



SAINT JOSEPH SCHOOL WAKEFIELD

A 21st Century Learning Community Based on Timeless Catholic Values

The Myth of Redshirting

Each year, parents agonize over the decision whether to delay formal schooling in Preschool or Kindergarten for an extra year. Parents often believe that age is a deciding factor in academic and social success over the years of schooling, especially for boys. This belief is based on the college practice of holding athletes out of competition for a year to allow skills and physical development which will make them more competitive and successful. This practice is called redshirting. In college athletics, redshirting has had some success; however, in academics, it has not translated to success at any level, particularly in the beginning. National research has clearly demonstrated that delaying a child's formal schooling is a permanent disadvantage for the child. Loss of motivation over the years, behavior issues among many compounded by age changes. Despite the overwhelming evidence, parents' consideration of redshirting is a popular discussion.

Twenty-five years ago, Kindergarten was a child's introduction to formal schooling outside the home. In Kindergarten, children learned sharing, routines, work habits, and teamwork - the basics of success in school. Since then, a seismic shift at the beginning of school has occurred. The era of two working parents has become the norm and extended families are no longer close by to help raise children. As a consequence, many children are entering formal school at 2.9 years of age, after nearly 3 years of daycare. By the time a child becomes age appropriate for Kindergarten, he or she may have been in some form of organized schooling for at least two years. They have learned school routines, their colors, and letters, gross and fine motor skills, to share, to make friends, along with other academic and social skills. These skills traditionally learned in Kindergarten are well established by age 5. Age is no longer a factor, the real determinant is readiness.

As a result, the emphasis of 21st Century Kindergarten has shifted to cognitive development, curiosity, imagination, self-reliance, and social learning; the infrastructure of learning has already taken root. The belief that redshirting will improve academic and competitiveness is a myth. Readiness for learning, not age is the real determining factor. In short, keeping a child out of school based on age does not provide any advantage, rather it proves to be a disadvantage, both academically and socially.

At Saint Joseph School our recommendation is that children aged 5 by September 1 are generally ready to start Kindergarten, but only parents can fully judge their readiness.