

UNION MEMORIAL SCHOOL

Should My Child Wait to Start Kindergarten?



Introduction: Whether or not to start your child in kindergarten when he or she turns five or delay entry for a year is something more and more parents are considering. In 1980, about 10 percent of kindergarteners delayed entry. Since then, the percentage has doubled.¹ Each child and situation is unique, but our hope is this document will help parents considering delayed entry into kindergarten weigh the pros and cons of their decision. If a child does poorly in a first school experience, that failure is hard to eradicate. You want a child's first experience in learning to be satisfying.

Vermont Law: Vermont law requires schools to offer kindergarten, but does not require children to attend kindergarten at age five. Compulsory school attendance is not required until age six.

Colchester School District Policy: Colchester School District Policy is simple and unambiguous. Children must be five years of age before September 1 in order to enroll in kindergarten. Early entry is not permitted, but delayed entry is. The decision to do so lies solely with the child's parent(s). September 1 and age five are a bit arbitrary. When does a child start to walk? When he's ready. When does a child start to talk? When she's ready. When does a child start kindergarten? When he or she turns five. The reality is some children are ready earlier and some are ready later.

Kindergarten Screening: Our kindergarten screening process is designed to get to know your child for the sole purpose of creating balanced classes. Balanced, heterogeneously grouped classrooms are important to us. Though the classroom teacher who conducts your child's screening can offer some insight, our screening process is not designed to predict whether or not your child is ready for or will be successful in kindergarten. We are a public school whose only criteria for kindergarten are (1) at least one of the child's parents/guardians resides in Colchester and (2) the child has reached the age of five before September 1.

Things to Consider: Waiting an extra year to start your child in kindergarten *might* be beneficial if your child:

- has shown a pattern of delay in reaching age appropriate milestones.
- has access to a stimulating environment such as a quality daycare or preschool. If he or she is already enrolled in such a program, talk to the teacher and ask if your child is "ready" for kindergarten. Kids behave differently when they are away from home, so the teacher will be able to give you good information on your child's ability to listen, follow directions and play with others.
- is extremely shy or fearful about leaving home. If your child is near the cut-off age and reluctant to start school, you may want to delay for a year and enroll him or her in activities like pre-K or Head Start, as well as group activities with other children.
- has a summer birthday and displays immature social development relative to his or her peers. If so, he or she will be nearly an entire year younger than some of the other children in the class. One year, the gift of time, can be incredibly beneficial.

Finally, think about the future. Your child may not achieve some adolescent milestones at the same time as his or her peers (e.g. getting a driver's license). He or she will also be in the workforce one less year if entry is delayed. This will affect lifetime earnings and retirement.

Further Research: If you want to do some research on your own, this practice is often referred to as "Redshirting." The term comes from the practice of postponing the participation of college athletes in competitive games to prolong their eligibility. The National Association for the Education of Young Children is a good place to start. Their website is www.naeyc.org.

Conclusion: Ultimately, the decision about sending your child to kindergarten is yours. At Union Memorial School, we have a very highly qualified teaching staff. Our teachers have been recognized at the national level for their ability to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of our learners. Regardless of your child's developmental or skills achievement, we stand ready to work with you for a great kindergarten year.

¹Bronson, Po, and Merryman, Ashley. "Should Children Redshirt Kindergarten?" [Newsweek](#) 3 September 2009.