

Part of the  **canada.com** Network

canada.com, Newspapers, TV,
Radio

Log in | Register today | Email 

local classifieds  working  driving  obituaries  celebrating  shopping  househunting  contractors  dating

See today's Digital Edition
Subscribe to email newsletter
Subscriber Services



12°C

Clear

Detailed Forecast

[The Gazette Home](#)

Search
for

in The Gazette





017 Monday, September 17, 2007

Holding kids back can push them forward

Being oldest in class is beneficial: experts

JANICE TIBBETS, CanWest News Service

Published: Tuesday, September 04

Jacquie Thiessen is already considering giving her unborn infant the "gift of time" when he or she reaches school age by delaying entry into kindergarten.

Thiessen, a kindergarten teacher in Saskatchewan, is a proponent of academic redshirting - a controversial practice of having younger children, particularly boys, sit out a year if they are born near the school's cutoff date.

That way, they'll be among the oldest, brightest, strongest, and more mature when they finally start school.

 [Email to a friend](#)

 [Printer friendly](#)

Font:

The term redshirting is adopted from varsity sports, where the youngest university athletes will be benched for their first year so they have a chance to grow bigger and stronger while keeping their four-year playing eligibility.

Thiessen says that she often encourages parents of children born late in the year to hold them back because they often don't have the maturity and self-confidence of their older peers.

While there are no statistics in Canada, the National Centre for Education Statistics in the United States reports that redshirting, which has held steady through the last two decades, occurs in about nine per cent of children who are kindergarten age.

In affluent neighbourhoods, it is reported to be as high as 25 per cent of eligible children because their parents do not have to worry about child-care costs.

"The evidence is worldwide that relative age affects performance," says Gus Thompson, a former University of Alberta professor who authored a 2005 study showing that the oldest students in Grade 1 scored significantly better than their younger classmates on tests measuring self-esteem.

In Canada, the birthday cutoff is set by each province, or in some cases, individual school boards. In most provinces, a child must be 5 years old by Dec. 31 in the year that he or she starts kindergarten. Some provinces have earlier cutoffs, including Quebec and Prince Edward Island, where a child must be five by Sept. 1, and Nova Scotia, which has a cut-off of Oct. 1.

In her years of teaching, Thiessen has found that the youngest kids in the class are usually the problem students, the ones who are easily distracted and therefore harder to teach.

But John McNamara, an educational psychologist at Brock University in St.

Today's Gazette



By-election day

Polls are open today from 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.

in three ridings where by-elections...

[more]

Thai plane crash kills 89
Iraq vows justice over killings
Montreal woman missing in woods

More News Stories

Digital Products

See today's Digital Edition
Subscribe to email newsletter

Inside The Gazette

News
Editorial / Op-ed
Letters
Your Business
Sports
Arts & Life
Driving
Columnists

The Stocks Pages
[30 days Archive](#)
[Headlines Scan](#)
[Newspaper Ads](#)
[Special Sections](#)

Weekly Sections

Preview
Culture
Books
Saturday Extra
Take 5
Weekend Life
Homefront
Weekend Religion
Travel
Insight
Driving
Working
Youth Zone
West Island

Features

[Aislin Cartoons](#)
[Montreal Alouettes](#)
[Montreal Canadiens](#)
[Faceoff Hockey Pool](#)

Classifieds

Marketplace

- Find a job at working.com
- Find a car at driving.ca
- Find real estate at Homes
- Find great stuff at shopping
- Find a contractor

Announcements

- Announcements at Celebrating.com
- Obituaries at Remembering

General Classifieds

- Local classifieds
- Selling? Place an ad
- Meet a match at Connecting

Catharines, Ont., says that research has shown there can be a downside of redshirting. Otherwise normal children can feel alienated and act out because they are clearly older than their classmates.

Mary Scissons, a Saskatoon educational psychologist, said she would hold back her daughter, Brigid, if she could do it all again.

"She's very bright and I thought she had to be challenged intellectually," says Scissons, who put her late-October child into kindergarten when she was 4.

"I think I kind of got caught in the parental treadmill. To do it all over again, I would just slow down a little bit more."

Brigid, who is now almost 16 and is starting Grade 11 this fall, remains one of the brighter kids in her class, but lacks the more sophisticated social skills of her older peers, Scissons said.

1 2

Subscriber Exclusives

Headlines marked with a  are exclusive to subscribers.

[More](#)



[Enter our contests](#)



[Your Gazette](#)

- Gazette in Education
- Subscriber Services
- Subscribe
- Renew subscription
- Update credit card information
- Send us a news tip
- Advertising
- About us
- Contact us
- Privacy Statement

Letters

- To the editor
- Site feedback

[Ads by Google](#)

Inside the [canada.com Network](#).

Newspapers:

National Post Victoria Times Colonist The Province (Vancouver) Vancouver Sun Edmonton Journal Calgary Herald Regina Leader-Post