



The Gift of Time

By Pam Morris, Early Learning Center director

What we wouldn't all give for an extra day in the week to get things done. Or a specific day with someone who is no longer in our life. There is a scene in the movie, "Good Will Hunting" where Minnie Driver, who has been left a sizable sum of money so she can attend Harvard, says, "Don't you think I would give it all back if I could just have one more day with my dad?" "I would give it back in a heartbeat." "But I can't." I have paraphrased a bit but you get the idea. While this sentiment often resonates with me as my dad passed away just two years ago, I think about this idea of the gift of time in other contexts; specifically when it comes to children and education.

During my years in this field, I have been in contact with many parents who are often in a hurry to get their children to the next level. When will they start walking (when their little one is still crawling)? When will they start talking (when their little one is babbling) and I can't wait for kindergarten so they can get on with their "real learning."

Many of you know that I am the proud and vocal mom of 3 daughters: 22, almost 17 and 14. And when they say the time goes fast, they (always that anonymous "they") are absolutely right. Your children grow up so fast. One day you are wearing the baby carrier and the next, you are choosing an outfit for the winter formal. AARGH!!

But what if we took a step back and try to see what the rush is all about. What if we really look at our child to see that this time of childhood **NEVER** comes back. And this time of innocence and needing just a few more hugs or a little more time to truly make that separation, smoothly, from parents is fleeting in the scheme of their lifespan; in the scheme of our lifespan.

According to a research study conducted by [Stanford CEPA Center for Education Policy Analysis](#) states, "that a one-year delay in the start of school dramatically reduces inattention/hyperactivity at age 7... We also find that this large and targeted effect persists at age 11."



In the article published about this study, “Ready, steady ... stay at home? The benefits of a delayed school start” (theguardian.com), the authors report that the answer to the question, should children delay their start in a large kindergarten, is “it depends on the child, their resources and the quality of preschool available. There is no simple answer.

However, a study (*Thomas S Dee, in Stanford*) recently published with Hans Henrik Sievertsen of the Danish National Centre for Social Research showed improved self-regulation in children whose entry had been delayed. Interestingly, these improvements persisted into later childhood too.

It’s obvious to me that this decision is not an easy one. It is one that needs to take into account so many variables. Most importantly, in my opinion, is knowing your child. What type of environment is the right one? What do they need to be successful? And how does each individual family dynamic play into this decision? There is no easy answer and it is one that each family must make for themselves. It’s also important to realize that this decision can be made one way one year and then a different decision can be made the following year.

If families take into consideration how they can give their child the greatest gift of all, the gift of time, then that is the best decision no matter the specifics. Time to grow; time to develop; time to be a child. The gift of time: there is no greater gift.

Shabbat Shalom!