	1.96 (1.12)
Physical size of child	2.42 (1.38)
Low self-confidence of child	2.83 (1.37)
No expressed interest in kindergarten	3.00 (1.45)
Poor family history in kindergarten	3.29 (1.73)
Slower physical development than peers	3.71 (1.12)
Demands more attention than reasonable	3.79 (1.35)
Birth date of child relative to September 1 st cut off date	3.83 (1.27)
Health issues of child that might affect academics	3.88 (1.36)
Problematic experiences in preschool	4.08 (1.47)
Slower academic development than peers	4.13 (1.33)
To avoid possible retention	4.48 (1.53)
Not emotionally ready for kindergarten	4.58 (1.14)
Child acts immature for age	4.63 (1.14)
Delay recommended by preschool teacher	5.21 (0.83)

The results also illustrate a few reasons why most teachers would not support redshirting a child. These items earned low mean scores on the survey instrument. They include ‘Child has an equal academic development to peers’ (M=1.96, SD=1.12) and ‘Low self-confidence of the child’ (M=2.83, SD=1.37). According to the teacher participants, these factors do not seem to hinder a child’s academic development in kindergarten and readiness to learn.

Another survey item which received a low mean score related to the self-confidence of the child. Teachers in this survey felt that holding back a child’s school enrollment simply because the child has low confidence in his/her abilities was not reasonable. The teachers in this survey felt that delaying a child’s kindergarten year in order to help boost a child’s self-confidence is not wise, possibly because it would simply be postponing the natural promotion of self-confidence most children experience during their kindergarten year.

Comparison of parent and teacher survey responses

Comparing the responses of the parent and teacher surveys reveals some insight about how the two groups view the benefits of redshirting differently. Many of the opinion related items on the teacher survey corresponded with a similarly worded question on the parent survey to allow for comparisons to be made between the two groups. A comparison of the mean responses for twelve of the survey item is listed in Table 3. Surprisingly, a comparison of the parent and teacher survey results showed very different opinions on reasons for redshirting a child. As illustrated in Table 3, there are some survey items in which the parent participants rated an item significantly lower than the teacher participants. Those with a significant difference (greater than 2.0 difference in the mean) include ‘problems in preschool or daycare’, ‘slower physical development’, ‘to avoid possible retention’, and ‘recommendation by a preschool teacher’. In each of these cases, the parents rated the item in the disagree range on the survey (mean of 1–3.5), while the teachers agreed with the same statements (mean of 3.5–6) on their survey.

TABLE 3
COMPARISON OF MEAN RESPONSE SCORES OF SIMILAR SURVEY ITEMS FOR
PARENTS AND TEACHER SURVEYS

	Parent Mean	Teacher Mean
Problems in preschool or daycare	1.48	4.08
Slower physical development	1.60	3.71
To avoid possible retention	1.92	4.48
Physical size of child	2.05	2.42
Slower academic development	2.32	4.13
Child expressed no interest	2.33	3.00
High student/teacher ratio in kindergarten	2.35	3.79
Recommendation by preschool teacher	2.66	5.21
Child acts immature for age	3.00	4.63
Child not emotionally ready	3.44	4.58
Child's birth date relative to Sept. 1 st cut off	4.59	3.83
Increase in self-confidence	4.65	2.83

Two of these survey items relate to performance or behavioral issues in preschool. Due to the wide variance in scores for these two survey items between the teachers and the parents, the possibility exists that they view preschool and its importance to future education for the child differently. Based on their responses to the survey, the parents seem to feel that any problems their child may have had in preschool would most likely not be a hindrance to the child at the kindergarten level. Fifty-five of the parent participants chose to send their child to preschool before entering kindergarten, so the majority of these parents must have seen value in participating in a preschool program. However, some parents may feel that preschool is more of a 'play' rather than 'educational' environment for their child thus making it less comparable to kindergarten. Teachers, on the other hand, rated these as strong reasons to consider redshirting a child. These teachers seem to put a lot of trust into the opinions of preschool professionals and the value of the skills they teach to young children. Areas of concern at the preschool level are likely to continue to be problems for the child in kindergarten, thus becoming an issue to resolve for the kindergarten teacher. The participating teachers seem to value allowing another year to mature and grow as an intervention to solve many of the preschool challenges some children face.

Some caution does need to be given to the parent survey results regarding preschool issues. It is possible that parents rated the survey items that are related to preschool in the disagree range because they may not have had negative experiences with their child to report. Due to the fact that eight parents (12.7%) who participated chose not to send their child to preschool prior to entering kindergarten, these survey items would not have been a consideration in their decision, thus possibly convincing them to mark the survey item in the disagree range. Although the differences in mean values between parents and teachers are intriguing, they do need to be considered provisional.

Another survey item which earned very differing mean scores between the parent and teacher groups involved using delayed kindergarten entry as a method of keeping a child from being retained in a grade. The parents seem to be generally unconcerned with the issue of retention, giving it a mean rating of 1.92. This is surprising because another survey item, 'to protect my child from struggling academically' earned a mean score of 3.81. If the parents were moderately concerned about their child's ability to keep up with the academics expected in kindergarten, why would they not be concerned about the possibility of retention to help children get another year to

fully grasp important academic skills for that grade level? It is possible that parents were so confident that using redshirting to help their child 'catch up' academically with their peers would be successful that they believed later retention would not be necessary. Another possibility is that parents, especially ones who have their oldest child entering kindergarten, do not feel knowledgeable about grade level retention and the circumstances in which it is utilized. Many parents may comprehend the challenges involved in a child's struggling with academics in school, but few seem to have considered repeating a grade as the possible result.

Teachers agreed with using delayed kindergarten entry as a method of preventing retention much more strongly with a mean of 4.48. It is possible that these teachers feel it is better for the parents to intentionally 'retain' children before they enter kindergarten than it is for the teacher to recommend retention for a child who has not been successful with grade level expectations. With recent No Child Left Behind (2001) legislation, teachers and schools are being held more accountable for their students' knowledge of the content. While students are not subject to standardized testing at the kindergarten level, the teachers still feel the pressure of ensuring their students have the knowledge they need to meet the expectations set forth by this legislation. This pressure might be lessened somewhat when parents elect to delay their child's entry into kindergarten on the basis of trying to prevent grade level retention. By their responses, teachers in this survey have shown they would prefer to not retain a child if the opportunity exists for redshirting as an alternative.

Parents evaluated only two of the comparable survey responses higher than the group of teachers. These two criteria where the parents felt more strongly in favor of redshirting than teachers were 'birth date of the child relative to the September 1st cutoff date' and 'increase in self-confidence'. The act of redshirting a child based on his or her birth date was rated as 4.59 for parents versus 3.83 for teachers. Although teachers did not disagree with this statement, they showed only a moderate agreement with using a child's birth date as an important consideration in redshirting (using 3.5 as a mean midpoint). The issue of increasing a child's self confidence by redshirting was given a mean of 4.65 by parents versus a 2.83 from teachers. The difference in scores for this survey item are intriguing, because the highest ranking survey item from the perspective of the parents is actually given a disagree response from the teachers. While it is certain that teachers want their students to have high levels of confidence in themselves and their abilities, they do not feel that delaying a child's entry into kindergarten is an effective means of accomplishing this goal based on their responses.

Parents may have selected these two items to be strong determining factors in their child's educational decision to redshirt because the child's birth date and self-confidence are issues that are more tangible to parents and easier to understand how they can be affected in the classroom. These are both non-academic factors about which the parents may feel they have more control. Many parents commented on the survey that they did not want their child to be the youngest in the class or that they wanted their child to be a confident kindergartener. These social considerations for kindergarten entry are going to be much stronger for the parents than for teachers because of their relationships with the children involved. Teachers, because they are not as emotionally tied to the decision and more educated on kindergarten expectations, can more easily make recommendations on kindergarten entry based on academic or maturation considerations. Evaluation from each of these perspectives is likely to contribute to the different opinions that parents and teachers provided in the survey.

DISCUSSION

The research findings on parent's rationale for redshirting are comparable to the findings of other studies previously discussed. The results of this study suggest that parents are most likely to consider social or emotional reasons when electing to redshirt. This finding is corroborated by previous research (Getty, 2002) that found parents to rely heavily on social development factors when selecting to redshirt their children. Social skills were rated very high by parents, who considered these factors to be even more important than academic skills for kindergarten success. Getty also suggests that an outdated view of kindergarten by parents might be a significant reason for these results. A study by Chance (2000) determined that parents put high importance on their child gaining self-confidence and increasing their academic knowledge to keep from struggling in kindergarten. This finding also concurs with the results of this study. Noel and Newman (2003) found that parents equate being younger to struggling in school and having a lower self confidence, further supporting this general theme.

While other factors for opting to redshirt vary, most of the responses from this study and numerous other studies found that parents are greatly concerned with their child struggling academically and suffering from low self-confidence if entering kindergarten on-time. Parents use redshirting as a strategy to further develop these two areas prior to enrolling their child in school. Teachers and schools need to find ways to accommodate these concerns by reaching out to parents to help alleviate their fears of struggling and poor self-confidence for their child in the school setting. Alternatively, parents need to seek out opportunities to learn more about current kindergarten academic and social expectations in order to help prepare their child to be more successful.

The greatest benefit for the children involved might be to have parents and teachers work together to assist parents in making their decision whether or not to delay kindergarten. Since teachers in this study viewed redshirting as a possible way to limit retention in later grades, it is very likely that teachers would see the benefit of this as well. This assistance can be accomplished in numerous ways. At kindergarten registration in the spring, where parents come to register their pre-kindergarten child for enrollment into school the following year, the kindergarten teaching staff of the school can be made available to answer questions. Responding to questions, specifically those related to more emotional issues of entering kindergarten, would assist parents who are still unsure if they will be enrolling their child for the upcoming year or not. A presentation including a video of kindergarteners in action should be included to allow parents to visualize what the 'typical' kindergarten child is capable of and expected to do in the classroom setting. Many parents understand their child well, but lack exposure to their child's peers, which would allow them to see what other children the same age are feeling and accomplishing. Such a video could allow parents to broaden their perspectives and consider more variables when making such a decision.

In order to promote meetings between teachers and parents who may not attend a kindergarten registration, preschool directors should invite kindergarten teacher representatives to come to their school for a meeting with parents in the spring. The meeting could follow some of the same designs as the kindergarten registration described earlier, including a question and answer session and video presentation. Creating these connections for parents and teachers to meet and discuss the academic future of the child can only be helpful to parents in this situation.

Further, the school district should also get involved by providing documentation for parents to access online through the district's webpage about delayed kindergarten entry. The results of the parent survey showed that parents are unlikely to seek out research articles to see what studies have found on the effects of redshirting. This is not surprising, as professional research articles are not necessarily easy to find for persons not affiliated with educational institutions. Some parents

may simply not know where to look or what sources to trust. The district should assist parents in this area by providing a few research articles for parents to access online concerning redshirting's academic and social effects. Research provided on the website should include multiple perspectives for parents to review. Studies finding negative effects and others showing more positive effects of redshirting should be included to not represent a preference from the district one way or the other. Districts could go so far as to create pamphlets of information put forth from the studies to summarize their results and make it more understandable for all parents rather than just those familiar with educational issues or jargon. Making it easier for parents to consider more technical or academic perspectives of delayed kindergarten entry will help prepare them better to make the decision and bolster a more cooperative partnership between the parents and the school district in the interest of the child.

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