



JANET BARRESI
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
STATE OF OKLAHOMA

SUCCESSSES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

- Oklahoma is a national leader in early childhood education. Other states look to us for guidance in their programs.
- Since the 2007-2008 school year, Oklahoma has seen tremendous growth in full-day Kindergarten and Pre-Kindergarten for four year olds.
 - Parents across the state are taking advantage of enrollment availability.
 - For school year 2010-2011, full day Kindergarten was at 93% total enrollment even though it was voluntary on the part of parents.
 - 503 of 529 districts have only full-day Kindergarten.
- Pre-Kindergarten enrollment continues to grow although enrollment is VOLUNTARY for parents and for districts.
 - From the growth in the program over the past four years, it is clear that both parents and districts value the program's opportunities.
 - For school year 2010-2011, the Pre-Kindergarten enrollment of 38,441 is 74% of Kindergarten enrollment and a good approximation of all four year olds reached.
 - 70% of children enrolled in Pre-Kindergarten are in a full day program.
 - During the past three years, overall enrollment and the number of full day Pre-Kindergarten programs have grown tremendously.
 - The growth in Pre-Kindergarten programs will continue to grow. Oklahoma City Public Schools alone has committed to add 120 classrooms over the next four years.
- The vast growth in early childhood programs in recent years indicates that parents are in favor and supportive of their children being involved.

School Year	Kindergarten Enrollment	Full-Day Kindergarten Enrollment	Pre-Kindergarten Enrollment/ % Kindergarten	Full-Day Pre-Kindergarten Enrollment
2010-2011	52,112	48,259 (93%)	38,441 / 74%	23,767 (70%)
2009-2010	51,026	46,943 (92%)	37,369 / 73%	21,420 (57%)
2008-2009	50,491	43,436 (86%)	36,027 / 71%	19,753 (55%)
2007-2008	49,298	39,819 (81%)	35,242 / 72%	17,918 (51%)

*School year data from the yearly October School Census counts.

COHORT AT RISK

- The birth rate for July and August – both months with 31 days – has been averaging 17.8% of total births in the state.
 - With the recent Kindergarten enrollment of approximately 52,000, this would slow down schooling for over 9,200 students.
 - Those 9,200 students will not be missing just two months but rather an entire year.
- A majority of Oklahoma's young children live in low-income situations and many are at risk from other factors that may adversely impact their early development.
- The birth cohort size has been averaging 53.4 per year for the last three years.

Low-Income:

- Over 60% of births are paid for by Medicaid.
- Over 40% of births are to unwed mothers.
- 54.6% of children under the age of 6 reside in a household with income <200% Federal Poverty Level (FPL = family of 4 at \$46,000/year).

Teenage Mothers

- Oklahoma is generally ranked in the top 5-6 states for both:
 - Teen birth rate, and
 - Percentage of all births to teens.

Maternal Education

- Maternal education is generally considered by experts to be an important factor.
 - In Oklahoma, about 22% of recent births are to non high school graduates.
 - And, 60% of all births are to mothers with their highest education being 12th grade.
- In 1997, Oklahoma passed sweeping welfare reform. Since that time, the state has seen a 92% reduction in women on welfare in the state.
 - This number proves that mothers today are choosing to enter the workforce and finding alternative options for their children.

AROUND THE COUNTRY

- Forty-one states have September 1st or later as the cut-off date for children to turn five. Six states have cut-offs prior to September 1st:

Alaska – August 15th

Delaware – August 31st

Indiana – July 1st

Kansas – August 31st

Missouri – August 1st

Washington – August 31st

- Three states allow for the local education agency to decide (New York, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania).
- Moving the date to June or July 1st would make Oklahoma the outlier in the region.

Kindergarten cut-off dates by state

Alabama	September 1	South Dakota	September 1
Alaska	August 15	Tennessee	September 30
Arizona	September 1	Texas	September 1
Arkansas	September 15	Utah	September 2
California	December 2	Vermont	January 1
Colorado	September 15	Virginia	September 30
Connecticut	January 1	Washington	August 31
Delaware	August 31	West Virginia	September 1
Florida	September 1	Wisconsin	September 1
Georgia	September 1	Wyoming	September 15
Hawaii	December 31		
Idaho	September 1		
Illinois	September 1		
Indiana	July 1		
Iowa	September 15		
Kansas	August 31		
Kentucky	October 1		
Louisiana	September 30		
Maine	October 15		
Maryland	November 30		
Massachusetts	Local Education Agency option		
Michigan	December 1		
Minnesota	September 1		
Mississippi	September 1		
Missouri	August 1		
Montana	September 10		
Nebraska	October 15		
Nevada	September 30		
New Hampshire	September 30		
New Jersey	November 30		
New Mexico	September 1		
New York	Local Education Agency option		
North Carolina	October 16		
North Dakota	September 1		
Ohio	September 30		
Oklahoma	September 1		
Oregon	September 1		
Pennsylvania	Local Education Agency option		
Rhode Island	September 1		
South Carolina	September 1		

Kindergarten (K) and Pre Kindergarten (PreK) Data for Selected Districts and Counties

	<u>K#</u> <u>Enrollment</u>	<u>PreK #/% of K</u>	<u>PreK Full</u> <u>Day#/%</u>	<u>Lunch</u> <u>Assistance</u>	<u>% 1st-3rd</u> <u>Receiving</u> <u>Reading</u> <u>Remediation</u>	<u>% 3rd Graders</u> <u>Reading</u> <u>Unsatisfactory</u>
STATE WIDE	52,112	38,441/74%	70%	59%	34%	26%
Duncan PS	307	269/88%	81%	58%	41%	32%
Stephens CO	651	544/84%	75%	54%	32%	26%
Lawton PS	1,324	917/69%	53%	58%	38%	27%
Comanche CO	1,818	1,344/74%	60%	55%	33%	26%
Goodwell PS	12	14/117%	0%	40%	21%	NA
Texas Co	332	238/72%	14%	62%	32%	27%
Porum PS	44	48/100%	100%	76%	35%	28%
Muskogee CO	1,087	805/74%	93%	65%	29%	29%
Morrison PS	43	33/75%	100%	59%	44%	24%
Noble CO	158	158/100%	37%	58%	43%	34%
McAlester PS	232	198/85%	100%	64%	36%	28%
Pittsburg CO	592	512/86%	37%	68%	31%	31%
Grove PS	171	181/106%	100%	60%	33%	13%
Delaware CO	509	456/90%	98%	70%	29%	24%
Marlow PS	109	85/78%	0%	49%	17%	13%
Stephens CO	651	544/84%	84%	54%	32%	26%
Jenks PS	724	492/68%	47%	26%	24%	21%
Tulsa CO	9,340	6,267/66%	70%	54%	39%	24%
Putnam City PS	1,505	996/66%	34%	66%	64%	30%
Oklahoma CO	10,023	6,313/63%	18%	61%	42%	26%
Tulsa PS	3,868	3,055/79%	100%	83%	52%	33%
Tulsa CO	9,340	6,267/66%	70%	54%	39%	24%
OKC PS	4,118	2,502/61%	16%	84%	48%	35%
Oklahoma CO	10,023	6,313/63%	18%	61%	42%	26%
Sand Springs PS	340	247/73%	99%	65%	32%	18%
Tulsa CO	9,340	6,267/66%	70%	54%	39%	24%
Ardmore PS	263	229/87%	100%	81%	46%	30%
Carter CO	717	594/83%	100%	65%	33%	29%
Durant PS	310	266/86%	100%	64%	16%	20%
Bryan CO	597	548/92%	100%	69%	22%	23%
Norman PS	1,149	757/66%	2%	42%	30%	18%
Cleveland CO	3,182	1,914/60%	9%	43%	28%	18%
Kansas PS	65	68/105%	100%	74%	8%	36%
Delaware CO	509	456/90%	98%	70%	29%	24%

Sam Wang is an associate professor of molecular biology and neuroscience at Princeton. Sandra Aamodt is a former editor in chief of Nature Neuroscience. They are the authors of “Welcome to Your Child’s Brain: How the Mind Grows From Conception to College.”

Room For Debate: Who’s Ready for Kindergarten?

THIS fall, one in 11 kindergarten-age children in the United States will not be going to class. Parents of these children often delay school entry in an attempt to give them a leg up on peers, but this strategy is likely to be counterproductive.

The practice, called redshirting — from the term for allowing college athletes to delay participation in sports to prolong their eligibility — also has a connection to children’s sports. As sports-minded parents know, physical maturity allows older children to perform better. Coaches often mistake this difference for natural aptitude and respond by giving the older children on their T-ball or soccer teams more opportunities to improve their skills. And those athletes tend to gain a lasting competitive advantage. Does a similar approach work for academic achievement?

Teachers may encourage redshirting because more mature children are easier to handle in the classroom and initially produce better test scores than their younger classmates. In a class of 25, the average difference is equivalent to going from 13th place to 11th. This advantage fades by the end of elementary school, though, and disadvantages start to accumulate. In high school, redshirted children are less motivated and perform less well. By adulthood, they are no better off in wages or educational attainment — in fact, their lifetime earnings are reduced by one year.

In short, the analogy to athletics does not hold. The question we should ask instead is: What approach gives children the greatest opportunity to learn?

Parents who want to give their young children an academic advantage have a powerful tool: school itself. In a large-scale study at 26 Canadian elementary schools, first graders who were young for their year made considerably more progress in reading and math than kindergartners who were old for their year (but just two months younger). In another large study, the youngest fifth-graders scored a little lower than their classmates, but five points higher in verbal I.Q., on average, than fourth-graders of the same age. In other words, school makes children smarter.

The benefits of being younger are even greater for those who skip a grade, an option available to many high-achieving children. Compared with nonskippers of similar talent and motivation, these youngsters pursue advanced degrees and enter professional school more often. Acceleration is a powerful intervention, with effects on achievement that are twice as large as programs for the gifted. Grade-skippers even report more positive social and emotional feelings.

These differences may come from the increased challenges of a demanding environment. Learning is maximized not by getting all the answers right, but by making errors and correcting them quickly. In this respect, children benefit from being close to the limits of their ability. Too low an error rate becomes boring, while too high an error rate is unrewarding. A delay in school entry may therefore still be justified if children are very far behind their peers, leaving a gap too broad for school to allow effective learning.

Parents want to provide the best environment for their child, but delaying school is rarely the right approach. The first six years of life are a time of tremendous growth and change in the developing brain. Synapses, the connections between brain cells, are undergoing major reorganization. Indeed, a 4-year-old's brain uses more energy than it ever will again. Brain development cannot be put on pause, so the critical question is how to provide the best possible context to support it.

For most children, that context is the classroom. Disadvantaged children have the most to lose from delayed access to school. For low-income children, every month of additional schooling closes one-tenth of the gap between them and more advantaged students. Even without redshirting, a national trend is afoot to move back the cutoff birthdays for the start of school. Since the early 1970s, the date has shifted by an average of six weeks, to about Oct. 14 from about Nov. 25. This has the effect of making children who would have been the youngest in one grade the oldest in the next-lower grade; it hurts children from low-income families the most.

Some children, especially boys, are slow to mature emotionally, a process that may be aided by the presence of older children. Kindergartners show age-related differences in social acceptance and self-perceptions, but these differences usually even out by first grade. The benefits of interacting with older children may extend to empathetic abilities. Empathy requires the ability to reason about the beliefs of others. This capacity relies on brain maturation, but it is also influenced by interactions with other children. Having an older (but not younger) sibling speeds the onset of this capacity in 3- to 5-year-olds. The acceleration is large: up to half a year per sibling. Although nearly all children reach a mature level of understanding by age 6, there may be lasting social advantages to developing this ability earlier. Parents concerned about a child's emotional maturity might consider that frequent interaction with more mature classmates could help the developmental process along.

The initial redshirt advantage may disappear because children are not on a fixed trajectory but learn actively from teachers — and classmates. It matters very much who a child's peers are. Redshirted children begin school with others who are a little further behind them. Because learning is social, the real winners in that situation are their classmates.

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