Study: If You Want Successful Children Put Off Kindergarten for One Year

Kids born in June and July shouldn't start kindergarten when September hits, say researchers


By Daryl Nelson

ConsumerAffairs' culture and lifestyle reporter, Daryl Nelson has written for Readers Digest, Townsquare Media, AllHipHop.com and a number of other online and print publications. Read Full Bio→ (http://www.consumeraffairs.com/about/staff/daryl-nelson/)
Email Daryl Nelson (mailto:daryl.nelson@consumeraffairs.com)  Phone: 800-351-3140

It's all a bit hazy, but believe it or not I do remember a little bit about kindergarten.

I vaguely recall forming lines to go to other parts of the school, playing on the jungle gym at recess, and having a crush on a girl named Sharon Price--who would ultimately choose a guy named Alan because he always had Jolly Ranchers in his pocket. It was just the beginning of me losing girls to other guys who had cooler things than I did.

Alan was older and taller than me too, which couldn’t have worked in my favor, and according to a new study parents should be waiting an extra year to enroll their kids in school when their birthdays are during the summer months.

Researchers from the University of British Columbia suggest holding off enrollment for a short while could allow your child to be more successful, not only with their schooling, but also when they become adults and enter the professional world.

Fewer CEOs
Researchers at the Canadian school found that children who were enrolled in kindergarten as soon as they were eligible—as opposed to waiting one year later—grew up to fill fewer CEO positions than those kids who started kindergarten later on.

“Our findings indicate that summer babies underperform in the ranks of CEOs as a result of the ‘birthdate-effect’ a phenomenon resulting from the way children are grouped by age in school,” explained one of the study authors Maurice Levi.

“Older children within the same grade tend to do better than the youngest, who are less intellectually developed. Early success is often rewarded with leadership roles and enriched learning opportunities, leading to future advantages that are magnified throughout life.”

Parents of those kids who turn kindergarten age during the summer months have to decide, “Do I want my child to be one of the youngest and possibly least developed academically or socially in the class, or do I prefer my child to be among the oldest, which increases their chance to standout and outperform classmates.” It’s a mental back and forth many parents have to discuss with each other.

**Not just age**

And it’s not only age that makes a difference when kids start school. Size can also be a factor because some parents prefer their children to be one of the bigger students in the class as this sometimes leads to the child having more confidence, and increases their chances of excelling in physical activities during gym class or recess.

Researchers believe developing a good amount of confidence at an early age only raises the chances of that confidence staying with the child, as there will always be an age and potential size difference compared to other classmates for the child's whole academic career.

The study also revealed the amount of CEOs who have birthdays in June and July far outweigh those CEOs who were born in the other 10 months of the year.

“Our evidence is consistent with the ‘relative-age effect’ due to school admissions grouping together
children with age differences up to one year, with children born in June and July disadvantaged throughout life by being younger than their classmates born in other months,” said the researchers in the study.

“Our results suggest that the relative-age effect has a long-lasting influence on career success.”

**Earlier not always better**

Many parents believe enrolling a child into kindergarten when they become old enough during the summer, allows them to practically get an extra year of schooling, as some would say “the earlier the better” when it comes to children learning how to read, count and spell their names.

And although some younger kindergarteners may actually outshine older classmates in these areas, sometimes they don’t do as well socially, as being the youngest and smallest student from the point of kindergarten all the way up until high school never really scores them any points with their peers.

In fact, younger age children and those with a smaller physical stature could be subject to teasing and ridicule from other children.

Levi says this could affect a child’s level of confidence by a great deal, which they can carry with them when applying for jobs after college graduation, especially those jobs that are in leadership roles.

This can not only have a big impact on the child’s future, but also to the business world, that could potentially have fewer capable and confident leaders.

“We could be excluding some of the business world’s best talent simply by enrolling them in school too early,” said Levi.