

# When to Start Kindergarten: The Pros and Late Entry

*What's the right time for your young child to start school? Metro Detroit early childhood experts we*

By **Rebecca Thomas** - August 9, 2019



At 5 years old, most children are ready to begin kindergarten. They can handle organized activity setting and are prepared to make new friends and take on the challenge of school.

The Michigan Department of Education requires that students must be 5 years old by Sept. 1 in are close to that deadline or who turn 5 just after, parents face the decision of **choosing a kinde**

Waiting a year would make them the older students in the classroom. There are pros and cons early childhood education experts weigh in on when to start kindergarten – and when to wait.

## Starting school early

Denise Deane is a former admissions adviser from Grosse Pointe Farms. She's served several low school-aged children through the admissions process and answering the age-old question: what are the several reasons to send children to kindergarten early, but the foremost is academics. Children learn a new way.

"Parents need to look at the program as a whole. It needs to meet the needs of children academically, program and it's just more preschool stuff and the child is ready for more, (then) they don't want to repeat more of what they already know.

"That wouldn't be a program that stimulates curiosity, wonderment and exploration. It isn't going to

Steve Gay, program coordinator for [Macomb Community Action Head Start Birth to Five Program](#), teaches kids how to interact with peers at different ages and stages.

"In some other countries and areas, they have mixed-grade classrooms," says Gay. He points to classrooms which have students at varying levels and grades taught by one teacher. "It teaches them how to learn

Gay says it's more important that parents and teachers examine the child's developmental age and readiness cases. He says some children have the tools to succeed earlier than others.

## Delaying kindergarten

While some kids are ready early on, Gay says other kindergartners are pushed into school because they just aren't there yet.

"I, personally, was held back. I was 4-and-half years old and I went to kindergarten for a month and then I realized I wasn't ready," Gay says.

He recalls that drop-offs each morning were unbearable for everyone involved, and he just wasn't ready for the environment. He says his parents waited a year before trying again, and it was the complete opposite of what he needed.

In fact, delaying or "[redshirting](#)" kindergarten is better for some kids.

Deane says the social-emotional development of a child is an important factor. It isn't always the academic side that says, but rather teachers in fourth or fifth grade down the road who notice a difference – one that affects all the children.

"Sometimes younger children handle the academic side of things just fine, but socially, they are often behind," she says. "The older children in the class are often more socially adept at handling life situations and social interactions."

Deane says the interpersonal relationships will not just impact the students in school but also later in life.

"If you have difficulty with personal relationships, you are really at a disadvantage. The EQ, or emotional quotient, is a factor in someone's success as a human being," Deane explains. "It impacts how you feel about and how you approach projects you want to tackle."

Gay adds that the older children in the classrooms often take on a larger role.

"The oldest get to learn to be leaders and learn those skills," he says.

## Which choice is right for you?

There are positive and negative reasons for delaying the start of kindergarten. Deane and Gay are important to the process.

"Ultimately, it depends on each child and the teacher," Gay says. "The teachers know group learning partnership. Together, you must decide if this is the time or whether another year would make a difference."

He says typically, preschools can evaluate students and determine if they are socially and emotionally ready. If not, they may need a little more time **preparing for kindergarten**. Deane adds that school administrators and teachers can identify students who need more preparation through observation and conversation.

"There has to be a partnership with the teaching staff, the school psychologist or anyone who can help the child be successful," Deane says. "If there is any question, the parents and the school need to be in communication."

"It may mean altering their trajectory for the next few years and they may not necessarily move forward as quickly as they would have otherwise."

*This post was originally published in 2017 and is updated regularly.*