

6-2-2017

Redshirting: A Critical, Historical Analysis of the Changing Theories, Policies, and Practices of Children's Transition into Kindergarten

Lisa Babel

The Graduate Center, City University of New York

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Follow this and additional works at: http://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds

 Part of the [Accessibility Commons](#), [Early Childhood Education Commons](#), and the [Elementary Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Babel, Lisa, "Redshirting: A Critical, Historical Analysis of the Changing Theories, Policies, and Practices of Children's Transition into Kindergarten" (2017). *CUNY Academic Works*.
http://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/2032

This Thesis is brought to you by CUNY Academic Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Graduate Works by Year: Dissertations, Theses, and Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of CUNY Academic Works. For more information, please contact deposit@gc.cuny.edu.

REDSHIRTING: A CRITICAL, HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CHANGING
THEORIES, POLICIES, AND PRACTICES OF CHILDREN'S TRANSITION INTO
KINDERGARTEN

by

LISA BABEL

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York.

2017

© 2017

LISA BABEL

All Rights Reserved.

Redshirting: A Critical, Historical Analysis of the Changing Theories, Policies, and Practices of
Children's Transition into Kindergarten

by

Lisa Babel

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in
satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

Date

Roger Hart

Thesis Advisor

Date

Elizabeth Macaulay Lewis

Executive Officer

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

ABSTRACT

Redshirting: A Critical, Historical Analysis of the Changing Theories, Policies, and Practices and
Children's Transition into Kindergarten

by

Lisa Babel

Advisor: Roger Hart

This paper examines the contemporary debate over redshirting within the context of a historical analysis of how schools in the United States have addressed children's transition into kindergarten. It also considers how preparation for the transition to school is cause for concern that has varied greatly depending on the socio-economic conditions of children's families. Redshirting is the term currently being used to define a child's delayed entry into kindergarten, usually with the intention of creating an additional year for that child to develop socially and to strive academically. Central to understanding this phenomenon and how to address it is the issue of children's kindergarten readiness. The high-pressured nature of modern schooling has increased learning demands of children in the lower grades and even kindergarten, creating confusion and resulting in fear for most parents. A historical analysis of the changing theories, policies, and practices of preparing children for the transition into kindergarten in the United States is provided as a way of shedding light on the present controversy of redshirting children prior to them making their kindergarten debut.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am truly thankful to all those who have supported me during the many phases of my research, which have led to this moment.

First and foremost, I want to express my gratitude for my thesis advisor, Roger Hart. I have never encounter anyone with so much sincerity in everything that they do. I am thankful for your guidance, patience, and for devoting so much time and effort in helping me complete my thesis. To Colette Daiute, for expressing enthusiasm and willingness to offer ideas that not only strengthened my research, but for suggestions that will help further my work. I have always felt uplifted after discussing my ideas with you, and I hope to continue those discussions as my research evolves. To Nancy Cardwell, for bringing me out of my shell and encouraging me when I was hesitant to speak up. I have never felt so confident and free to express my thoughts and ideas, especially about my own research, than when I was in your class. And to my undergraduate, Political Science professor, Aleksandr Zamalin; I do not know if I would be here if you had not suggested that I apply to graduate school in the first place. It only takes one person to believe in you in order for you to believe in yourself, and you were that person for me. Thank you.

To Kutay Agardici, for lending your expertise when it came to constructing the maps and graphs used for this research. You saved me from hours of frustration, and I may not have included the necessary data if it had not been for your help.

Lastly, I am grateful to my loved ones who allowed me to babble on about my thesis on redshirting throughout this long process. You may not understand my passion for school and research, but you accept me for who I am, and it means more to me than you will ever know!

To my little sister, Tiffany. You are the one who inspired me to write about redshirting and you continue to inspire me each and every day. I cannot wait to see what the future holds for you!

To my own kindergarten teacher, Ms. Johnson. You gave me a second chance at counting to 100 so I could pass my test on the last day of school. If you had not let me cover my eyes while I counted in front of the class, I do not think I would have gotten through it without crying either... And thank you for going to McDonald's with me that summer- I have never forgotten that!

PREFACE

In the spring of 2015, my little sister was required to take an assessment along with all the other children beginning kindergarten in the fall. Although my sister passed every part of her assessment and scored higher than the majority of children her age, they suggested that she start kindergarten a year later, when she was older – Otherwise known as redshirting. They suggested that my mother enroll my sister in a two-year kindergarten program instead, to give her more time to flourish. In addition, they listed all the potential dangers of starting kindergarten at four and half years of age (almost five); low self-esteem, falling behind academically, inability to make friends, etc., and with no information to counteract it. My mother never experienced this with her other four children and since her last child attended kindergarten 13 years prior, she questioned whether her concept of kindergarten was outdated. Reluctantly, my mother redshirted my sister, and enrolled her in the two-year kindergarten program and regretted it almost immediately.

As excited as my sister was to begin school, her excitement died soon after the first day and her teacher admitted that she was not being challenged enough. When October rolled around, the students were given yet another assessment, which showed that not only did she pass every aspect of her assessment – with the exception of not being able to draw a person [accurately] – she had already surpassed the teacher’s end-of-the-year learning objectives. Because of this, my mother requested that my sister be moved into a traditional kindergarten classroom - the sooner, the better. Although she was not informed prior to enrollment, the school made it clear after the fact that once a child was enrolled in the two-year program, they were not allowed to transition out unless they changed school districts, so my sister remained in her assigned class.

Around the time my sister was redshirted, I was conducting research on the universal preschool movement and wrote a review on the various types of preschools and how they may contribute to the idea of kindergarten readiness. Coincidentally, I found information about redshirting in regard to kindergarten preparedness. That, in combination with my family's ongoing ordeal, inspired me to delve deeper into the issue of redshirting, who it is affecting, and why.

In the fall of 2016, my sister entered her second year of kindergarten with disdain for the curriculum, as well as for the younger students. She continued to sit through another year of school without being challenged, without developing academically, without thriving as children should. Redshirting has many varying implications for all children, and parents may not be aware of both the positive and negative outcomes of delaying their child's kindergarten entry. Thus, redshirting needs to be reviewed from all aspects, and parents need to think critically about the implications of delaying their child's entry into kindergarten. My sister may not have been able to draw a person a year ago, but that did not stop her from trying, and her pictures of people now are quite endearing because of it.*

*See Appendix

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
1. HISTORY	2
2. THEORY	6
FRIEDRICH FROEBEL	6
Philosophy.....	6
Teacher.....	7
Curriculum.....	8
Play.....	9
Legacy.....	9
JOHN DEWEY	10
Philosophy.....	10
Teacher.....	11
Curriculum.....	12
Play.....	13
Legacy.....	14
MARIA MONTESSORI	14
Philosophy.....	15
Teacher.....	16
Curriculum.....	16
Play.....	19
Legacy.....	20
SUMMARY	21
3. POLICY	21
Policies regarding the Linking of Kindergarten with Elementary School.....	21
Policies regarding Student Performance and Testing.....	22
Variations in State Requirements Affecting Kindergartens.....	25
Advocates for Children in the Early Childhood Education Policy Debate.....	30
SUMMARY	33
4. PRACTICE	33
The Practice of Children’s Transition into Kindergarten.....	33
Who is Affected?.....	36
Intergroup Dynamics: Parents and Schools.....	37
Intergroup Dynamics: Students and Teachers.....	42
Alternative to Redshirting?.....	49
Implications.....	51
SUMMARY	53
5. CONCLUSION	54

TABLE OF CONTENTS

6. Appendix.....56
REFERENCES.....57

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1A: COMPULSORY SCHOOL AGE (As of 2014).....	26
Figure 1B: KINDERGARTEN ATTENDANCE (As of 2014).....	27
Figure 1C: KINDERGARTEN ASSESSMENT (As of 2014).....	28
Figure 1D: BIRTHDAY MONTH CUT-OFF FOR KINDERGARTEN ENTRY (As of 2014).....	29
Figure 2: 2010-2011 KINDERGARTEN COHORT.....	35

INTRODUCTION

Malcolm Gladwell's best-selling book, "Outliers: The Story of Success," is based on the notion that success occurs when people are in the right place at the right time, and there is little to do with hard work and determination. (Gladwell 2008) He begins by describing the success and highly developed skills of Canadian hockey players, thanks to a term known as "Redshirting." The term "Redshirting," was first used in the 1950s to describe college athletes who would sit out for a season, in order to improve physically and work on their skills, so that they would produce better game results the following season. Gladwell moves on by using that same term to describe delayed entry of kindergarteners in order for them to have another year for that child to develop socially and to strive academically, and thereby, leading to greater success in life. With such intense emphasis on standardized testing these days, it is no wonder that more and more children are being redshirted in order to meet the increasing demands of kindergarten.

This paper addresses the complexity of academic redshirting and what it means today, who is affected by it, and what are the factors associated with it. Why has it emerged at as a phenomenon at this moment in time? Moreover, who is orchestrating this social phenomena? Is it because the child is not "ready" or because the pedagogy is not appropriate? Is it solely at the parents' discretion, or is it encouraged by the schools? Why do some educators and parents opt for it and other not? Central to understanding this phenomenon and how to address it is the issue of children's kindergarten readiness. The high-pressured nature of modern schooling has increased learning demands of children in the lower grades and even kindergarten, creating confusion and resulting in fear for most parents. Although children can be assessed during, and sometimes after kindergarten has commenced, for the sake of clarity, the focus of this paper is on assessments conducted prior to kindergarten entry, since the majority of testing is done to

determine whether or not a child should enter kindergarten when they are of legal chronological age to do so.

A historical analysis of the changing theories, policies, and practices of preparing children for the transition into kindergarten in the United States is provided as a way of shedding light on the present controversy of redshirting.¹ This paper is broken down into four parts by History, Theory, Policy, and Practice, in order to gain a better understanding of kindergarten and how it has evolved over the years and led to the current phenomenon of redshirting. The literature review begins by describing the creation and initial conception of kindergarten that can be attributed to three primary educational theorists; Friedrich Froebel, John Dewey, and Maria Montessori. Next, various policies are explained that have altered not only the kindergarten curriculum, but the make-up of the students in kindergarten. Lastly, the practice of redshirting by various stakeholders (i.e. parents, teachers, school administrators) to combat the rigorous curriculum in kindergarten is discussed.

Research using online databases, such as Jstor and Google Scholar, as well as notification correspondence for key words and/or phrases, “redshirting,” and, “kindergarten readiness,” have contributed to the following literature review.

1. HISTORY

“Kindergarten,” is a term that was invented by Friedrich Froebel in 1840 Germany. (Lascarides & Hinitiz 2013) Many Americans had not heard of kindergarten until it was mentioned in print in the United States in 1856, when Henry Barnard wrote about his observation and analysis of the kindergarten at an international exhibit for educational systems in London a few years prior. Five years after the first publication in the United States about kindergarten, another article was printed in the Christian Examiner, a Unitarian publication. That same year,

Margarethe Schurz, one of the first Froebelian-educated kindergartners, established a German-language kindergarten – and first kindergarten in the United States – in Watertown, Wisconsin back. In 1860, the first English-language kindergarten was established in Boston, Massachusetts, however, it was founded by Elizabeth Peabody, a teacher who promoted education and advocated for kindergarten until her death.

In the 19th century, the kindergarten movement was aligned with other monumental debates over women's rights, Native American rights, and slavery, to name a few. Kindergarten was introduced to Americans during a time when people were unsatisfied with the current education system, not to mention the lack of education for younger children. Moreover, the demand for education to be more accessible for children of the working-class was on the rise, in the hopes that greater access to education would promote democracy, as well as create greater opportunities for children through their education. When kindergarten spread to the United States, Transcendentalists, such as Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, threw in their full support from the beginning, however, everyday folk were not so quick to get behind the idea of kindergarten. (Morgan 2011) People were hesitant to support public education for younger children (under age 6) because that called for higher taxes for everyone. Yet, it continued to grow throughout the latter half of the 19th Century.

As kindergarten spread throughout the United States, so did its' evolution as an adaption to American life. Part of kindergarten's evolution consisted of the addition of wooden blocks in the classroom, and home visits to educate children struck by illness. (Lascarides & Hinitiz 2013) On occasion, there were skeptics of kindergarten, especially in the United States of America. In the late 1800's, criticisms of the kindergarten began to appear in print within the United States, citing the horrors of young children being brainwashed by total strangers (i.e. teachers) to reject

Christianity, and in turn create distance between the parent(s) and the child. Soon after the start of the 20th Century, cities with large urban populations, including African Americans and European immigrants, established community centers, and in them, kindergartens were incorporated to provide education for younger children. (Morgan 2011) Unfortunately, some European immigrant families for whom kindergartens were created for in cities like Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York, were not keen on an educational philosophy that encouraged self-activity and promoted play. The concern was for the well-being of the family unit, which involved all able family members to work and financially support one another. Thus, some European immigrants called for more structure, heavy curriculum, and stationary activities within the kindergarten.

Concerns about the transition from kindergarten to first grade became an issue. Thus, to make for a smoother transition between the grades, teachers of public kindergartens and first grade teachers began to receive the same training and were instructed to teach a similar curriculum. (Lascarides & Hinitiz 2013) As a result, first grade teachers found that students who had attended kindergarten were much more prepared by the time they arrived to elementary school, while other teachers complained that children who had attended kindergarten should have shown more preparedness for first grade, as opposed to students with no prior education - As is very similar to today.

In 1873, the depression incited the establishment of free kindergartens – or charity kindergartens, as they were once known – in order to provide not only an education for poor children, but to provide clothes and food to those in need. In doing so, children learned how to better take care of themselves by practicing better hygiene habits, manners, and positive interactions with others, both children and adults alike. It took much convincing, however, a

superintendent – William T. Harris – finally opened the first public kindergarten in St Louis, Missouri in 1873, thanks to Elizabeth Peabody and Susan Blow, another Froebelian-educated kindergarten. (Morgan 2011) This act later contributed to Harris' appointment as the United States' Commissioner of Education from 1889-1906, otherwise known as the Secretary of Education now. Eight years after St Louis opened the first public kindergarten, Milwaukee, Wisconsin established another public kindergarten in 1881, followed by Newport, Rhode Island in 1882. Meanwhile, the first public kindergarten for African Americans was founded in 1879. And by 1900, there were over 100 cities in the United States with free kindergartens.

When kindergartens were created, they were considered separate to that of elementary schools. Once early childhood education and elementary education were coupled together in one school, however, kindergarten was slowly stripped away of its developmentally appropriate practices, such as the use of art, music, and play to learn, and was introduced to more rigorous work and instruction that was typically seen from first grade and onward. Kindergarten was finally incorporated into the public education system toward the end of the 19th Century, and by 1930, it had become institutionalized, as did other stages of education had done previously. (Lascarides & Hinitiz 2013)

Summary

Today, 33,000 private schools offer it, as well as every public school, thanks to educational theorists like Froebel, Dewey, and Montessori, who helped shaped the original conception of kindergarten. (Lascarides & Hinitiz 2013)

2. THEORY

FRIEDRICH FROEBEL

“What genuine education for life and what an education for genuine life!”
(Friedrich Froebel 1895: 157)

FRIEDRICH FROEBEL coined the term, “kindergarten,” in a book that he wrote in 1826. (Froebel 1887) He started out as a teacher before Johann Pestalozzi – a pedagogue himself, and Froebel’s mentor – took him under his wing. (Lascarides & Hinitiz 2013) Pestalozzi was an education reformer of his time, and Froebel was inspired by Pestalozzi’s belief that children learned through doing, as well as through observation. Because of Pestalozzi’s influence, Froebel envisioned an education that would evoke self-awareness in children through art, music, and various forms of play.

Philosophy

It would take Froebel twenty-five years of teaching by trial and error, before he came up with the idea of kindergarten. (Lascarides & Hinitiz 2013) His first students were that of his own family – his nephews. Rather than provide formal instruction for the boys, Froebel provided them with opportunities to experience and learn through those experiences. Froebel eventually created a school for children from ages 3-7, however, he did not come up with the name “kindergarten,” until some years after he had started the school. In 1840, Froebel finally settled on the term, “kindergarten,” which meant, “children’s garden,” to describe his type of early childhood education. (Froebel 1887) More specifically, he felt that gardening was an essential part of learning at this age, and since “kind” in German translates to “child” in English, this period of education in a young child’s life is now called, “kindergarten.” The term was to categorize a level of education for children between the ages of three to six years of age.

At the time, schools in Germany were not created for children under the age of seven. (Lascarides & Hinitiz 2013) When children entered school, memorization and reciting what teachers had said was considered learning. Because of this, there was no eagerness to actually learn, nor could students initiate their own learning. Froebel believed that children were not learning anything useful, and were devoid of real knowledge. To him, formal education was passive; the child would not understand the material as much as if they would have learned it by discovering it themselves.

During this time, Froebel believed that children were not ready for traditional studies, rather they should initiate their own learning through personal inquiry. Thus, he believed kindergarten was essential prior to compulsory education so that children could love learning. Froebel wanted all his kindergartners to achieve self-actualization through interaction with nature, that is, he knew the children could reach their fullest potential by realizing their true self and their place in the world. He believed that kindergarten should be all about the joys of learning and initiating learning through nature and children's individual interests.

When Froebel constructed the idea of kindergarten, he did so with the intent to provide a quality education for young children of poor, working-class families in his country of Germany. (Morgan 2011) As kindergarten became more popular in Europe at the turn of the 19th Century, Americans were traveling to Germany to be trained by Froebel himself, as kindergarten professionals that would teach, and carry out his teaching philosophy elsewhere.

Teacher

The purpose of a teacher in kindergarten, Froebel thought, was not to answer every question a child had at the onset, rather the teacher was to encourage them to gather what is needed to form their own answer to a question or a problem, and guide them toward the solution.

(Froebel 1887) When teachers were to teach, they were not to teach facts, rather morals and/or principles. Just because a child could recite the teacher's instruction, did not mean the child learned anything, nor grew because of it. The classroom environment would be much more positive and the children would thrive if the teachers thought of their students as capable, contributing members of society, as opposed to empty minds that needed to be filled with knowledge that only a teacher could provide. Interestingly, at the time, teaching was considered, primarily, a male profession. (Lascarides & Hinitiz 2013) Froebel believed, however, that women were natural educators and encouraged women to train with him.

Curriculum

As for school, Froebel used the metaphor of a tree to explain the workings within education. (Froebel 1895) The child grows as does the tree, gaining use of limbs and its senses. The tree provides sustenance (i.e. oxygen, food, shelter, etc.), whereas his kindergarten gave time, provided learning opportunities, and acquired education that would lead to further development. And Froebel saw the kindergarten classroom as a metaphor for a garden, and the children as plants. (Morgan 2011) Like plants, children needed to be tended to and cared for as they developed, just as plants needed water and sunlight to grow. Likewise, Froebel saw gardening as a teaching tool too because it taught children how to care for another living being, and in doing so, would lead the child to be sufficient in taking care of the self.

Froebel believed strongly in the use of what he called, "gifts," to teach children mathematical concepts, as well as promote logic and reasoning. (Lascarides & Hinitiz 2013) These gifts, in turn, helped the child make connections to the outside world. The first gift consisted of six wool balls with three representing the primary colors and the other three representing the secondary colors. The second gifts involved a wooden ball, wooden cube, and

wooden cylinder to demonstrate comparisons and differences in objects. The third through sixth gifts used building blocks to assist in number formation, and relations to other objects. Froebel saw these gifts as materials that promoted order, but allowed for creativity as well. Another important aspect of the curriculum - Froebel was careful to mention that children should only attend kindergarten for a few hours a day! (Froebel 1895)

Play

Through play, a child figures out their existing capabilities, as well as what they may become capable of as they make sense of the world around them. (Froebel 1887) Not only that, children could work through their own frustrations and confusion with life through their play. He also viewed play as serious in nature because it encouraged both thinking, as well as spontaneous action. (Froebel 1895) Froebel even took it further by explaining that not only was play critical to learning, it was the highest phase of a child's development. Even adults themselves, Froebel thought, could learn a lot through children's play, as well as the ways in which they learn and feed their own curiosities. Adults had to realize that not only could they help children learn about life through play, but that children could help adults learn about life through play too.

Legacy

Friedrich Froebel passed away in 1852. (Lascarides & Hinitiz 2013) Although he did not live to see it, he greatly influenced the kindergarten movement which began in Germany and was later brought to the United States by the Schurz family. Several years after Friedrich Froebel's death, Margarethe Schurz, a trained Froebelian-educator, moved to the United States to establish the first kindergarten (in German) in Wisconsin in 1856. From there, the kindergarten movement expanded across the country.

JOHN DEWEY

“Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.”
(Dewey 1897: 77-80)

JOHN DEWEY was born in 1859, in Burlington, Vermont. (Lascarides & Hinitiz 2013) He attended the University of Vermont and in his third year of college, he enrolled in a class that would change the course of his life; A course on Darwin’s theory of evolution. He obtained his degree in 1879, started out as a high school teacher, and soon after began studying and teaching philosophy. In 1894, he accepted an offer at the University of Chicago, where he created a laboratory school on campus, known as the Dewey School in 1896. He published his book, “Psychology,” in 1897, and he served as President of the American Psychological Association from 1899-1900, as well as the American Philosophical Society from 1905-1906.

Philosophy

Once he developed an interest in psychology, Dewey began to think much more about imagination, memory, learning, and engagement. (Lascarides & Hinitiz 2013) Soon, he started observing the development of children by watching his own three children so that he could obtain hands-on experience, and form his own analyses. Through his observations and research, like Froebel before him, Dewey realized that if children were not engaged in their own learning, then they really were not learning anything at all.

Dewey observed the current education system as being more teacher and textbook oriented, rather than focusing on the child and their learning processes. He confronted the widely held view of the child as immature and empty of knowledge. (Dewey 1997) Being a child does not mean that the mind is empty, according to Dewey, nor is the mind not growing just because they cannot regurgitate the so-called knowledge thrown at them by their teacher. Adults were quick to compare children to themselves, because adults saw children as becoming [an adult] as

opposed to being [a child]. Dewey, however thought that children were more favorable than adults because children were still flexible in how they saw the world, and they lived in the moment, unlike most adults. As a result, Dewey established a school for young children in 1896 because there were not many at the time, nor was there a special education geared toward teaching children so young. (Lascarides & Hinitiz 2013) Continuing into the early 1900s, he philosophized an education system that was founded on the ideas of equality and individuality because he did not think that class and race should be obstacles to receiving a quality education. (Dewey 1997)

Again like Froebel, Dewey believed that children learned the best by practicing self-efficacy and initiating their own learning within the environment. Children learned through self-activity, which meant interacting with objects and/or socializing with other children. Through these experiences, children learned to make sense of the world. They could only learn by having the freedom to explore and experiment with both natural and man-made materials in order to construct their own knowledge of the physical environment and the people who affected it and were affected by it. Without exploration and experimentation, children would not be able to create meaningful understandings of the world. Not allowing children to explore and act on their curiosities, he said, would only stifle cognitive development, as well as discourage independence and individuality.

Not only do children's self-teaching affect cognitive development, Dewey concluded, it also promoted social and emotional development. When the child learned through experience, they were better equipped to interact and emotionally handle similar experiences in the future. A child could not learn without previously learning to learn, however, and they acquired this sense of learning through experience and making sense of it. Learning in itself was a habit to be

learned. For Dewey, one's education never truly ends. It is a continual process that calls for learning, reconfiguring past knowledge, and acting on existing knowledge one has gathered over their lifetime.

Teacher

Dewey used nature as a metaphor for children's growth and learning, just as Froebel did with the analogy of the tree. For Dewey, the teacher is that of a farmer. (Dewey 1997) A farmer may plant and water their crops, but the farmer cannot make the seeds take root, nor will all the crops be the same in size, shape, color, etc. As for the teacher, they have a responsibility to assist children in their own learning and must give them the time to grow and help fuel their individual interests.

His ecological framework demonstrated an environment in which teachers worked with children to foster their own independent learning through interactions in said environment. The capacity for growth, both in mind and spirit, would continue to grow if initiative and inquiry were encouraged by teachers who fostered children's education, as opposed to formal instruction, especially in the younger years. Children would not develop critical thinking skills unless teachers promoted their curiosity and spontaneous activity within their environment. Dewey did disagree with Froebel, however, in that, Dewey thought Froebel was more focused on the end result of an education, whereas Dewey believed that kindergarten, as well as all education, was a continuous life process through adulthood. Thus, learning was of utmost value, rather than what was learned was only of value.

Curriculum

Dewey believed in using material in the classroom for children that introduced various occupations of daily life. (Dewey 1997) Although the types of materials were quite broad, he

found the benefit in each of them, like paper, cardboard, clay, cloth, metal, wood, and sand to name a few. And the activities in which promoted the use of such materials included measuring, molding, sewing, printing, pattern making, reading/writing, cooking, and of course gardening, among many other forms of engagement. Moreover, he believed that there must be a connection when something new was introduced to the child, or they will not fully retain what they have been introduced to. Dewey whole-heartedly believed that every lesson taught in schools, no matter the age, had a connection to everyday experiences, and those everyday experiences were the only way children connected school material with a greater purpose.

When experiencing these activities and more, Dewey saw mistakes as another part of learning, and almost preferred it, rather than having a child master a specific skill from the beginning. Mistakes, Dewey thought, only created more opportunity in learning, as well as created a sense of awareness and judgement for future experiences. He made the bold claim that it was better to make mistakes with a creative and constructive attitude, as opposed to perfecting a skill that did not allow the child freedom to experience trial and error. Mistakes allowed for an open-minded perspective when it came to learning, and life in general.

Play

When it came to play, one of its many benefits, according to Dewey, was the joy that children associated with school when they were afforded time to play. (Dewey 2013) Furthermore, he believed that learning only came easier to children who had the opportunity for ample play time during their school days, which would also make the class as a whole more manageable for the teachers. Dewey did not, however, see play as a diversion for educational studies, rather children were to take what they learned during their play experiences and connect them to what they learned during instruction. When children played and/or

participated in games freely, the children mimicked past instances they had experienced, such as shopping, gardening, or other daily activities. Through play, children made sense of what they had experienced.

Legacy

The Dewey school eventually outgrew three buildings filled with 140 students, 22 teachers, and 100 staff members. (Lascarides & Hinitiz 2013) His school grouped children together by age. He was the director of the school and his wife was the principal. Because he believed in an accessible, quality education, tuition for the Dewey school remained low enough to ensure that all children had the opportunity to attend. Consequently, the school struggled financially. Dewey eventually left the school, and it closed several years later.

John Dewey passed away on June 1st, 1952. He greatly affected the American education system, including early childhood education. There are several Dewey schools in particular that are still well-known schools and institutions, such as the Crow Island School in Chicago, the Walden School, and Bank Street Children's School in the United States, as well as the Summerhill School in England. (Morgan 2011) All were influenced by his teaching principles and educational philosophy.

MARIA MONTESSORI

“Education is not something a teacher does, but that is a natural process, which develops spontaneously in the human being. It is not acquired by listening to words, but in virtue of experience in which the child acts on his environment.”

(Montessori 1995: 8)

MARIA MONTESSORI became the first female to receive a medical degree in Italy in 1896 and soon began her medical career in pediatrics and psychiatry in a free clinic, where she often treated children of the working class. (Lascarides & Hinitiz 2013) In 1899, as director of the State Orthophrenic School for Deficient Children, she noticed that her patients were not

“deficient,” as labeled previously, rather they needed to acquire purposeful stimuli in order for them to truly engage in their society. Because of this, she went back to school to study psychology and anthropology to get a better understanding of children and how they responded to the world around them.

In the beginning of the 20th Century, Maria Montessori became a common name in the field of early childhood education. Not only were people aware of her pedagogy, but knowing that she also received a medical degree gave parents further reassurance of the quality of education provided. Several years later, Montessori was approached to start a school for underprivileged children that were left unsupervised during the day time hours while their parents worked. On January 6th, 1907, Maria Montessori and her assistant established the Casa dei Bambini (Children’s House) and opened its doors to 50-60 low-income children. The following year, another Montessori school house opened in Milan, and the Montessori Method quickly spread throughout different parts of the world.

Philosophy

The intent of a Montessori education was for children to engage in meditation and profound thought, in order to achieve great intellect, or in today's society, to be intellectually ready for kindergarten. (Lascarides & Hinitiz 2013) Montessori believed that children learned differently from adults, and yet, the way in which children learn, carried out into their adult lives. Children who learned through the process of their own chosen activities, as opposed to those whose means were to learn in order to achieve an end result, became highly independent and autonomous adults, whereas the latter came to rely on extrinsic awards in order to complete a task. Thus, Montessori used a constructivist approach to early childhood education, where everything from the environment in which the children learned to the materials they learned

from, were carefully and meticulously organized in such a way that provided the best possible learning experience for children.

Maria Montessori's ideas of early childhood education began in Italy and spread in the early 20th century. She believed children should practice kinesthetic learning, or use hands-on experience with everyday materials in order to gain optimal understanding of the world around them. She also believed that socialization with peers had great importance to children's socioemotional development, and that children should utilize their existing environment in any way that made it possible to learn. Montessori did not see children as passive, dependent learners, rather she saw them as active participants in their own learning.

Teacher

A Montessori directress - as she called them then - not only observed the children, but took note of their abilities and progress, as well as guided children in learning when needed. (AMSHQ 2015) For Montessori, the Directress (or Director) did not "teach," rather they guided children through the learning process by carefully preparing their environment, first and foremost. Montessori not only refused to use the word "teacher," she denied employment to anyone with a traditional teaching education. She did not want someone with traditional training to influence her staff, rather the directresses were to only implement Montessori pedagogy within their classrooms. The early childhood curriculum was more child-centered, where the teacher was only there to support and guide the child's learning, rather than facilitate direct instruction.

Curriculum

Montessori was not given permission to call her new establishment a school at first, so she was denied the essential resources, such as desks and other school supplies, needed for a normal classroom environment. (Morgan, 2011) Instead, she designed her own classroom

furniture that was small enough to accommodate little children, as well as provided hands-on materials, like ordinary household items and toys, which resulted in a different kind of learning experience.

A vital part of Montessori's methodology was the children's use of didactic materials. (Lillard 2013) The initial school started out with a variety of toys and other materials, however, Montessori soon discovered that too many options led to doubt within the children and chaos among the classroom. In addition, most of the toys were not even utilized, and Montessori discovered that the children preferred to interact with everyday materials instead. Because of this, she discarded items that were not used, nor would provide learning opportunities for children. She decided to only include didactic materials, which would purposefully instill learning in mathematics, science, social studies, language, and the arts.

There were 83 sets of materials in any given Montessori classroom, each to be on display at the appropriate developmental stage of the child. Materials were self-selected and self-paced. The didactic materials that existed within every Montessori classroom encouraged not only academic learning when using things like puzzles for geography, colored beads for counting, metal insects for science, or sandpaper letters for learning the alphabet, but sensory and practical items. Sensory materials included texturized pieces of fabric, bells, and smelling jars to encourage awareness and familiarity of one's senses. On the other hand, practical materials consisted of cups for pouring liquids, tools to fix things, and sponges to clean the tables in order to encourage fine motor development needed for everyday tasks and experiences. (Lascarides & Hinitiz 2013) At times, a child could grab a bucket, fill it with water, carry it to a designated area, use the water to wipe down a table, and then carry the bucket back to the sink and pour out all the water. Although the simple act may seem just that, simple, repeating the task multiple

times taught the child hand-eye coordination, balance, strength, reason, and judgment, among other things. (Lillard 2013) None of the materials within a Montessori classroom were plastic; everything was made with natural materials, such as wood and metal. Moreover, there were no kits that came with instructions on how to build/create anything. It was all left up to the imagination (Montessori 2015) And while the children learned through their interactions within the environment and the materials being used, there was always one adult in the background, carefully observing the children's progress.

Her educational philosophy was considered revolutionary, in that, Montessori did not believe children of any age should be measured by their academic performance, but rather by allowing children to unintentionally demonstrate their understanding of academic concepts through the use of didactic materials that were tailored for each child's individual development. She also believed that children should be allowed to move freely and independently through the classroom, engaging in activities that sparked their interests. She saw that children could initiate their own learning through the use of appropriate didactic materials that were provided within the classroom environment.

The environment was best described as a large open space, with simple, pale walls, in order to provide a calming, harmonious environment that would make the children feel safe and encourage them to explore. (Lascarides & Hinitiz 2013) Montessori's philosophy also emphasized cleanliness, along with a sparse classroom environment that did not allow for clutter, nor chaos, which would only overwhelm the children and lower their motivation to accomplish anything. (Montessori 2015) The environment played a key role in Montessori education too because it was part of "the learning triangle," which Montessori referred to as the directress (teacher), the child, and the environment. All were intrinsically linked, not only to create

learning, but to ensure a love of learning as well. (AMSHQ 2015)

As time went on, Montessori decided it was beneficial to also train the older children whom attended her schools, to assist the staff in daily tasks, including looking after the younger children. (Lascarides & Hinitiz 2013) This concept worked so well that she deemed it necessary to incorporate specific tasks, such as cleaning up, for the younger children to do too. The children in each classroom were grouped in a three-year age range. For early childhood, they ranged anywhere from 3-6 years of age, in order for the children to learn from and teach one another - An integral part of Montessori pedagogy. Montessori was adamant on a child-centered approach when she designed her methodology.

The children could work independently or form their own collaborative groups. (Lillard 2005) They also learned to write before they could read and were usually doing both by the age of three, and could even write in cursive by the age of four. There was also no homework, in the most traditional sense. Children were not sent home with worksheets which only became a “mind-numbing” task, rather they were given work that was an extension of their own interests within the classroom. (AMIUSA 2014) Children in a Montessori classroom would not take tests, nor receive grades either. The assessments were arranged into various categories, such as self-discipline, decision-making skills, attitude, concentration, and determination, among others.

Play

Montessori shared a similar philosophy to that of Froebel when it came to children learning verbal and mathematical concepts through the association of play and/or self-activity. She only believed in play, however, if it instilled practical knowledge, ensuring it was something children would have to do throughout their lives. (Lillard 2013) Although Montessori strongly condemned guided instruction with materials, the concept of free play was frowned upon. The

idea of playful learning, however, was a balance between the two, and one in which Montessori approved. As long as the child was learning something in conjunction with having fun while doing it, the child was progressing.

Legacy

One of Montessori's first students, Anne George, soon established the first American Montessori school in 1911, in Tarrytown, New York. In order to observe how her methodology was being carried out in the states, Maria Montessori made her first trip to America in 1913, and founded the Montessori Educational Association of America. More than 100 schools were established within five years of the opening but the Montessori craze was short-lived. John Dewey critiqued the program and claimed that it stifled children's creativity, as well as focused too much on the individual. Due to this claim, the Montessori approach was quickly devalued and most of the schools in the United States had shut down by the 1920s. (Chertoff 2015)

Despite the steep decline in Montessori schools at the time, the Association of Montessori Internationale (AMI) was founded by Marie Montessori in 1929, so that she could promote her methodology throughout the world. It was not until the 1960s when change was in the air for a new generation that alternative methods like a Montessori education became popular once again. At that time, the American Montessori Society (AMS) was created in addition to the existing Association of Montessori Internationale. The United States now leads the way with more Montessori schools than any other country.

Montessori left her career as a doctor in order to develop her teaching/learning pedagogy and master it through decades of work. Although her teaching pedagogy was initially intended for early childhood education, she began to construct an educational model that would benefit older children and youth when illness overcame her. (Lopata 2005) Maria Montessori died on

May 6th, 1952. Her son, Mario, carried on her teaching pedagogy. (Lascarides & Hinitiz 2013)

Summary

Friedrich Froebel, John Dewey, and Maria Montessori were the founders of early childhood education and the most influential in the construction of the kindergarten. Although the idea of kindergarten has since evolved, these three educational theorists focused on the development of the individual child, as well as access to a quality education for all young children. Friedrich Froebel believed that kindergarten was about initiating learning through children's individual interests; John Dewey believed that children learned best by practicing self-efficacy and initiating their own learning in cooperation with their peers; and Maria Montessori believed that children are active participants in their own learning, and should learn through hands-on experience in a carefully prepared environment. In all three models, children being able to learn through play was central, although Montessori's approach involved play under close guidance from an adult facilitator. The concept of kindergarten continued to evolve, however, and heavily began to shift due to various educational policies in the United States during the 20th Century.

3. POLICY

Policies regarding the Linking of Kindergarten with, Primary School

In 1892, the International Kindergarten Union (IKU) was created to address the training and preparation required for kindergarten teaching. (Morgan 2011) In 1931, however, the International Kindergarten Union joined forces with the National Council of Primary Education. In the newly merged organization, the Association of Childhood Education (ACE) where teachers and others who supported education equality fought for equitable learning environments and curriculum affecting children of all ages. Unfortunately, issues pertaining to kindergarten

specifically, quietly took a back seat to educational issues that affected children of any age. Nevertheless, most kindergartens continued in settings where children learned primarily through play and was commonly seen as a transitional setting to prepare children socially and emotionally for the more formal setting of school.

Changing policies regarding student performance and testing

Federal education policy is primarily concerned with funding public elementary and secondary schools within the United States, and some of it dates back to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which was part of the Johnson Administration's "War on Poverty." (Morgan 2011) The original intent was to narrow the achievement gap of children in American schools. With an emphasis on disadvantaged schools, the ESEA funded these schools with the educational resources they deemed necessary for the schools and the students to improve. (Diamond, Reagan, & Bandyk 2000) The belief was that if all children had access to educational resources early on, that everyone who entered the school system by age five-kindergarten age- would have already acquired the necessary preparatory skills they would need to thrive developmentally. (Health and Human Services 2013). The more education one acquired, the less likely the cycle of poverty would perpetuate itself.

More than a century later, President Barack Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act, backed with bipartisan support, which gave state governments the power to set their own standards and accountability measures for standardized testing. (EDWEEK 2016) Simultaneously, the act put an end to the No Child Left Behind Act, which was also passed with bipartisan support. Currently, almost half of the United States require school districts to administer tests to children in order to determine their kindergarten readiness in response to such policies.

Following this policy decision there has been a steadily increasing effort to raise student achievement and to bring the demands for performance down to younger children, in kindergarten, and now even in pre-K classrooms. What has come to be called “high-stakes testing” has reached down into pre-Kindergarten.

In 1990, President George H. Bush’s administration laid out the National Education Goals that were to be achieved by the year 2000. (National Education Goals Panel 1993) A special committee, known as the National Education Goals Panel was created, and they began by acknowledging that 4 million children begin kindergarten every year. Their bold statement, *“All children in America will start school ready to learn,”* by the turn of the century. (National Education Goals Panel 1993) The idea was that if children were held to higher standards at the onset of schooling, their academic progress would continually meet and/or exceed national standards in an effort not to settle. As profound as the statement was, however, it fell short of providing children and their families with the necessary resources to be kindergarten ready. They were, however, quick to establish a set of standards that should be met regarding children’s cognitive, social, and emotional development, as well as overall physical well-being. The standards also included approaches to learning that would also measure teacher effectiveness and student learning.

In addition, the NEGP introduced ready schools to assist children with their kindergarten readiness. In particular, teachers were to conduct home visits and have parent orientations; principals were to encourage high self-esteem and even higher expectations, and schools were to promote leadership skills. Although only a few of the key ideas from the NEGP were named, the three that were previously mentioned were the most detailed. Overall, the ten keys to ready schools were not only vague, but they did not go into a lot of detail on how teachers, principals,

and schools as a whole would support the readiness of children with these keys. More specifically, they did not address the lack of resources to do things like home visits, improving self-esteem, and encouraging school leadership skills. Parents were also encouraged to take children to the doctor, participate in parent education courses, and read to their children, however, the NEGP neglected to mention the socio-economic barriers to do such things, such as time and finances.

To no surprise, not all children were “ready to learn” by the year 2000. As a result, the President George W. Bush administration enacted the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002, which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act from 1964. (EDWEEK 2015) The education reform supported standards-based testing and required a change in daily curriculum for all children in order to prepare for such tests. Again, the thought was if schools were held to higher performance standards, they would meet or exceed expectations. As an incentive, schools would be rewarded for high performance results, whereas under-performing schools and districts were held accountable for overall low test scores. A few years later, the President Barack Obama administration passed the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015, replacing NCLB. (EDWEEK 2016) The act turned the responsibility for creating assessments and holding schools accountable over from federal to state jurisdiction, and could no longer offer monetary incentives.

Today, some children are assessed as early as the spring prior to kindergarten entry, others during the fall of their kindergarten year, and some in between kindergarten and first grade. A child is deemed "ready" for kindergarten, if they can demonstrate cognitive and non-cognitive skills, such as letter and number recognition, as well as listening skills and sharing with other children. (Baumgartner 2016) Results from kindergarten assessments, however, only show what a child feels confident doing in an uncomfortable situation and unlike anything they have

ever experienced. (Graue 1993) Moreover, assessment tools have consistently failed to predict children's school readiness, and therefore, have interrupted the appropriate trajectory for those children to enter into kindergarten. Not only that, readiness assessments are oftentimes used to deny children entry and/or to defund programs meant to help children. Readiness assessments, however, should be used for the sole purpose of identifying a child's developmental capacity and how to tailor the curriculum to best fit their learning needs. So, what does this mean for the future of kindergarten and how might states be affected, due to varying laws about attending kindergarten?

Variations in State Requirements Affecting Kindergartens

In response to these federal policies that have taken place over the years, laws pertaining to kindergarten vary greatly by state, depending on demand and public support to push policymakers to establish such schooling. In order to break down the varying state requirements, data from the Education Commission for the States was collected to demonstrate four aspects that may affect when a child starts kindergarten, and is represented in the following pictures, Figures 1A-1D: compulsory school age, kindergarten attendance, kindergarten assessments, and birthday cut-off. (Education Commission for the States 2014)

COMPULSORY SCHOOL AGE

(As of 2014)

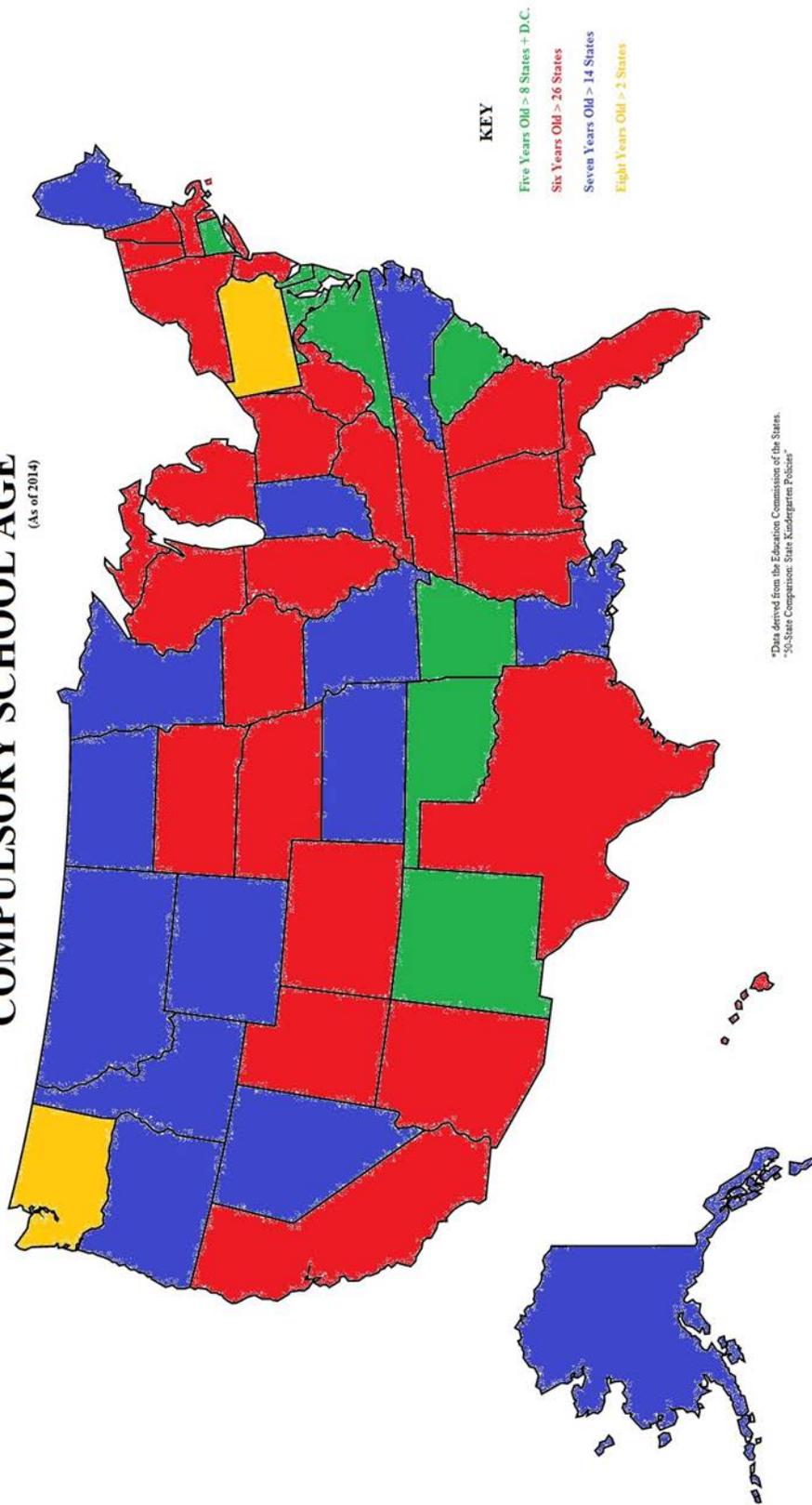


Figure 1A: COMPULSORY SCHOOL AGE (As of 2014)

KINDERGARTEN ATTENDANCE

(As of 2014)

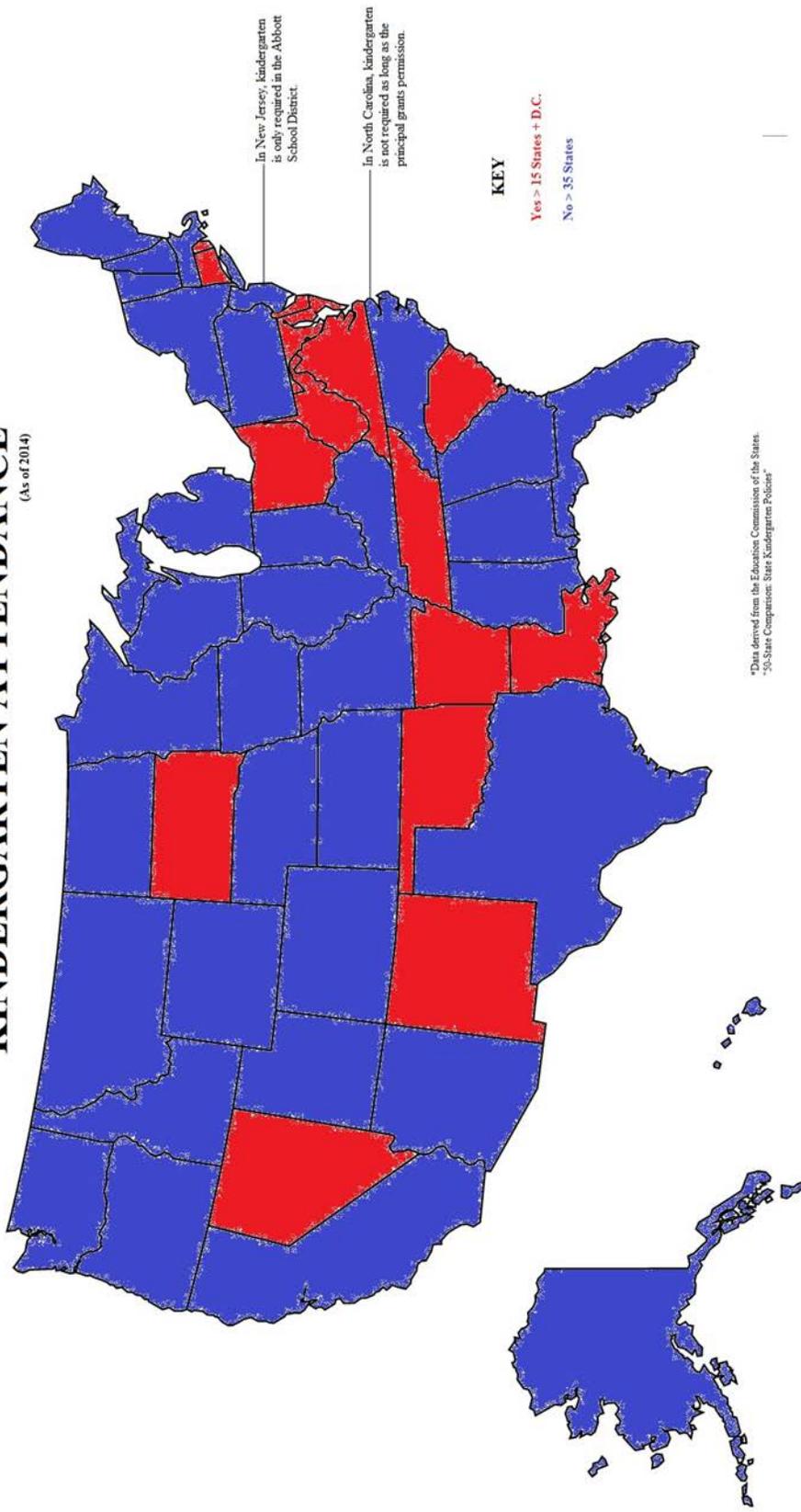


Figure 1B: KINDERGARTEN ATTENDANCE (As of 2014)

KINDERGARTEN ASSESSMENT (As of 2014)

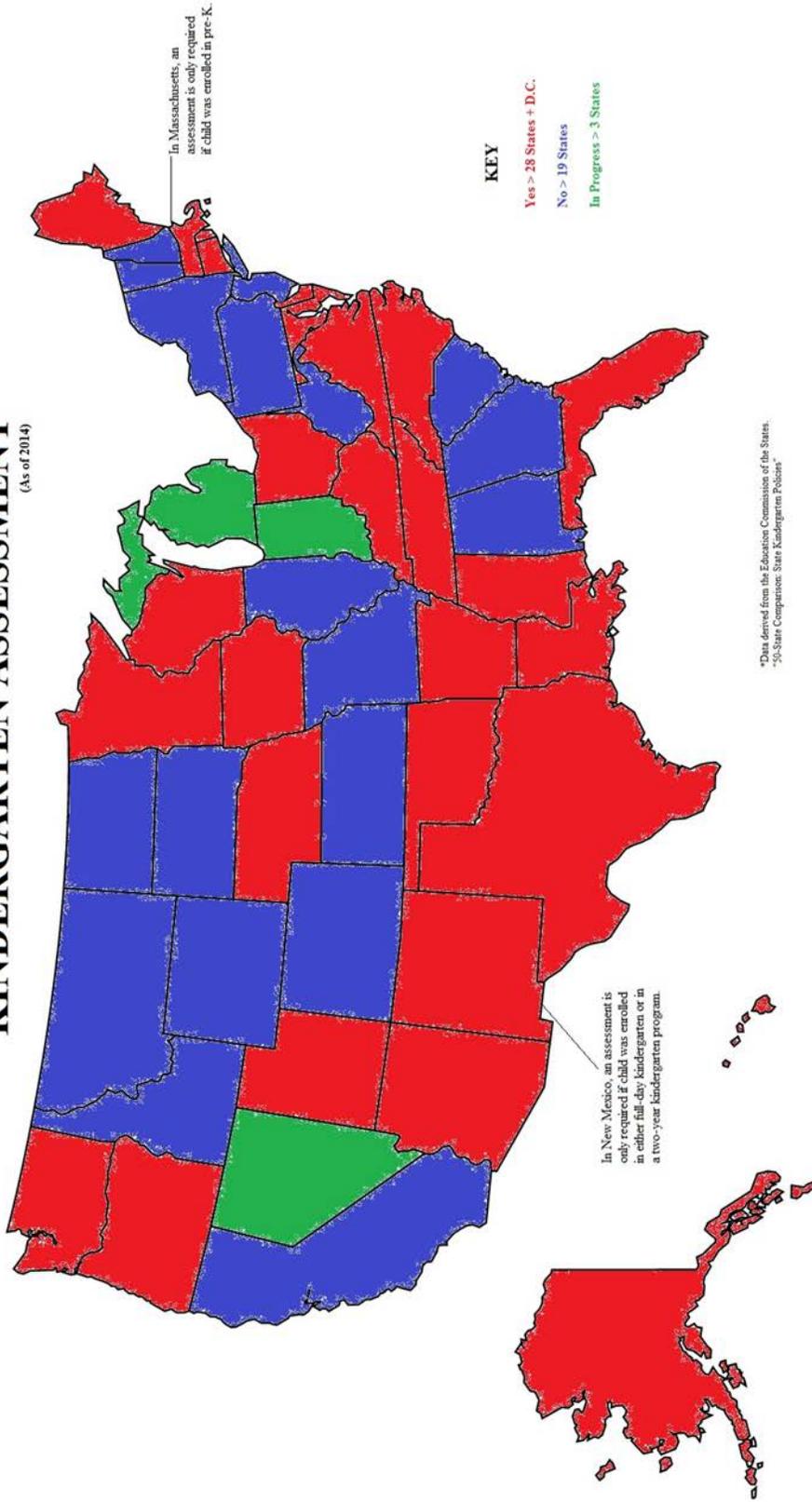


Figure 1C: KINDERGARTEN ASSESSMENT (As of 2014)

BIRTHDAY MONTH CUT-OFF FOR KINDERGARTEN ENTRY (As of 2014)

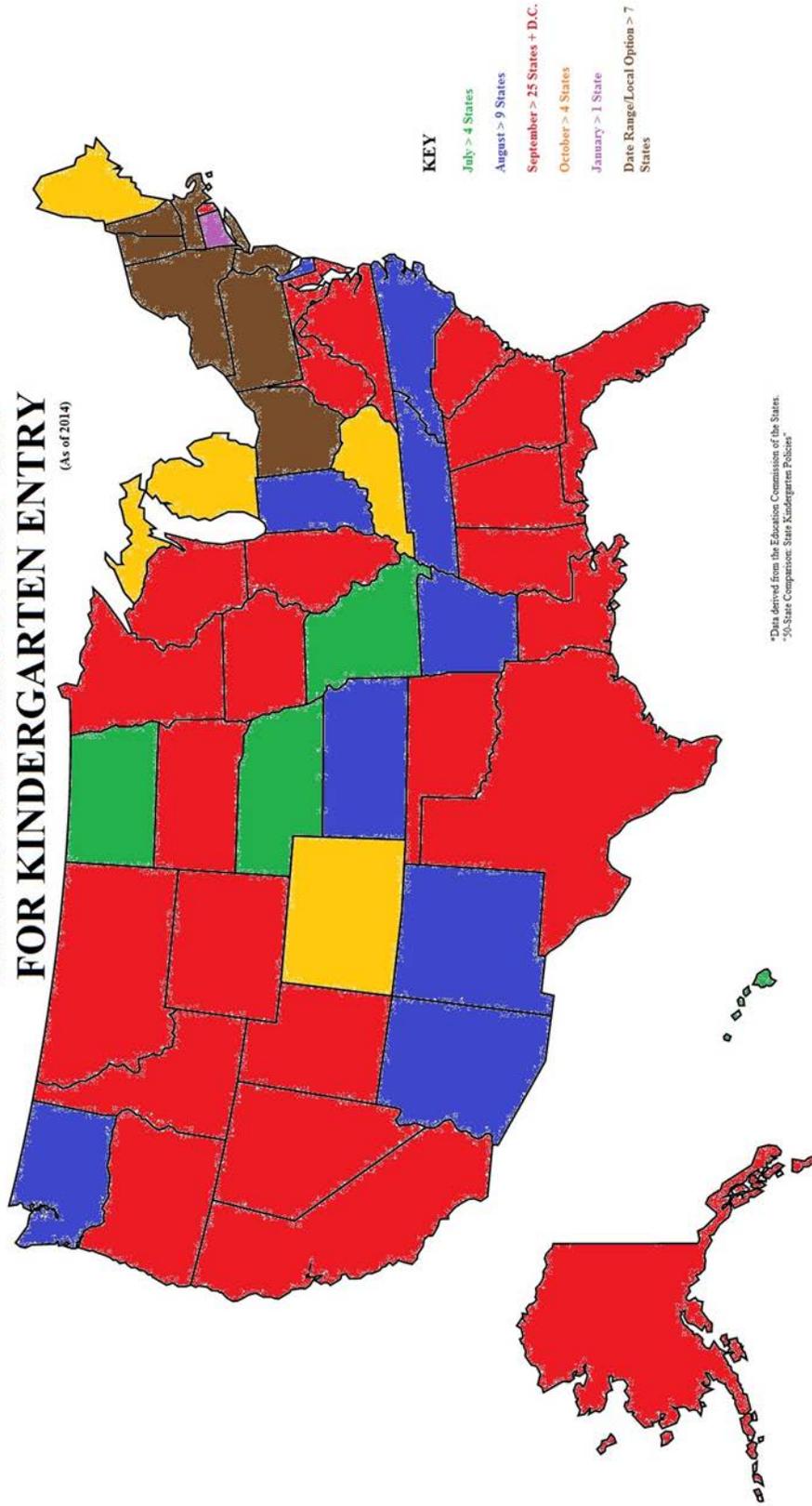


Figure 1D: BIRTHDAY MONTH CUT-OFF FOR KINDERGARTEN ENTRY (As of 2014)

As demonstrated in tables 1A-1D, in 2014, the youngest compulsory school age in eight states was five-years old, whereas the oldest compulsory age in two states was eight-years old. For kindergarten attendance, 15 states and D.C. required kindergarten, whereas 35 states did not require kindergarten attendance. When it came to kindergarten assessment, 28 states and D.C. required an assessment, 19 states did not require an assessment, and three states were in the process of creating a required kindergarten assessment. As for birthday cut-off dates to complete five-years of age, four states had a cut-off date in as early as July, whereas only one state had a cut-off date as late as January 1st. An overwhelming majority of birthday cut-off dates, however, took place in September.

Although each state has its own set of laws pertaining to kindergarten entry, some school districts, however, can still make exceptions for children who do not fall within a specific age bracket. With such a vast age range among students nationally, children can be anywhere from five-years old to eight-years old when they begin kindergarten, and in Connecticut, it is possible for a child to begin kindergarten at four-years old as long as they have permission. So, as rare as it may be, it is possible for a three-year old child in Connecticut and an eight-year old child in either Pennsylvania or Washington to be in kindergarten at the same time. The differences in cognitive, social, and emotional development between a four-year old and an eight-year old, however, are monumental, and yet, those children could be learning the same material but could have varying developmental capacities and demonstrate different skill levels.

Advocates for Children in the Early Childhood Education Policy Debate

When it comes to children's rights and kindergarten readiness and entry, the biggest voice advocating for children is the National Association for the Education of Young Children. (NAEYC 2015) The NAEYC's mission statement, revised in 1995, advocates for children's right

to an equal education, as well as equal educational opportunities that provide assistance for children who have not yet met the necessary requirements for kindergarten readiness. The organization also works to establish appropriate expectations for developmental practices within the kindergarten classroom. They believe that schools should support children's learning, regardless of whether the child is "ready" prior to kindergarten entry. Not only that, but they believe school readiness should not be narrowed down to a list of capabilities every child must have, rather readiness should recognize that children progress at different rates. In addition, readiness should not consider only what the child can do, but what the school can do to help the child become ready to learn.

Another contributing voice is the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists and the Departments of Education within each state. (NAECS/SDE 2001) The NAECS/SDE position statement on entry and placement in kindergarten still expresses the organizations' disappointment, yet again, in the way kindergarten readiness is being handled, or lack thereof. Kindergarten teachers state that they are not able to teach various approaches to learning in order to help children grasp the material and increase cognitive development, nor can they determine the curriculum for their own classroom. Moreover, it is the school administrators who are deciding what is taught and how it is taught based on what they believe will improve overall student achievement and school ratings. To make matters worse, school administrators are constantly pressured to increase education standards that are aligned with the increase in standardized testing. As a result, the principals, teachers, support staff, and most of all, the children, feel the pressure as well, and the school environment becomes increasingly unpleasant for everyone.

The NAECS/SDE argues that the process of redshirting has become a way to lessen some

of the pressure on all of those involved (i.e. children, parents, teachers, principals, etc.). Their position statement even mentions that schools themselves may now be taking part in the initiating of redshirting by administering developmentally inappropriate tests to measure children's readiness, and later, putting pressure on parents to delay their children's kindergarten entry. The position statement is also quick to point out that the transitional grades between preschool and kindergarten that some schools create, which will be discussed later on, only make matters worse for the child as they get older. The NAECS/SDE reiterates that age eligible children have the right to enter kindergarten on time, regardless of their assessment results. Assessments are not supposed to be used as a method to deny children entry into kindergarten at the appropriate chronological age. Moreover, attention and financial resources need to be redirected toward improving the transition into kindergarten, as well as the kindergarten curriculum itself.

In addition, the key messages of the Developmentally Appropriate Practice Policy Statement align with the NAECS mission statement, and even take readiness a step further to include specific activities children should engage with in kindergarten in order to promote school success. (Copple & Bredekamp 2009) It states that schools and its' teachers should be ready for the child at kindergarten entry, and not the other way around. They should encourage children's cognitive development by introducing learning activities of varying degrees of difficulty. The policy statement goes into greater detail in discussing the importance of play and its value in children's self-regulation and social competence, as well as encouraging their language development. They address the fact that many children are no longer afforded the freedom of play and/or self-selected activities outside of a school environment, presumably because of adult-selected extra-curricular activities for children, and possibly increased time with technology (i.e.

games, visual entertainment, etc.). Because of this, children are not as familiar with dramatic play anymore, not to mention the cognitive, social, and emotional development children accrue while acting out real life roles that help them learn about themselves and increase their comprehension of the world around them.

Summary

The assessments children now have prior to kindergarten, supposedly, measure whether or not a child will succeed academically in elementary school. The accuracy of such measures, however, is debatable. (Graue 1993) So, what does this mean for the curriculum of kindergarten and the responsibilities of the teacher? And what information is out there in regard to laws that affect varying children's entry into kindergarten and kindergarten placement?

4. PRACTICE

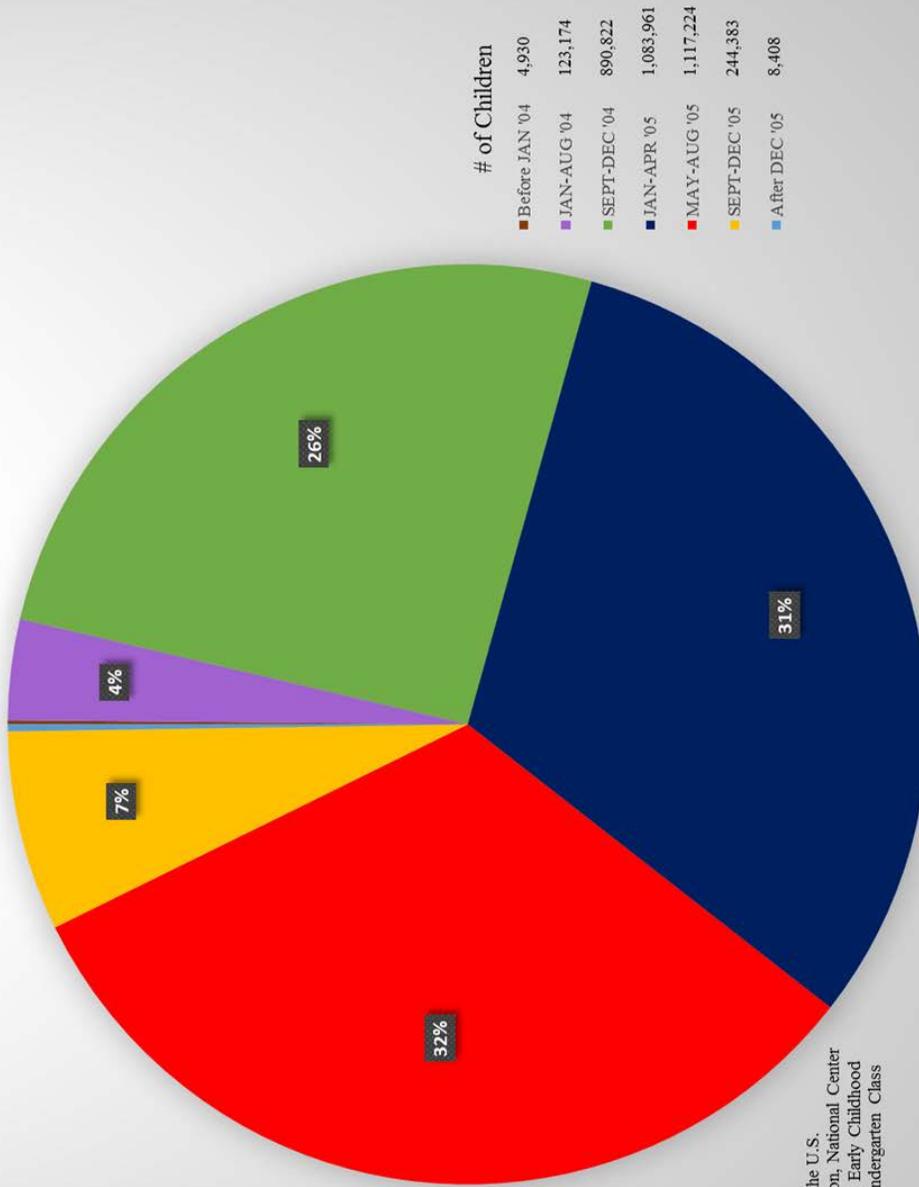
The Practice of Children's Transition into Kindergarten

The idea of kindergarten has evolved in relation to the conception of "readiness" since the 1970s. (Lascarides & Hinitiz 2013) The issues surrounding kindergarten readiness only began to gain traction, however, in the late 1990s along with the larger education reform movement. Now, kindergarten is being called by many "the new first grade," due to its more advanced curriculum in preparation for an academic career that will largely revolve around high-stake testing. To make matters more pressing, children are expected to come to school "kindergarten ready," on their very first day of school. But, what if a child is not "kindergarten ready?" The answer for some, is redshirting- a child's delayed entry into kindergarten, usually with the intention of creating an additional year for that child to develop socially and to strive academically.

At the start of the 2010-2011 school year, 3,472,902 children were enrolled in

kindergarten alone. (Diamond, Reagan, & Bandyk 2000) A majority of the kindergartners, however, had birthdates that fell before September 2005, indicating that the kindergartners were at least five-years old, if not older when they walked into their classroom(s) for the first time. To demonstrate, the following graph in Figure 2 represents data that was collected from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study: Kindergarten Class of 2010-2011. The graph shows the number and total percentage of children born within a specified date range who were part of the 2010-2011 cohort. (NCES 2015) The time frame consisted of children's birthdays between January 2004 and December 2005.

2010-2011 Kindergarten Cohort



*Data is derived from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics Early Childhood Longitudinal Study: Kindergarten Class of 2010/2011.

Figure 2: 2010-2011 Kindergarten Cohort

What more can this graph tell us? According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 9% of children each year are redshirted in the United States. (Katz 2000) While redshirting used to occur primarily in private institutions, it has become increasingly common in the public education system. Depending on societal pressures and influences, communities display significantly different incidences of redshirting. (Huang 2015) The state of Wisconsin, for example, averaged a rate of 7% in redshirting. Once the prevalence in redshirting within the state is broken down into school districts, however, the redshirting rate varies from as low as 3% in some schools to as high as 94% in other schools. Although it is rare to have such a substantial difference in redshirting, Wisconsin is an example of the potential increase in educational disparities that can come from the practice of redshirting.

Today, kindergarten is largely concerned with academic instruction and furthering cognitive development, rather than affording opportunities for children to play and to socialize. (Bassok, Latham, & Rorem 2016) There has been a heightened focus on writing/reading, as well as a concentration on mathematical skills, however, rather than child-initiated activities and less time spent on the arts (i.e. drawing/painting, dance, music, dramatic play, etc.). Not only do kindergartners use textbooks and workbooks, as well as complete multiple worksheets nowadays, they are expected to know how to read by the end of the year. Unfortunately, the shift from a play-based curriculum to an instruction-based curriculum in kindergarten has changed the most in schools that typically serve low-income families that cannot afford the preschool experience for their children. Hence, those children who were assessed without prior school experience in pre-K, have been increasingly labeled "not ready" for kindergarten.

Who is Affected?

Children who are often redshirted, tend to have late summer to fall birthdays, and will,

therefore, be the youngest in their class if they begin on time. (Education Commission of the States 2014) A child used to be considered ready for kindergarten once they reached the specified chronological age of five-years old, rather than where they were at developmentally, but that is no longer the case. Class, race, and gender, are also subtle contributing factors to redshirting that are hardly being addressed.

Children who are white, male, and come from a high SES family background are more likely to be redshirted, for the fact that parents do not believe their boys are developmentally ready, based on their behavior and high need for physical activity. (Huang 2015) It appears that while white, well- educated parents redshirted their children initially, a growing number of less affluent, low-income parents are now redshirting their children too, but it may be for different reasons. In regards to educational attainment, children with mothers who hold a college degree are more likely to be viewed as kindergarten ready, as opposed to children with mothers who hold a high school diploma or less. (Baumgartner 2016) When it comes to gender, girls out-perform boys both academically, and behaviorally. With more boys being redshirted, however, discrepancies in development between girls and boys, in regard to relative age, worsens. Interestingly, boys in the South are twice as likely to repeat kindergarten as boys living elsewhere in the country. (Katz 2000) Redshirting is also more prevalent in some neighborhoods than others due to social pressures from the rest of the community, however, there is a growing speculation that some schools themselves are the ones recommending, even pressuring parents to redshirt their children.

Intergroup Dynamics: Parents and Schools

Academic redshirting is the action of an adult holding a child back from starting kindergarten. With this decision, comes a range of arguments, both for and against, from parents

to policy makers. Based on existing research, there are two distinct ways to look at redshirting. The first, is that parents who initiated the redshirting process did so in order for their child to have an advantage over their peers in the following school year. Based on the multitude of books and articles that discuss redshirting, it is understood that children who are redshirted typically come from wealthier families and their parents are more aware of the concept of redshirting. On the other hand, more recent publications on redshirting have begun to suspect that there are parents of lower socio-economic status who redshirted their child too, but only because they were advised by the school to do so. Hence, it is important to look more closely at the perspectives of the adults who are closest to children (i.e. parents) and the ones who understand the most where children are developmentally (i.e. teachers) in order to understand the intergroup dynamics that shape the experience of kindergarten.

Due to increased pressures from the federal government with policies like the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the National Education Goals Panel, No Child Left Behind, the Every Student Succeeds Act, and the Common Core Standards in the 21st Century, teachers started to complain that the children in their classes did not meet set standards because those who taught the younger grades, beginning with kindergarten, were not doing an adequate job of preparing children for academic instruction and standardized testing. (Little & Cohen-Vogel 2016) Thus, kindergarten teachers began to feel that they were not able to teach what they believe is developmentally appropriate anymore because of the increasing demands that were coming down from above- higher grade teachers and from school administrators who have now become the most nervous about school performance.

Kindergarten teachers, in particular, view readiness in terms of social-emotional development, as opposed to cognitive development, which they believe children will learn once

they attend kindergarten. Specifically, positive social interactions and behaviors, along with willingness to learn and participate outweigh the identification of letters/sounds and numbers. Unfortunately, more teachers are told to reconstruct their curriculum to meet the needs of the increasing number of six-year olds entering kindergarten, as opposed to the children entering kindergarten who are only five years old. As a result, teachers unintentionally create a curriculum that is developmentally inappropriate for children who are beginning kindergarten at the designated starting age of five-years old.

As much as kindergarten teachers believe social and emotional development is more essential than cognitive development, teachers have begun to sway on what they believe children should know and be capable of in kindergarten. The biggest change in beliefs has been children's literacy. (Bassok, Latham, & Rorem) In 1998, 31% of kindergarten teachers felt it was necessary that kindergarten children acquire the skills and demonstrate the appropriate proficiency in reading, however, those in favor of attaining reading skills in kindergarten rose to 80% in 2010. The rest of the findings were even more startling, with kindergarten teachers' who offered daily student-initiated activities for a one-hour minimum, which decreased from 54% to 40%. In the twelve years of the study, teachers also admitted to limiting music from 34% to 16%, and art from 27% to 11%, daily. The data in the research was completed prior to the implementation of the Common Core Standards, which has only increased the amount of time in kindergarten spent on academic skills, and decreased the amount of time on art, music, and the like.

Parents are the most boisterous than any other group and are very passionate about whether to redshirt or not to redshirt their children, however it is disconcerting that redshirting is portrayed as being associated with higher SES families, and neglects to address families of the working-class who find themselves as part of the redshirting process. All parents, however,

believe that their child needs to be more “ready,” than the teachers think their students need to be. (Hatcher, Nuner, & Paulsel 2012) According to parents, their child should have basic knowledge of things like the alphabet, counting, and identifying colors and shapes, whereas teachers are more concerned with the way in which the child behaves and responds to instruction. Hence, parents wish their child to be intellectually ready for kindergarten, while teachers wish their future students to be socially and emotionally ready. Perhaps, if kindergarten and preschool teachers team up and decide on the appropriate aspects to measure readiness, as well as informing parents with preschool age children of what readiness skills are to be emphasized, the need for redshirting would not be as strong. Or, perhaps, the schools and policymakers should make the school environment ready for the child, by perhaps having a first grade that is more accepting of different abilities and skills.

A commonly used website - debate.org - posed the question, "Do you consider redshirting an unfair advantage?" (debate.org 2017) The poll demonstrated that 52% of users did not think redshirting led to an unfair advantage, whereas 48% of users did see redshirting as an unfair advantage over one's peers. It was clear, that out of the comments posted by people, especially parents who had redshirted their own children, that they were very passionate one way or another about the issue of redshirting. Those in favor of redshirting commented that, *"Putting off kindergarten for a year may be the best thing for certain children because they all develop at different rates,"* and, *"What other parents do is no else's business."* At the same time, however, those who opposed redshirting did not hold back, stating that, "Redshirting is an abomination," *"Cheaters will always justify their actions," "Once behind, always behind,"* and, *"You want your kid to have more confidence? Well, it comes at the expense of my kid."*

Indeed, there are parents who manipulate the education system in order for their child to

have a perceived advantage over their peers, especially when it comes to sports. Most of the existing literature focuses on this aspect of redshirting. As time goes on, however, other factors have begun to influence parents' decision to redshirt. Interestingly in the literature, African Americans and other minorities appear concerned for their children's readiness but do not redshirt their children unless prompted by the school (informally). Caucasians, however, seem to openly express their intent to redshirt their children. (Diamond, Reagan, & Bandyk 2000)

It is important to keep in mind while conducting research on redshirting the assumptions held by parents and school affiliates who support it, as well as the ones who oppose it. Parents for redshirting commonly assume their child will have a head start developmentally because he/she will be older than most of their classmates. (Hatcher, Nuner, & Paulsel 2012) Some teachers are also in favor of redshirting because their older students tend to be more emotionally mature and so they have an easier time following directions. What many don't know is the research shows that the potential positive effects of redshirting only last until the third grade; after that, the data shows the emergence of negative effects of redshirting; low self-esteem, more likely to do drugs, and earn less money when they are older. On the opposing side, however, I have not found any value laden assumptions about redshirting that parents of redshirted children have, rather they appear unaware of the school's advantage in redshirting their children. Furthermore, those who support redshirting may not realize the effects it has on the redshirted child's peers as well. In another aspect, those who oppose redshirting may be unaware of how schools manipulate unsuspecting families solely based on socio-economic status, race, gender, or age of the child.

The manifestation of redshirting between schools and parents in today's society is one of the factors in determining how and why children are redshirted. The intergroup dynamics that

play out now are just the result of a long history of change and perception among different groups of people, and if there was an awareness of such changes, that may eliminate the need for redshirting altogether. Rather than only discussing what redshirting is and its effects, the thought processes that lead to redshirting demonstrate the cause and effect of particular intergroup dynamics between families and the education system. We need to recognize the full range of stakeholders here: policy makers who want children in the nation or state to be children ready to learn and perform well in the economy, school administrators who are concerned with how their school is rated in relation to test scores (accountability), teachers because of accountability for curriculum performance and how they are evaluated by the school administration in relation to test scores, and parents who want their children to get ahead of the game.

When children are assessed prior to kindergarten, they all display a wide range of skill and proficiency, and therefore, cannot be held to particular measures, nor standards of assessments. Not only that, all stakeholders - parents, teachers, school administrators, and policy makers - may have different expectations for children eligible for kindergarten entry, like what they should already know and what they can do in and out of school. Those who assess, and inevitably determine whether a child is redshirted, only consider the short term advantages. Although redshirted children may enter kindergarten more advanced, the well-being of the child takes a back seat for the benefit of the multiple stakeholders.

Intergroup Dynamics: Students and Teachers

The significance of an early childhood education in the United States is not fully recognized because children's own insights into their school experiences are not valued by adults. The age of a child when they first enter into kindergarten can affect the way they adapt to a new environment, as well as the way they form relationships with fellow classmates, and more

importantly, their teachers. This is just one of many reasons why parents may redshirt their children, or prolong their kindergarten entry. When a child is redshirted, however, they can experience various effects that may correlate with the type of relationship quality they have had with their teacher. In hopes of having more students both intellectually and emotionally ready to learn in kindergarten, it is important to look at teacher-student relationships in early childhood education, how these roles may differ in various classroom environments, and how the quality of the relationship may affect a child's overall kindergarten readiness.

Researchers have examined the significance of teacher-student relationships, especially during a student's early childhood education. (Sabol & Pianta 2012) Utilizing Developmental Systems Theory, researchers measured perceived quality of teacher-student relationships through several surveys. Although the various surveys measured older students' perceived teacher-student relationships, the study focused mainly on teachers' perceived notions, particularly at the early childhood level of education. Researchers measured perceived closeness, conflict, and dependency, according to preschool, kindergarten, and early elementary teachers. It goes without saying that children from lower SES families have a pre-determined academic risk, and therefore, are more likely to form lower quality relationships with their teachers, compared to other children. These findings confirmed that a child's positive relationship with a teacher during early childhood can be the most important determinant in a students' school success, especially for those who enter school with pre-existing risk factors associated with poor academic performance. Furthermore, teacher-student relationships can compensate for prior negative experiences a child brings with them at the school gates. And although the bond between teacher and student tend to dissipate as the child gets older, a child's relationship with their teacher in kindergarten and first grade is predicated on their relationship with their preschool teacher.

Moreover, the teacher-student relationship quality in preschool, as opposed to parent-child relationship quality, is a stronger predictor of relationships with kindergarten and first grade teachers. Thus, if a child demonstrates aggressive behavior at the beginning of preschool, in relation to a poor quality teacher-student relationship, the child will most definitely get worse if the issue is not addressed immediately.

Other research has looked even more closely at the association between teacher-student closeness and conflict in preschool and kindergarten, and how it affects a child's skill level and how they adapt to first grade. (Pianta & Stuhlman 2004) The study examined the importance of teacher-student relationships, and makes note of mentioning the recent issues concerning children's lack of school readiness. As a result, the quality of teacher-student relationships was linked to changes in development and the ability to obtain the social and academic skills needed for a successful transition to first grade and continued success throughout a child's education. Through the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care, 490 students, their families, and teachers were assessed for the study. During the research phase, students were assessed in work habits, academic performance, and overall social and emotional development. Although several different tests were conducted, again, only teachers' perceived notions of teacher-student quality was the primary focus, which measured the closeness and conflict between a teacher and individual students. Through this, researchers concluded that a positively stable teacher-child relationship in kindergarten resulted in a student's behavioral competency and less academic problems in first grade. As observed, however, teaching styles, classroom management, and the teacher's emotional tone greatly affected the relationship they had with their students. Hence, the more sensitive the teacher and

overall feel of the classroom environment, the less behavioral adjustments and disciplinary infractions that occur within early childhood education.

Another study observed a kindergarten classroom that appeared flexible and child-centered with a play-based curriculum; there were 14 children, two lead teachers, and several assistants in the classroom simultaneously. (Lee & Recchia 2012) As exemplified through multiple observations, it was clear that power was crucial in the classroom and could indirectly affect individual relationships among a child and the adult in charge. In this classroom, some children are referred to as leaders because of their ability to affect the behavior and actions of other students, especially those of a younger age. In this particular study, three children – two boys and one girl – were considered “leaders” who both positively and negatively influenced their classmates. Based on the adult-child interactions between the teacher(s) and leaders of the classroom, the teachers relations with other students suffered more often times than not. Because of this, teacher-student relations were poor, which lead to multiple disruptions in the learning process. The leaders tended to exclude or boss other children around, as well as ignore adult intervention at times. The teachers would either ignore or redirect the student’s attention to another activity. These situations can potentially shift the power dynamics between teacher and students, and teachers have to consider, “when the rights and privileges of one child are infringing on the rights and privileges of all others.” It is more efficient for a teacher to be understanding rather than critical of a situation, as well as redirect rather than reprimand a student, all the while maintaining a consistent learning environment for all children. As a result, the teacher-student relationship is undamaged and remains stable, with room for improvement, especially in early childhood education. Because balance has been maintained within the

classroom, there are multiple opportunities to then strengthen teacher-student relationships once again.

With yet another study had a slightly different take on teacher-student relationships, as it addressed teachers' fears and acceptance of sharing power with their students in the classroom. (Rogoff 2001) Not only are students the "learners," but teachers learn from the students as well. By not having full control over classroom instruction, the teacher can observe how children interpret an assignment/activity and make it their own. Moreover, the teacher can see what works, what doesn't work, and how to improve a lesson, not to mention how individual children are progressing. When the teacher becomes more in tuned to each student's strengths and weaknesses, they can learn how to foster students' independence by allowing them to take the lead in their own learning. It is a different way of teaching and learning that can occur in the classroom, especially in early childhood education, and shows that it is also ok to veer from the lesson plan if the teacher thinks it will lead to a teaching moment. In addition, a teacher may admit that they are uncomfortable with the fact that they do not know everything their students question them about. The teacher may fear that they cannot be in control of their students if they do not know everything, however, it shows that everyone- both teachers and students alike- can share the distribution of knowledge and responsibilities within the classroom. As a result, everyone can feel more comfortable in saying, "I don't know," because they are in a more relaxed and supportive learning environment, which can further strengthen the relationship the teacher has with their students. The most compelling factor of these examples, however, is the fear of losing control. What many teachers may not realize is that by not having complete control over their students, they are opening a door that allows students to express themselves and

communicate their needs and wants more efficiently in early childhood because they feel accepted by their teacher.

A different research study involved the idea of choice, as well as the illusion of choice that teachers “give” their students, especially in early childhood education. (Cannella 1997) The choices that children are given in early childhood are already quite limited, and appear more as ultimatums than choices (i.e. do not talk at the carpet or else sit alone at their desk, share toys or else play separately, follow directions or else receive a time-out). In most cases, the child’s “choice” results in them following the adult’s command, or being isolated from their classmates. Another way that teachers trick their students into following rules is by making the children believe that they themselves constructed the rules they must follow, that way, children are more inclined to abide by something they think they had a say in. The phrase, “covert control,” is used here because children agree with the boundaries they think they created for themselves, when in fact, it is the teacher who lead their students to such “discoveries.” This idea may backfire, however, if students catch on to a teacher’s manipulation, then they will no longer trust, nor have respect for their teacher, which may stifle their learning, even at the early childhood level. A student at any age will respect their teacher if their teacher respects them, which will continue to drive the learning process forward.

Lastly, a study that offered an alternative to teachers control and manipulation tactics, by advocating for increased, influential student involvement in schools, and emphasizing the benefits to both students and the teachers/schools that allow students to take action and for their voices to be heard, regardless of age. (Fletcher 2003) Currently, most student involvement, especially in early childhood education, is superficial and run by adults. The younger the students, the less likely they are encouraged to take initiative, and the less likely they are

motivated to do so. Student involvement is not students passively learning, rather it involves students' engagement and participation in the learning process. If students are involved and encouraged by their school community, it results in children "learning with a purpose." Not only that, if students can design their own curriculum and teach others, the material will resonate within them, and the students will be eager to learn even more. In addition, if students can evaluate their teacher's teaching, as well as teacher-student relationships (unlike the previous studies), perhaps both teachers and students could better support the other in their teaching/learning endeavors, and teacher-student relationships could blossom.

The significance of teacher-student relationship quality in early childhood education can and will affect whether a child is redshirted and/or their readiness for kindergarten entry. Although the six articles address various aspects of teacher-student relationships, it is all from the perspective of adults. The significance of teacher-student relationship quality in early childhood education can affect whether a child is redshirted and/or their readiness for kindergarten entry. Based on the six readings on teacher-student relationships, below is a list of effects that can be caused by student-teacher relationship quality, especially at the early childhood level.

Positive Teacher-Student Relationship Quality

- High levels of engagement and motivation
- Increased participation
- Better/improved social skills
- Positive peer relations
- Increased reading ability and vocabulary (especially for children of color)

Negative Teacher-Student Relationship Quality

- Disinterest in school
- School avoidance
- Social withdrawal
- Anxiety
- Less cooperative participation
- Academic risk
- School retention

As demonstrated in the research studies listed above, teacher-student relationship quality in early childhood education may contribute to a child being redshirted. More research needs to be conducted in order to bring awareness to the factors that influence children's kindergarten readiness. A study on how relationship quality among teachers and students may have changed in early childhood education and why, may be a good place to start.

Alternative to Redshirting?

With all the hype of redshirting and the tension between parents and schools, there is an alternative to redshirting- It is called Transitional Kindergarten. Transitional Kindergarten (TK), or sometimes known as Developmental Kindergarten or Young Fives, is a return to the traditional kindergarten program that past generations are familiar with. (Cappelloni 2013) Some schools thought the best thing to do would be to add an additional year of schooling prior to kindergarten to ensure that the children who were not considered ready for traditional kindergarten at the time of their assessment, would become ready with the help of Transitional Kindergarten. It is developmentally appropriate for children whose birthdays fall later in the year, and bridges the transition between preschool and kindergarten if a child is not ready.

Transitional Kindergarten must always be followed by a year of kindergarten, unless otherwise permitted by the teacher or school official. Preference tends to be given to those children whose birthdays range from late spring through the fall. Transitional Kindergarten goes at a slower pace, and has a more flexible classroom structure, so that children can have an easier time acclimating to the school environment, and especially for those who did not attend preschool.

[Perceived] Transitional Kindergarten Benefits:

- Promotes self-confidence and independence
- Children learn acceptance, self-control, to share, converse, as well as recognition of letters, numbers, and other basic concepts
- Earlier academic achievement
- Decreased placement in special education programs
- Decreased grade retention
- Decreased high school dropout rates and increased future employment

For Transitional Kindergarten (TK), those who "assess" children take into consideration the sex of the child, chronological age, and existing cognitive development in order to determine whether or not a child is "ready" for traditional kindergarten, or would benefit from two years of kindergarten; the first being transitional kindergarten, followed by the standard kindergarten we have today. Thus, one can conclude that there is also an extra benefit in public schools who have two year kindergartens - more revenue per student, per year. Instead of receiving federal dollars for 13 years of schooling, schools/districts will receive that money for 14 years for children enrolled for two years of kindergarten. Because of this, two-year kindergarten programs throughout the country do not necessarily have children's best interest at heart, and in the long run, children who enroll in two years of kindergarten will most likely experience the same negative effects as children who are redshirted because they will always be seen as being older than their peers and less likely to be in solidarity with them.

Implications

More often than not, children who are older, even by a few months, can display signs of advanced maturity and cognitive development, which may be more than their younger counterparts. The speed at which children develop is of no surprise, and the younger they are, the more rapid their growth, both cognitive and social-emotional. Thus, it is no wonder that a child up to 12 months older than another can be vastly different, and in a school environment, nonetheless. (Deming & Dynarski 2008) The possible short-term advantages and potential long-term disadvantages of redshirting vary greatly, depending on the child's SES, gender, race, and prior abilities/disabilities. The effects can also depend on the parents and/or teachers who support or oppose redshirting. Below are the various advantages and disadvantages of redshirting: (Graue 2000)

Advantages

- Physically stronger, taller, and improved fine motor skills (beneficial for sports)
- More socially and emotionally mature
- Increased confidence
- Maintains self-control
- Higher test scores that lead to better college and/or higher lifetime earnings

Disadvantages

- Low self-esteem
- Feelings of alienation
- Behavioral problems
- Altered curriculum
- Dissatisfaction for school

As is shown, the advantages and disadvantages of redshirting appear to contradict one another, however, the effects vary for each individual child. That being said, it is important that all stakeholders' involved in the decision to redshirt a child are aware of the possible implications. On the one hand, children who are redshirted may be seen as more capable and intelligent than their classmates, and may therefore, receive more attention and more positive

reinforcement, which may lead to long-term greater opportunities in life (i.e. better college, better job, higher income earnings). (Deming & Dynarski 2008) On the other hand, children who are redshirted are seen as older than their classmates and possibly more independent, therefore, they may receive less assistance from the teacher and lack the motivation that they need to do well in school. As a result, children who are redshirted may produce lesser quality work, leading to lower levels of achievement, and therefore, less opportunities to succeed in life (i.e. no college, lower paying job, less lifetime earnings). Even if children who are redshirted do experience the possible advantages that come with redshirting, the older a child is when they begin school, the older they are when they graduate, the less likely they are to earn a college and/or post graduate degree and the later they enter the job market because of their age, leading to less lifetime earnings.

Something that is not addressed often when discussing redshirting, however, is that most of the positive effects of redshirting are short-lived, and, interestingly, descend after third grade standardized testing has commenced. Redshirted children may produce better GPAs and higher standardized test scores initially, however, the advantage those same children had, begins to wain as they age out of elementary school, and the gap between the older and younger students dissipates. When this happens, redshirted children feel the pressure to continually be better than their younger peers, to no avail, because their younger classmates catch up developmentally. As a result, redshirted children may experience decreased self-esteem, less motivation to learn, and therefore, receive lower grades as a result. Children who are redshirted may have a learning disorder when they enter school too, but if they enter school a year later, they are also diagnosed later, losing an entire year where they could have been helped, which could have made the learning disability more manageable. Redshirted children may dislike school altogether, and in

some cases, drop out of high school when they come of age. Furthermore, because they started school at an older age, they can legally discontinue high school with even less schooling than someone who drops out but started school at five-years old. Thus, adolescents and/or adults who were redshirted as children, may not only be dissatisfied with life, but have increased rates of criminal activity, decreased rates of civic participation, and even shorter life expectancies. (Cook & Kang 2016)

Older students in kindergarten may start out with advanced academic skills, however, their younger classmates eventually attain the same skills, and in a shorter amount of time. (Datar & Gottfried 2013) Despite that, as more children are redshirted, they are entering kindergarten older, with a greater capacity for instruction-based learning. Because of this, teachers alter the curriculum in order to tend to the needs of the older children, resulting in greater difficulty for the younger children in class. And the more difficult the curriculum may be for the younger students, the more often they are labeled "learning disabled" because they cannot compete with the unfair advantage their older classmates have over them. The more children who are redshirted, and the more it is encouraged, the age of entry will also continue to increase. It has become a race in order for children to begin kindergarten at an older age than their fellow classmates, only to have a perceived advantage that will not last.

Summary

Equal opportunity in the current education system does not exist, as children are assessed before they reach the school gates, most often, for kindergarten. When children are assessed, and so early on, the education gap only widens among gender, race, and especially socio-economic status (SES). Greater family income is shown to have positive effects on children's readiness skills, unlike children from low income households who are already at risk for poor academic

performance, and increases if they are redshirted. Furthermore, lower income households may not have the financial means necessary to provide educational materials that will prepare their children for kindergarten entry, unlike upper income families who can provide financially for their children. Based on the research, it is also evident that most of the positive research that has been done on redshirting appears to focus solely on cognitive development as well, with little to no mention of detailed effects on social and emotional growth, or lack thereof. Because of this, it would be beneficial to look at the different effects on children whose parents voluntarily redshirted them, as opposed to parents who may have felt pressure from schools to redshirt their children.

CONCLUSION

Academic redshirting is a child's delayed entry into kindergarten, usually with the intention of creating an additional year for that child to develop socially and to strive academically. With this decision, comes many arguments, both for and against, from parents to policy makers. Based on existing research thus far, there are two distinct ways to look at redshirting. First, is that parents who initiated the redshirting process did so in order for their child to have an advantage over their peers in the following school year. It is my understanding that these children come from wealthier families and their parents are more aware of the redshirting phenomena. On the other hand, there are parents who belong to lower SES families who redshirted their child only because they were advised by the school to do so. This led me to consider whether schools may be redshirting children to suit their needs instead of the child's needs. Could the very institution that parents trust to educate their children be manipulating uninformed parents for their own gain (i.e. financially, accountability, etc.)?

If we look beyond a child's statistics - physically and socio-economically - perhaps, we can accept that a child does not have to be the best at everything in order to succeed. And if children are going to be assessed, it should not be done as a way to weed-out which children are ready and which are not ready for school. If children are going to be assessed, it should be done as a way to prepare schools to ready their learning environments for children.

Learning is a life long journey and all children have an inherent desire to learn, regardless of their “assessed” abilities and capacity to succeed. Thus, considering the manifestation of redshirting among parents and schools, with consideration for teacher-student relationship quality, as well as the conceptual framework that surrounds kindergarten readiness, it is strongly encouraged that further study be conducted on how and why children are assessed prior to making their kindergarten debut.

APPENDIX



Tiffany's Drawing (at five-years old)

REFERENCES

- American Montessori Society. 2015. "History of AMS." American Montessori Society.
www.amshq.org.
- Association of Montessori Internationale. 2014. "Montessori Classrooms." Association of
Montessori Internationale. www.amiusa.org.
- Bassok, Daphna, Scott Latham, and Anna Rorem. 2016. "Is Kindergarten the New First Grade?"
AERA Open 2, no. 1. Accessed January 27th, 2017.
- Baumgartner, Erin M. 2016. "Making Gains or Falling Behind? Changes and Stability in School
Readiness." Social Science Research. Accessed January 27th, 2017.
- Cannella, Gaile Sloan. 1997. Deconstructing Early Childhood Education: Social Justice and
Revolution. 3rd Edition. Michigan: University of Michigan.
- Cappelloni, Nancy. 2013. Kindergarten Readiness. California: SAGE Company.
- Chertoff, Emily. 2015. "The Great Montessori Schism." www.theatlantic.com.
- Cook, Philip J., and Songman Kang. 2016. "Birthdays, Schooling, and Crime: Regression
Discontinuity Analysis of School Performance, Delinquency, Dropout, and Crime
Initiation." American Economic Journal: Applied Economics 8, no. 1: 33-57.
- Copple, Carol, and Sue Bredekamp. 2009. "Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early
Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8. 3rd Edition." National
Association for the Education of Young Children. www.naeyc.org.
- Datar, Ashlesha, and Michael Gottfried. 2013. "School Entry Age and Children's Social
Behavioral Skills: Evidence from a National Longitudinal Study of US Kindergartners."
SSRN Scholarly Paper. Accessed October 16th, 2016.

REFERENCES

- Debate. 2017. "Do You Consider Redshirting an Unfair Advantage?" www.debate.org.
- Deming, David, and Susan Dynarski. 2008. "The Lengthening of Childhood." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 22, no. 3: 71-92. Accessed October 16th, 2016.
- Dewey, John. 1997. *Democracy and Education*. New York: Free Press.
- Dewey, John. 1897. "My Pedagogic Creed." *The School Journal*, Volume LIV, Number 3: 77-80. Accessed March 29th, 2017.
- Diamond, Karen, Amy J. Reagan, and Jennifer E. Bandyk. 2000. "Parents' Conceptions of Kindergarten Readiness: Relationships with Race, Ethnicity, and Development." *The Journal of Educational Research* 94, no. 2: 93-100. Accessed October 16th, 2016.
- Editorial Projects in Education Research Center. 2016. "Issues A-Z: The Every Student Succeeds Act: An ESSA Overview." *Education Week*. www.edweek.org.
- Editorial Projects in Education Research Center. 2015. "No Child Left Behind: An Overview." *Education Week*. www.edweek.org.
- Education Commission of the States. 2014. "50-State Comparison: State Kindergarten Policies." *Education Commission of the States*. www.ecs.org.
- Fletcher, Adam. 2003. "Meaningful Student Involvement: A Guide to Inclusive School Change." Unknown. www.dallasisid.org.
- Froebel, Friedrich. 1895. *Pedagogics of the Kindergarten*. New York: D. Appleton & Company.
- Froebel, Friedrich. 1887. *The Education of Man*. New York: Appleton & Company.
- Gladwell, Malcom. 2008. *Outliers: The Story of Success*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.

REFERENCES

- Graue, M. Elizabeth. 1993. *Ready for What? Constructing Meanings of Readiness for Kindergarten*. New York: SUNY Press.
- Graue, M. Elizabeth, and James DiPerna. 2000. "Redshirting and Early Retention: Who Gets the 'Gift of Time' and What are its Outcomes?" *American Educational Research Journal*. Accessed September 9th, 2016.
- Hatcher, Beth, Joyce Nuner, and Jean Paulsel. 2012. "Kindergarten Readiness and Preschools: Teachers' and Parents' Beliefs within and across Programs." *Early Childhood Research and Practice* 14, no. 2. Accessed December 2nd, 2015.
- Huang, Francis Lim. 2015. "Investigating the Prevalence of Academic Redshirting Using Population Level Data." *Research Gate* 1, no. 2. Accessed September 9th, 2016.
- Katz, Lillian. 2000. "Academic Redshirting and Young Children." *ERIC Digest*. Accessed September 9th, 2016.
- Lascarides, V. Celia, and Blythe Hinitiz. 2013. *History of Early Childhood Education*. New York: Routledge.
- Lee, Yoon-Joo, and Susan L. Recchia. "Who's the Boss? Young Children's Power and Influence in an Early Childhood Classroom." *ECRP Vol. 10, No. 1*. Accessed March 19th, 2016.
- Lillard, Angeline S. 2005. *Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lillard, Angeline S. 2013. "Playful Learning and Montessori Education." *American Journal of Play*. Vol. 5, No. 2: 157-180. Accessed November 23rd, 2015.

REFERENCES

- Little, Michael H., and Lora Cohen-Vogel. 2016. "Too Much Too Soon? An Analysis of the Discourses Used by Policy Advocates in the Debate Over Kindergarten." *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 24: 106. Accessed September 9th, 2016.
- Lopata, Christopher, Nancy V. Wallace, and Kristin V. Finn. 2005. "Comparison of Academic Achievement Between Montessori and Traditional Education Programs." *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*. Vol. 20 Issue 5: 5-13.
- Montessori, Maria. 1995. *The Absorbent Mind*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
- Montessori. 2015. "Montessori Material and Learning Environments for the home and the school. The International Montessori Index." www.Montessori.edu.
- Morgan, Harry. 2011. *Childhood Education: History, Theory, and Practice*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.
- NAECS/SDE. 2001. "Still Unacceptable Trends in Kindergarten Entry and Placement." National Association of Early Childhood Specialists. www.naeyc.org.
- NAECS. 2015. "where we STAND." National Association for the Education of Young Children. Accessed October 1st, 2015.
- National Center for Education Statistics. 2015. "Early Childhood Longitudinal Study: Kindergarten Class of 2010-2011." U.S. Department of Education. Accessed March 3rd, 2017.

REFERENCES

- National Education Goals Panel. 1993. "The National Education Goals Report: Building a Nation of Learners. Volume One: The National Report." National Education Goals Panel. Accessed January 4th, 2017.
- Pianta, Robert C., and Megan W. Stuhlman. 2004. "Teacher-Child Relationships and Children's Success in the First Five Years of School." *School Psychology Review* Vol. 33 No. 3: 444-458. Accessed March 23rd, 2016.
- Rogoff, Barbara. 2001. *Learning Together: Children and Adults in a School Community*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sabol, Terri J., and Robert C. Pianta. 2012. "Recent trends in research on teacher-child relationships." *Attachment and Human Development* Vol. 14 No. 3: 213-231. Accessed March 23rd, 2016.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2013. "Head Start." Department of Health and Human Services. Accessed November 30th, 2013.