

## JACK'S CORNER

**QUESTION:** I was distressed to learn that my son's preschool teacher recommended he attend a Jr. kindergarten program instead of going right into a kindergarten class. I'm worried this will damage his self-image. What should I do?

**ANSWER:** If a child is to be held back, NOW is the time to do it. Research shows that most damage to a child's self-esteem occurs when the child is held back later in his school career. I have never heard parents say they were sorry that they held their child back at the beginning of his school career, but I have heard many sad stories from parents who wished they would have held their child back when s/he was young. This decision is rarely easy for parents, because it has a lot to do with their self-esteem. **Please don't force your child academically, socially and extracurricularly just because you need to feel good about your parenting or can't handle a child who is struggling a little.**

Consider the following:

1. Research shows that older children (those with early birthdays) tend to do better academically, socially, and emotionally. This is especially true of boys where size, power, and coordination are major factors in peer relationships.
2. Research shows that the older children in a classroom tend to make more mature and wiser choices. Generally, they are better at thinking for themselves and not as influenced by peer pressure.
3. Generally, these children tend to become the leaders in the classroom.
4. Generally, when children who have late birthdays are allowed to wait another year, or enter a "Jr. K" grade, they often "shine" emotionally, socially, and academically— whereas, if they enter kindergarten as one of the very youngest, they often struggle just to maintain with their peers.

5. Generally, at this age, an additional year of physical growth makes a **big** difference in a child's confidence, coordination, verbal skills, social abilities, cognitive development, etc.

6. Research shows that all the preschool, "Headstart" programs, mom and dad teaching their preschoolers at home, etc., don't significantly affect education after about 3<sup>rd</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> grade. **Students tend to "catch up" and level off with each other at that point.** (That was a big surprise to researchers.... and a politically unpopular result.) Achievement has more to do with genetics, a child's temperament, providing opportunities for children to have responsibility and problem solve, parents who model a lifestyle of learning, families that work together and challenge each other, and interactive parents... than it does with pushing academics on a child at an early age.

On a personal note, my wife and I made the decision to put our first child (who turned 5 in August just before kindergarten) in a Jr. first grade class although she tested ready for 1st grade. We wanted to give her **every advantage** we could, because we deeply love her.

By the time she entered junior high and high school, it was our plan and prayer that she would have had an extra year of maturity, self-confidence, experience, social skills, leadership opportunities, cognitive development, emotional stability, and spiritual growth. Consequently, she would have a better idea of what she wanted, what she believed, what she could do well, and what she had to offer the world in the name of Jesus. Eight years later, we were thrilled with the results! Doesn't every parent want to increase the opportunities for their child to succeed in these areas?

Talk with your child's teacher, consider educational testing, pray hard, **treat each child individually**, honestly ponder your motives, and utilize the above information. If you have educational and/or psychological concerns, do not hesitate to have your child tested. The peace of mind is worth it! These services are available through public and private agencies. You can contact your public school system to set up no-cost testing, or pay \$800 to \$1200 for private agency testing.

Jack Lipski, M.A.  
Christian Counselor

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