

# The Benefits of Delayed Schooling

If you are one of those parents who decided to delay your child's schooling, or forgo it altogether, you have plenty of company.

According to [Education Week](#), in the years 2008-2010 fewer than half of U.S. children under age five attended preschool, and the number of stay-at-home-parents has been [rising](#) over the past decade. Additionally, there are more than 2 million homeschoolers in this country and those numbers are increasing dramatically. A 2013 report by [Education News](#) found that the number of children being homeschooled in the United States has increased by 75 percent over 14 years. The report noted that "the number of primary school kids whose parents choose to forgo traditional education is growing seven times faster than the number of kids enrolling in K-12 every year."

Many of these parents who choose to delay or forgo schooling for their children may be influenced by mounting research showing that early schooling is not beneficial to most children, and in fact may be harmful to many. Most significantly, a [2008 longitudinal study](#) by psychology professor, Dr. Howard Friedman, of the University of California, Riverside, concluded that "early school entry was associated with less educational attainment, worse midlife adjustment, and most importantly, increased mortality risk." In an article in the United Kingdom's *Telegraph*, Professor Friedman [asserts](#):

*"Most children under age six need lots of time to play, and to develop social skills, and to learn to control their impulses. An over-emphasis on formal classroom instruction—that is, studies instead of buddies, or staying in instead of playing out—can have serious effects that might not be*

*apparent until years later.”*

In fact, the UK seems to be taking Dr. Friedman’s research, and that of others, to heart in an attempt to halt the expansion of formal schooling to earlier ages. In 2013, a respected group of more than 130 researchers and practitioners in the early childhood education field [argued](#) that formal schooling should be delayed until age six or seven, citing the “profound damage” that early schooling is causing children.

Here in the U.S., a 2015 research paper by Stanford University professor, Thomas Dee, [found](#) that delaying school entry led to less hyperactivity and more attentiveness. Children who entered formal schooling closer to age 7 were able to exhibit more self-regulation and had better mental health markers than children who entered school at age 6 or earlier. Even more remarkable is that this effect was sustained until at least age 11.

But what about the poor and disadvantaged children who purportedly benefit from earlier, more formal schooling? Dr. Richard House, a senior lecturer at the University of Roehampton in London, [argues](#):

*“There are of course some children from very deprived backgrounds who on balance would, and certainly do, gain a net benefit from such early interventions. But the evidence is now quite overwhelming that such an early introduction to institutional learning is not only quite unnecessary for the vast majority of children, but can actually cause major developmental harm, and at worst a shortened life-span.”*

As efforts mount both domestically and abroad to push academics and expand government schooling to increasingly younger children, it is important for parents to look at the data and implications of such early education policy. While the relatively small percentage of children from “very

deprived backgrounds,” as Dr. House states, may benefit from more rigorous early schooling, the vast majority of young children are not helped—and may in fact be harmed—by accelerated institutional learning.

It is no wonder that more and more parents are recognizing the serious effects that play-deprivation and forced academics can have on young children. In growing numbers, these parents are choosing to delay formal schooling—or avoid it altogether—and cultivate a nurturing, play-filled, family-centered childhood in their homes and throughout their communities.

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