2021-2022

KINDERGARTEN READINESS IN ALAMEDA COUNTY

in partnership with

FIRST 5 ALAMEDA COUNTY

prepared by

ASR

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

RESEARCH ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS

The level of engagement from parents and caregivers in our study would not have been possible without the support and assistance of trusted messengers in the community. ASR would like to acknowledge the early care and education professionals and teachers and the following community-based organizations for their outreach to parents and caregivers:

- Eden United Church of Christ
- Hayward Promise Neighborhood
- Lincoln Mandela Family Resource Center
- Oakland Head Start

- Parent Voices Oakland
- Roots Stay Ready for School
- San Antonio Family Resource Center
- Union City Family Center

The survey of early care and education professionals was a new endeavor for the Alameda County Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. We would like to thank BANANAS Inc., Community Child Care Council (4Cs) of Alameda County, and Hively for supporting outreach to Alameda County early care and education programs.

The Research Advisory Group would not have been possible without the efforts of Community Centered Evaluation & Research (CCER) and Clarity Social Research Group (SRG), who scheduled, coordinated, planned, and facilitated the Research Advisory Group meetings and its subcommittee meetings. In particular, ASR would like to acknowledge Maricela Piña, Nayeli Bernal, and Julie Harris of CCER and Penny Huang of Clarity SRG.

We are also grateful for the advice and guidance provided by Cristi Carman and Alex Wagnon of the University of Oregon, RAPID-EC research team, who shared with us their expertise in surveying parents and caregivers of young children during the COVID-19 pandemic. We incorporated their guidance into our procedures and some of their survey questions into our surveys.

KINDERGARTEN READINESS STUDY CONTRIBUTING GROUPS

Research Advisory Group = Parent/Caregiver Subcommittee + Community Members - Educators

Guiding Agencies = First 5 Alameda County (Lead) + Applied Survey Research + Community Centered Evaluation and Research + University of Oregon, RAPID-EC

Finally, ASR would like to especially thank First 5 Alameda County staff members, who helped with designing, implementing, and offering valuable feedback on the 2021-22 Alameda County Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) project, including Karyn Barnes, Jane Bernzweig, Vincent Cheng, Monica De Loera, Loren Farrar, Lisa Forti, Diana Garcia, John Garvey, Liz Gregor, Rowena Kamo, Carla Keener, Erika Kuempel, Anna Miera, Ana Rasquiza, Alma Reyes, Michele Rutherford, Mary Saelee, Laura Schroeder, Kristin Spanos, and Jane Wellenkamp.

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Road to Kindergarten Readiness

Community, Family, and School conditions affecting kindergarten readiness were determined through analysis of 3,000+ surveys and the input of a 30-member Research Advisory Group comprising parents/caregivers, early care and education professionals, transitional/kindergarten teachers, and community leaders. Learn more about the study sample and methodology in Appendix D of the 2021-22 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment.

FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION

As noted by our Research Advisory Group, discrimination based on racism and classism negatively impacts family's ability to access services and resources and undermines conditions needed for kindergarten readiness.

FINANCIAL STABILITY

Sufficient income and supports to ensure families can meet their basic needs for housing, food, utilities, diapers, and resources required to create a safe, healthy, and enriching home environment.

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

Access to affordable, high-quality child care options that meet family needs and preferences, especially for families with low incomes and those most impacted by structural racism.

KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION SUPPORT

Access to events and activities that ensure families' smooth transition into the TK–12 system, such as parent-teacher meetings, home visits, and kindergarten orientations, plus policies and practices that engage fathers.

FAMILY HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Connection to community-based resources through family navigation and access to health and mental health services that are culturally responsive and include vision, dental, and screenings and preventative care.

THRIVING NEIGHBORHOODS

Community conditions and a built environment that support family well-being, including affordable housing, access to public transportation, and family-friendly spaces.

SUPPORTED EDUCATORS & SYSTEMS

Collaboration between systems, including early care and education (ECE), transitional kindergarten to 12th grade (TK–12), and community organizations to better support ECE professionals, teachers, and families with resources and services.

FIRST 5 ALAMEDA COUNTY

www.first5alameda.org

KINDERGARTEN READINESS IN ALAMEDA COUNTY

2021-22 Executive Summary

Children are not innately ready or not ready for kindergarten. *They thrive when they grow and develop in environments that support and nurture them and their families. This* **requires community conditions that position families for success**—*well-paying jobs, access to quality, affordable early care and education, transportation, health care, safe, inviting places to live, play, and connect. It also requires* **freedom from discrimination rooted in racism and classism**. *According to parents/ caregivers, ECE professionals, and kindergarten/TK teachers, readiness declined during COVID-19.* **Findings from this year's report show that 33% of parents believe their child is fully ready for kindergarten compared to 44% in 2019.** *The 2021-22 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) findings and recommendations show how our county may improve kindergarten readiness in the overlapping environments that influence children's readiness—communities, families, and schools.*

Every two years since 2008, First 5 Alameda County (First 5) has sponsored a Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) to inform equitable programs, policies, and investments for children prenatal to age five, with the goal of ensuring that communities, families, and schools have what they need to support kindergarten readiness.

The 2021-22 Alameda County KRA builds off findings from prior years and is framed by a model of readiness that acknowledges **the effects of systemic inequities on kindergarten readiness.** First 5 prioritized a participatory, community-based research approach to study kindergarten readiness and ways it may have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over time, the studies have consistently indicated that **factors predicting readiness are closely associated with socioeconomic conditions rooted in structural racism and classism and public disinvestment in neighborhoods with primarily Black and Brown residents.**

Participatory and Responsive Approach

As part of First 5's intentional commitment to equity, we have evolved our organizational practices, including our approach to data and research. The KRA narrative began to incorporate the changes in 2015, with substantial shifts in the 2017 KRA framing. Consistent with this trajectory, the 2021-22 KRA process was designed to be participatory through the inclusion of a **Research Advisory Group.** The group was composed of diverse parents/caregivers who were compensated for their time, educators, representatives from community-based organizations, and policymakers. Advisory group members provided input on survey design, recruitment and outreach, interpretation of the results, and the final report recommendations.

Furthermore, the approach to the 2021 study was shaped through extensive consultation with the community and a survey of school district partners. Given the uncertainties and challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and through engagement with community partners and school districts, the 2021 study was redesigned to forgo teacher assessments of children entering kindergarten in favor of surveys of parents/caregivers, kindergarten/transitional kindergarten (TK) teachers, and early care and education (ECE) professionals.

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44%   2019

33%   2021-22
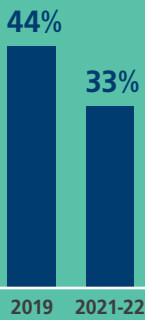
According to parents/caregivers, 33% of children were fully ready for kindergarten compared to 44% in 2019. Structural inequities compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic have impacted children, families, and communities.

COMMUNITIES

FINANCIAL STABILITY
Address Poverty and Ensure Basic Needs are Met

KEY FINDINGS

- Family income was strongly related to readiness.
- Families in the study who participated in the Oakland Resilient Families guaranteed income pilot reported significantly higher readiness.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support policies and programs that **increase job creation and workforce development with livable wages, economic supports like guaranteed income, and expand programming that supports families' basic needs.***
- Strengthen policies and practices that **expand access to quality affordable housing and utility assistance.***

THRIVING COMMUNITIES
Invest in Thriving Neighborhoods

KEY FINDINGS

- 65% of families indicated help connecting resources was important to them; only 12% of all families had actually received this kind of assistance.
- Lower-income families, families living in lower-income neighborhoods, Black or Hispanic/Latino families, and monolingual Spanish-speaking families were more likely to say community supports are needed.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Invest in **community-driven equitable economic development** for communities impacted by structural racism that has resulted in disproportionate rates of poverty.*
- Increase **identification of and support for children with special needs**, including early screening and intervention services through pediatric visits and community.*
- Advance policies that **promote family-friendly neighborhoods** through investments in public schools, parks, playgrounds, affordable housing, transportation, accessible libraries.*
- Support strategies and programs that improve timely **access to community supports through family navigation and care coordination.**
- Increase family **leadership opportunities and civic engagement.**
- Double-down on **place-based strategies and intentional community and public partnerships.**

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FAMILIES

FAMILY HEALTH & WELL-BEING — Improve Access and Navigation to Family Health & Well-Being Supports

KEY FINDINGS

- Children who attended well-child visits had higher readiness. In addition, children whose parents/caregivers reported fewer concerns about their child's mental health also had higher readiness.
- Almost 4 out of 10 children missed a health check-up during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Among children with special needs, 28% were unable to access the professional help they needed during the pandemic.
- 67% of caregivers expressed concern about their child's mental health during the pandemic.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improve systems to expand access to **affordable, culturally responsive mental health services and supports** for families and children within the community. *
- Invest in programs, services, and policies that are affirming and responsive to the cultural and language needs of communities to **address historical inequities and mitigate current experiences of discrimination.***
- Invest in **family resource centers and provide access to community resources and navigation support.**
- **Continue policies that were implemented during the pandemic to improve access to services and benefits enrollment** (e.g., Medi-Cal continuous eligibility, free quality school meals).
- Invest in **parent/caregiver peer groups**, including those that are culturally and gender specific (e.g., dad's groups, Afro-play, LGBTQ+), support networks, community building, and opportunities for leadership.
- Improve systems to **expand access** by **eliminating barriers** like long applications, frequent renewals, and Medi-Cal premiums and co-payments.

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION — Increase Access to Affordable, Quality Child Care and Culturally Appropriate Early Learning

KEY FINDINGS

- Families reported needing activities for young children and child care as their highest priority support.
- Children in higher-income families were significantly more likely to attend licensed child care, as were children who identify as White, Asian/Pacific Islander, or multiracial. Children in monolingual Spanish-speaking households were less likely to attend licensed care.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase access to **affordable, quality child care options** that meet the needs of families.*
- Expand **apprenticeships and workforce pipelines via early care and education for parents/caregivers** to provide access to secondary education.
- Expand **quality development/educational experiences for children in family, friend, and neighbor care** (e.g., partnership with libraries, parks, and recreation).
- Increase **child care-based food programs** to support provider and family food security.

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SCHOOLS

KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION SUPPORTS
Expand Access to Kindergarten Readiness Activities and Transition Supports

KEY FINDINGS

- Use of kindergarten transition supports, especially among fathers, was linked to higher readiness.
- Use of kindergarten transition supports dropped from 2019 (e.g., 87% visited the school in 2019, while 44% visited in 2021).
- Some transition supports were more likely to be offered by elementary schools in 2021-22 compared to 2019 (e.g., parent-teacher meetings, home visits), while others were less likely (e.g., kindergarten orientations).

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Expand access to kindergarten readiness activities and transition supports** that are accessible to all families within their community.
- Promote policies and practices that intentionally **engage and welcome fathers and historically underrepresented family members** in programs and services.

SUPPORTED EDUCATORS & SYSTEMS
Support Educators and Education Systems to Promote Success for Children

KEY FINDINGS

- 88% of kindergarten teachers reported feeling stressed. Educators who reported high levels of stress were over four times more likely to say they plan to leave the profession.
- Early care and education (ECE) professionals experienced the greatest changes to their hours and income during COVID-19: 49% reported decreased hours, 43% decreased wages, and 57% decreased household income.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase access to affordable, quality **mental health and self-care resources** for ECE professionals, educators, and classroom-based supports for children.*
- Support **communication, collaboration, and partnerships** between the home, informal care settings, early care and education professionals, community programs, and schools.*
- Support policies and practices that **expand family navigation and care coordination services at ECE settings and schools.***
- Provide educators with **supports to mitigate learning loss** and **professional development and training** to support students' wellbeing.
- Advance policies and supports for **professional development, capacity building, workforce diversification, and equitable compensation and working conditions** that support providers and quality care.

SUPPORT OF KINDERGARTEN READINESS

Throughout the report, see examples of First 5's local programming, investments, partnerships and policy advocacy that supports kindergarten readiness.

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Data for Action

Data from More Than
3,000
Alameda County
Community Members

2,015
parents/caregivers

694
early care and
education professionals

284
TK and kindergarten
teachers

As a result of this participatory approach and commitment to using data and research to support community-led, family-centered programming, policy, and investment, early childhood stakeholders now have access to the largest local data set available that represents the experiences and needs of thousands of parents/caregivers, ECE professionals, and teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings and corresponding recommendations are intended to help shape a policy response that supports communities, families, and schools in addressing inequities and disparities that have been exacerbated since the onset of the pandemic.

Family experiences and community conditions often differ due to underlying, structural conditions tied to classist and racist policies that can be masked when we look at the result of all families at once. To support an equity-centered approach to data collection, analysis, and reporting, we oversampled in neighborhoods that have experienced historic disinvestment and have been disproportionality impacted by COVID-19, and we have intentionally disaggregated results by neighborhood, income, race/ethnicity, language, and gender. Using the data, we make recommendations for policy change, programs, and/or investments that advance equity.

Supporting Kindergarten Readiness Through an Early Childhood System

Through **partnerships, collaboration, and strategic investment,** our county can help to create the conditions required for all children to enter kindergarten ready to succeed. The findings and recommendations in the 2021-22 KRA reinforce a systems-based approach to early childhood that centers equity and basic needs. First 5's programming, investments, and policy agenda are multipronged and cross **Place, People, and Policy** to improve conditions in the areas we support— **Neighborhoods, Health & Well-Being, Learning & Care, and Family.**

Building an equity-centered early childhood system of care requires the prioritization, commitment, and investment of a cross-section of stakeholders, including parent advocates and leaders, public systems, community-based organizations, and philanthropic organizations. Partnerships are also crucial to ensure that systems serving families— education, health, social services, and others—are integrated and coordinated, including warm hand offs between systems to support families in accessing the care, resources, and services they need.
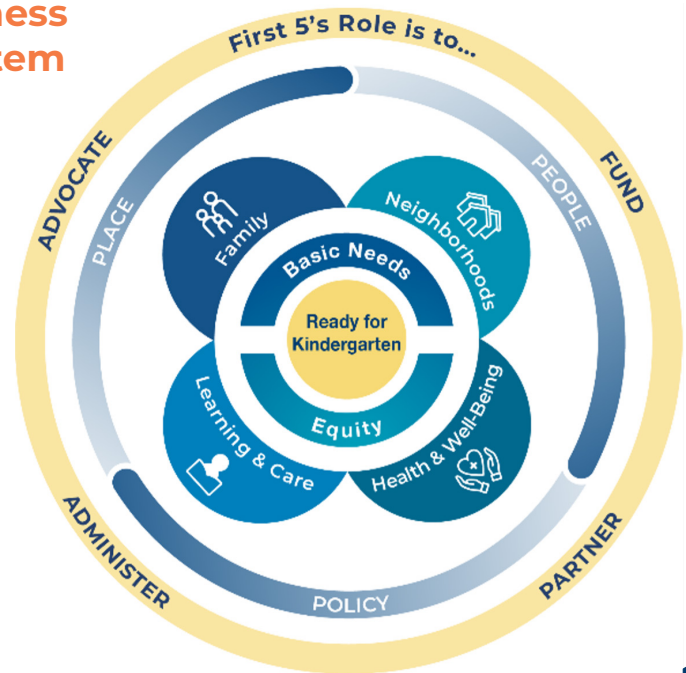
INTRODUCTION

Since 2008, First 5 Alameda County (First 5) has sponsored a Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) every two years to inform equitable programs, policies, and investments, with the goal of ensuring that communities, families, and schools have what they need to support kindergarten readiness.

Over time, the studies have consistently indicated that **factors predicting readiness are closely associated with socioeconomic conditions rooted in structural racism and classism and public disinvestment in neighborhoods with primarily Black and Brown residents.**

First 5 has an ongoing commitment to racial and economic justice. The agency has made intentional shifts to center equity-based practices in the use of data and research to support systems change, policymaking, and investment, in partnership with the community and in service to equity. Beginning in 2015, First 5's approach to the KRA evolved to better demonstrate the connection between community conditions and kindergarten readiness. That shift was more substantial with the 2017 KRA framing of readiness through the lens of communities, families, and schools. Since then, First 5 has continued to take steps to engage the community more broadly and apply more participatory practices. In 2019, this included a parent, educator*, and community forum. In 2021, First 5 established a Research Advisory Group to formally participate in the KRA process from beginning to end.

INCREASED PARTICIPATORY DATA COLLECTION PROCESS FOR 2021-22

2019 Data Collection
Teacher classroom observations, parent surveys, parent focus groups

2021-22 Data Collection
Surveys designed in partnership with parents and caregivers, educators*, community-based organizations, and policymakers sent out to both educators (K/TK teachers and early care and education, also referred to as ECE professionals) and parents
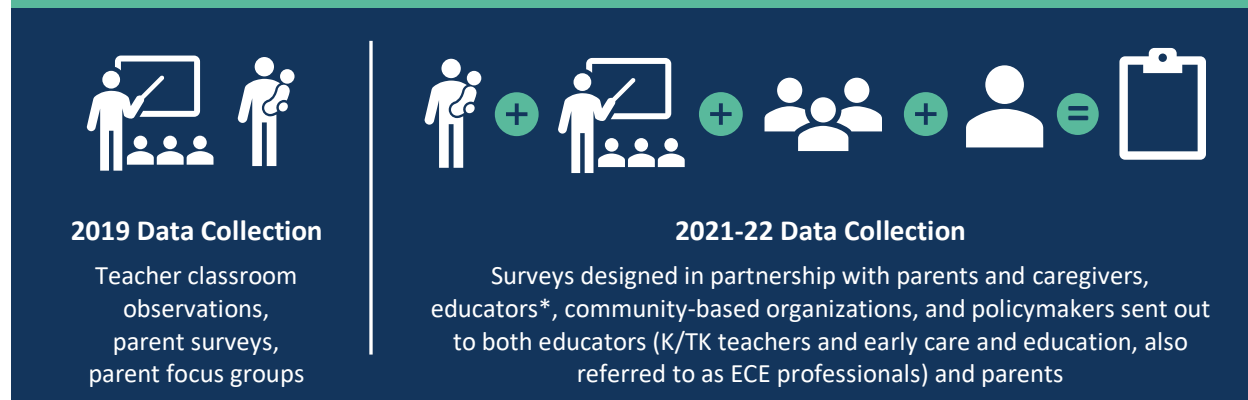
For this report, the term "educator" includes ECE professionals, TK teachers, and K teachers.

From the outset, the 2021-22 KRA process was designed to be participatory through the inclusion of a Research Advisory Group. Advisory group members provided input on survey design, recruitment and outreach, interpretation of the results, and the final report recommendations. The group was composed of diverse parents/caregivers, educators, representatives from community-based organizations, and policymakers. In service to equity and to remove barriers to participation, parents/caregivers were compensated for their time on the advisory group. The participants advised researchers on survey design, recruitment and outreach, interpretation of the results, and the final report recommendations.

Furthermore, the approach to the 2021-22 study was shaped through extensive consultation with the community. In Spring of 2021, First 5 surveyed school districts and found that 64 percent of districts (7 of 11 responding districts plus the Alameda County Office of Education) felt that it was best to eliminate the teacher assessment portion of the KRA due to the hybrid classroom learning environments. Reasons included undue classroom disruptions and concerns that learning loss during the COVID-19 pandemic would lead to inaccurate assessments. The 2021-22 study was redesigned in favor of surveys of parents/caregivers, kindergarten/transitional kindergarten (TK) teachers, and early care and education (ECE) professionals.

DATA FOR ACTION

First 5 is committed to using data and research to support community-led programming, policy, and investment that centers the needs of children and families. As a result of this process, early childhood stakeholders now have access to the largest local data set available that represents the experiences and needs of thousands of parents/caregivers, educators, and early care and education professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings and corresponding recommendations are intended to help shape a policy response that addresses inequities and disparities that have been exacerbated since the onset of the pandemic for communities, families, and schools.

WHAT PROMOTES KINDERGARTEN READINESS?

Children are not innately ready or not ready for kindergarten.[i] They thrive when they grow and develop in environments that support and nurture them and their families. This requires community conditions, such as well-paying jobs, access to quality, affordable early care and education, public transportation, health care, and safe, inviting places to live, play, and connect.[ii]

Community and Family Conditions Are Inextricable

Research shows that **differences in readiness are largely due to structural inequities that disadvantage lower-income children and children of color.**[iii] For example, family income is consistently a strong predictor of readiness; however, this relationship can be explained in part by differences in other factors associated with readiness, such as access to neighborhood assets, including parks, libraries, and mutual support among community members. **Prior research has shown these assets were significantly predictive of kindergarten readiness, but they are more likely to be found in higher-income neighborhoods that receive greater public investment.**[iv]

The KRA also shows that:

- When families with low-income are connected to resources, their children's readiness improves.

- Children's readiness was higher among families with low-income who received a guaranteed income.

- Those accessing services from First 5 Alameda County's (First 5) Neighborhoods Ready for School (NRFS) program—a place-based, community-led initiative—also had higher levels of readiness.

FIGURE 1. **AN EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM OF CARE CULTIVATES COMMUNITY AND FAMILY CONDITIONS FOR CHILDREN'S KINDERGARTEN READINESS**
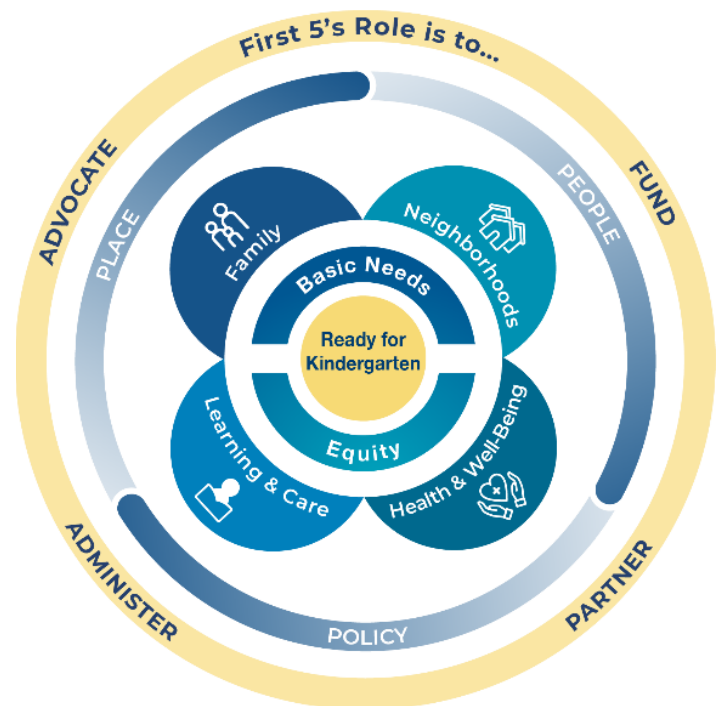
Building an Early Childhood System

In First 5's 2022–2027 Strategic Plan, we use Figure 1 to show an early childhood system of care. First 5's role is to fund, partner, administer, and advocate to build the system and help ensure children enter kindergarten ready to succeed. Our approach to building this system is guided by a **Place, People, Policy** framework that centers equity and seeks to narrow disparities rooted in racism and classism. **The KRA results reinforce the importance of improving conditions in the areas we support—Neighborhoods, Health & Well-Being, Learning & Care, and Family.** In the 2021-22 KRA, findings that impact children's readiness align with these categories.

Early Childhood System Components	2021-22 KRA Findings That Impact Readiness
NEIGHBORHOODS	**Financial Stability** **Thriving Neighborhoods**
HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	**Family Health & Well-Being**
LEARNING & CARE	**Early Care and Education** **Kindergarten Transition Support** **Supported Educators & Systems**
FAMILY	**Financial Stability** **Family Health & Well-Being**

The Role of Public Policy and Investment in Addressing Structural Inequities

In lower-income and Black- and Brown-majority communities, disinvestment, exploitative labor practices, and racist, classist public policies have created conditions resulting in decreased social and economic mobility and persistent, intergenerational poverty. Public systems must work to correct the injustices perpetrated by structural racism and classism, which have extracted wealth from communities and kept children, families, and communities from thriving.

To improve conditions for kindergarten readiness, public policies should reallocate resources and prioritize place-based strategies and investments that support equity and are community-led. This includes economic development tied to the creation of jobs with livable wages for parents and caregivers, access to health care, education, and transportation, among other supportive community conditions.

Public policy and investment can also support the preparedness of early care and education (ECE) sites and elementary schools to support a smooth transition to kindergarten for children and families. ECE professionals, teachers, and care and education systems need supports like opportunities for professional development so they can provide developmentally appropriate learning opportunities, celebrate diversity, engage in inclusive practices, commit to the success of each child, and engage families as equal partners in children's education.[v]

OVERALL IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON READINESS

Increased Stress for Families

The stressors brought on by the pandemic have been widespread but have disproportionately impacted families with lower earnings and communities of color disadvantaged by structural racism.[vi] The conditions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic likely had adverse effects on kindergarten readiness.

COVID-19 led to **parental job loss and financial insecurity,**[vii] as well as health and mental health challenges,[viii] which impacted children's learning and social-emotional well-being.[ix]

Many schools and ECE sites shut down or were forced to transition to online learning.[x] As a result, **fewer children accessed ECE** and therefore **missed opportunities for learning and socio-emotional development**.

Families' use of community resources relative to 2019 declined and children missed enrichment experiences due to the closure or pivot to online services of educational resources in the community, such as museums and libraries.[xi]

Parents/caregivers in the current study also reported **heightened stress levels and increased concerns about their child's mental health and well-being** during COVID-19.

Strain on Educators and Early Care and Education Professionals

ECE professionals and sites experienced **financial instability** due to reduced enrollment and increased costs to meet COVID-related class size reductions. Changing health and safety guidelines, staff shortages, and challenges in offering developmentally appropriate distance learning experiences created further challenges.[xii]

Elementary school teachers also experienced **increased stress** related to providing quality remote learning during school closures, as well as addressing the increased mental health and academic needs of students in their classrooms.[xiii]

ECE professionals and elementary school teachers have creatively adapted to the challenges posed by COVID-19 but continue to struggle to meet their own needs as well as those of their students.[xiv, xv] Educators have identified **the need for more mental health and well-being supports** for themselves and their students. The high levels of stress we found among ECE professionals and teachers in our study have important implications for our care and education systems. Educators with high levels of stress were more than four times more likely to say they plan to leave the profession.

Parents and educators cited the importance of availability of basic needs supports, specifically food and diapers, while educators also pointed to technology access, such as free devices, hot spots, and training as particularly helpful.

Families appreciated teacher flexibility, support, and creativity in delivering new programming and learning opportunities.

EDUCATORS MEET COVID-19 CHALLENGES WITH INNOVATION

"…activities were designed to provide a robust holistic experience for not only the child but the whole family…A family liaison was provided to each school site …. responsible for communicating information via personal phone calls, text messaging, parent letters and emails… Innovative classroom lessons were developed to ensure the domains of social-emotional development, language and literacy, and mathematics were addressed daily."

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ABOUT THIS STUDY AND ITS PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

Despite changes in methodology to adapt to the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic—specifically choosing to survey parents/caregivers, teachers, and for the first time, ECE professionals, instead of relying primarily on teacher assessments of children entering kindergarten—**the 2021-22 Alameda County KRA builds off the findings in the 2019 study and continues to be framed by a model of readiness that acknowledges the effects of systemic inequities on kindergarten readiness.** It also intends to not only measure kindergarten readiness, but also examine how it might have been affected by COVID-19.

This report is the culmination of the efforts of a partnership among First 5, who led and sponsored the study; Applied Survey Research, who conducted analysis of the data and produced reports of the findings; the RAPID-EC team at the University of Oregon, who contributed their expertise in conducting surveys of parents/caregivers during the pandemic and shared survey questions for use in this year's instruments; a diverse 29-member Research Advisory Group, who offered insights and input throughout the research process; and Community Centered Evaluation and Research, who organized and facilitated the Research Advisory Group.

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KINDERGARTEN READINESS STUDY CONTRIBUTING GROUPS

Research Advisory Group = **Parent/Caregiver Subcommittee** + **Community Members - Educators**

Guiding Agencies = **First 5 Alameda County (Lead)** + **Applied Survey Research** + **Community Centered Evaluation and Research** + **University of Oregon, RAPID-EC**

The inclusion of a Research Advisory Group was an ongoing intentional decision in service to equity to center the research process around community wisdom, expertise, and lived experience. The group was composed of 29 parents/caregivers who reflect the diversity of the county and were compensated for their time, educators, representatives from community-based organizations, and policymakers. The Research Advisory Group met six times to advise the researchers and help shape survey design, recruitment, outreach, interpretation of the results, and recommendations. In advance of each full Research Advisory Group meeting, a smaller subcommittee of parents/caregivers would meet to review the materials and provide advice, insight, and recommendations. Facilitated by Community Centered Evaluation and Research, the full Research Advisory Group reviewed materials from the research team and the parent/caregiver subcommittee, engaged in discussion and reflection of their own experiences in the community, and advised on the study and final recommendations.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, COLLABORATION THROUGH EACH STAGE

Sept-Nov 2021	Dec-Jan 2022	Feb-May 2022	Oct 2022-*Ongoing*
Design	**Data Collection**	**Analysis and Recommendations**	**Dissemination**
Research Advisory Group provided feedback on research questions, sampling approach, and survey tools.	**Trusted community messengers** recruited to reach out to parents and caregivers.	**Research Advisory Group** interpreted findings and prioritized recommendations.	**Research Advisory Group** will be invited to present on the KRA. Data will be made available to the public.

With these goals in mind, the study was conducted in late Fall 2021 and early Winter 2022. The report that follows summarizes the results of this study and answers the following key research questions.

A MORE PARTICIPATORY, INCLUSIVE KINDERGARTEN READINESS STUDY EXPLORED SIX KEY QUESTIONS

1 How ready for kindergarten do parents/caregivers and educators believe children to be in the domains of academic, self-regulation, and social readiness?

2 How does children's kindergarten readiness vary by race/ethnicity, income, and other demographic characteristics?

3 What have been the challenges parents/caregivers faced this past year, are these challenges new, and how have they impacted children's readiness?

4 What practices have schools and teachers put in place and what supports are still needed in response to the changing landscape of preschool and kindergarten learning environments?

5 Have policies, practices, and investments played a protective role for children and families?

6 What are the policy recommendations based on the findings?

Questions Explored with These Goals in Mind

The study's redesign helped achieve its primary goals, which included the following:

Use a participatory and equity-informed process that engages parents/caregivers, educators, and community stakeholders throughout the study.	Understand the impact of COVID-19 on kindergarten readiness of children, families, communities, and schools, in the context of past KRA results.	Explore and recommend how early childhood systems and neighborhoods can prepare children for kindergarten.	Recommend and inform policies and practices that promote equity in kindergarten readiness.

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METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION

Three instruments were used to collect data for the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA): a parent/caregiver survey, a kindergarten/TK teacher survey, and an ECE professional survey. All surveys were administered online from December 2, 2021, to January 14, 2022. The full Research Advisory Group met six times to advise on the 2021-22 KRA. Before each advisory group meeting, the parent subcommittee met to review materials, share insights, prepare comments to share with the full advisory group, and debrief prior meetings, ensuring that parent voices were intentionally lifted up in this process. Meetings were held in the evening to increase accessibility for working members. Results were presented to the group on March 22, 2022.

Research Advisory Group Meeting Dates and Feedback Accomplished

September 21, 2021	October 14, 2021	October 26, 2021	November 16, 2021	March 22, 2022	April 12, 2022
Review research questions and target populations and neighborhoods	Review and discuss parent survey	Review and discuss teacher and ECE professional surveys	Review outreach efforts and share final surveys	Present top-level results of all three surveys for group feedback and reaction	Review and discuss policy recommendations

OUTREACH IN UNINCORPORATED AREAS: ASHLAND AND CHERRYLAND

With the support of local partners, special outreach was conducted to engage families in Ashland and Cherryland, two unincorporated areas of Alameda County. A total of 220 surveys were received from families living in these two neighborhoods.

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RESEARCH WITH AN EQUITY LENS

To support an equity-centered approach to data collection, analysis, and reporting, First 5 took the steps listed below:

- We oversampled in **neighborhoods** that have experienced historic disinvestment and have been disproportionality impacted by COVID-19. These neighborhoods overlap with the county's place-based efforts, such as the First 5-funded NRFS effort and COVID-19 priority neighborhoods identified by the Board of Supervisors. To reach these communities, First 5 worked with a number of outreach partners that are trusted messengers in the community.

- **We have intentionally disaggregated results by neighborhood, income, race/ethnicity, language, and gender.** Family experiences and community conditions often differ due to classist and racist policies and that can be masked when we look at the results of all families at once. Using the data, we make recommendations for policy change, programs, and/or investments that advance equity. One example of this is prior findings related to the importance of father figures accessing community resources; First 5's Fatherhood Initiative seeks to address the role of fathers and father figures who have been traditionally excluded by public benefit and education systems. Flagged throughout this report are data points that are meaningful when disaggregated by these characteristics.

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HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

READY COMMUNITIES

FINANCIAL STABILITY
Sufficient income and supports to ensure families can meet their basic needs for housing, food, utilities, diapers, and resources required to create a safe, healthy, and enriching home environment.

THRIVING NEIGHBORHOODS
Community conditions and a built environment that support family well-being, including affordable housing, access to public transportation, and family-friendly spaces.

READY FAMILIES

FAMILY HEALTH & WELL-BEING
Connection to community-based resources through family navigation and access to health and mental health services that are culturally responsive and include vision, dental, screenings, and preventative care.

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION
Access to affordable, high-quality child care options that meet family needs and preferences, especially for families with low incomes and those most impacted by structural racism.

READY SCHOOLS

SUPPORTED EDUCATORS & SYSTEMS
Collaboration between systems, including early care and education (ECE), transitional kindergarten to 12th grade (TK-12), and community organizations to better support ECE professionals, teachers, and families with resources and services.

KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION SUPPORT
Access to events and activities that ensure families' smooth transition into the TK-12 system, such as parent-teacher meetings, home visits, and kindergarten orientations, plus policies and practices that engage fathers.

DISAGGREGATED DATA CALLOUTS

Flagged throughout this report are data points that are meaningful when disaggregated by neighborhood, income, race/ethnicity, language, and gender.

DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

Data
Details about data collection, strengths, and limitations are noted throughout the report.

Survey Design
Details about the design of each survey instrument are noted throughout the report.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

In these sections throughout the report, open-ended, verbatim responses are analyzed for themes and these themes are described. Direct quotes from survey participants are included in each of these sections.

FIGURE 2. **PRIORITY NEIGHBORHOODS AND NEIGHBORHOODS READY FOR SCHOOL (NRFS) COMMUNITIES**
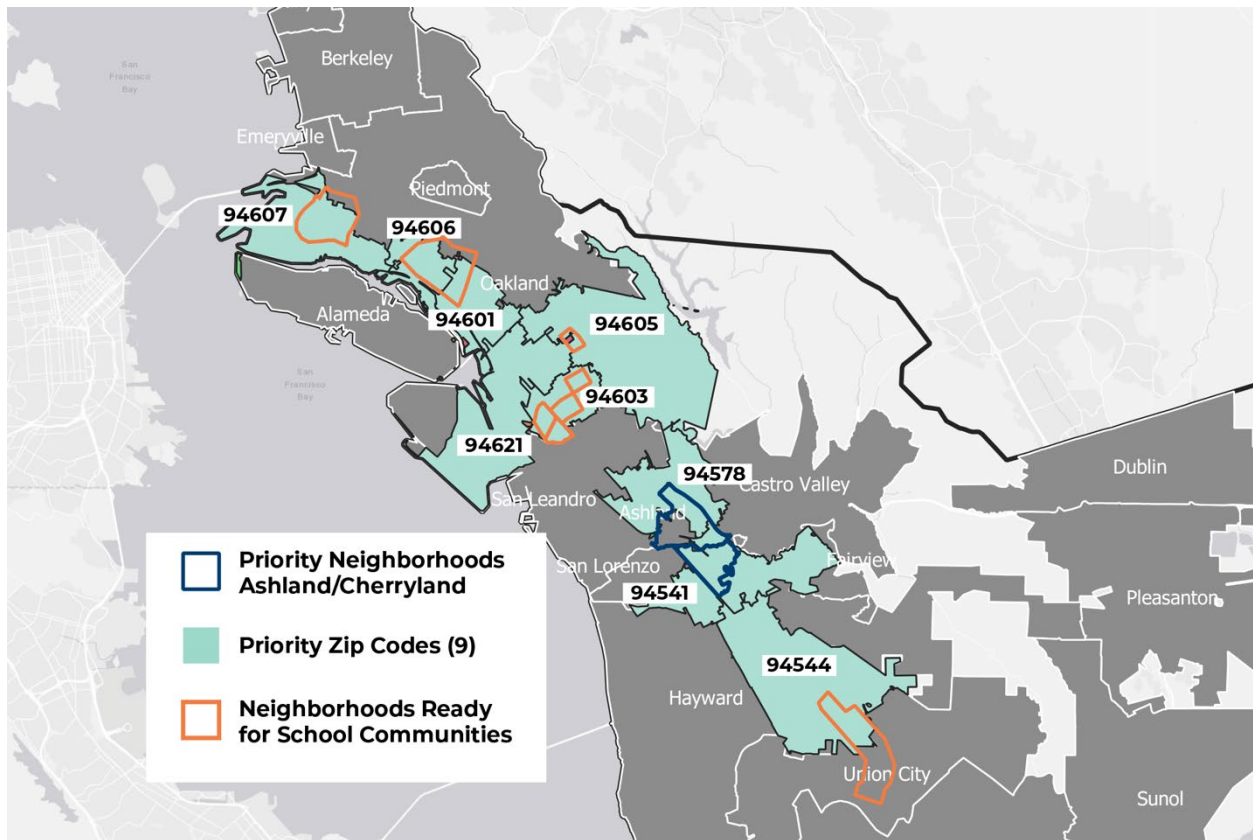
Priority neighborhoods consist of nine zip codes and the Ashland and Cherryland neighborhoods within Alameda County. These neighborhoods, which have experienced historical disinvestment and been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, overlap with the county's place-based efforts, including First 5's NRFS effort and COVID-19 priority zip codes identified by the Board of Supervisors. This study oversampled in these neighborhoods to ensure families living within these neighborhoods were adequately represented in the study findings.

DATA LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations. Participation is voluntary, meaning that the information presented in this report describes only the students and families who chose to be assessed. These families may differ in important ways from students and families who did not participate. Because the data in this study are self-reported, the researchers have little or no ability to verify the families' account of their experiences. In addition, given the multi-year data collection process, the participants and demographics of parent/caregivers, K/TK teachers, and ECE professionals vary from year to year. Furthermore, differences among educators may be due to several factors, including differences in the age of children served, differences in the settings where educators work, differences in the background and experiences of educators, or differences in the sample of ECE and kindergarten/transitional kindergarten sites surveyed. Therefore, the demographic makeup and/or differences between the samples and across years should be considered when interpreting results.

Also, family participation in services or programs, such as Help Me Grow, was measured this year by asking *whether* a family participated in the service or program, not *the degree* to which they participated. Therefore, it is important to consider that degree of participation is an additional factor that may be contributing to the impact of these programs on participants.

This year, previous findings of teachers' perceptions of readiness are not included. This is because perceived readiness of children was not asked in previous cycles of kindergarten readiness assessments in Alameda County as teachers assessed children's skills through in-class observation using the Kindergarten Observation Form (KOF). Of note, parent/caregiver perceptions of readiness were significantly correlated with teacher ratings of readiness in the 2019 KRA, showing alignment in the reported readiness of children from both the parent/caregiver and teacher perspectives.[i]

PARENT/CAREGIVER SURVEY

The parent/caregiver survey was completed by parents/caregivers of children ages three to six and asked questions about challenges families faced and the supports they needed, how they and their children have been impacted by COVID-19, and readiness activities they participated in with their children. To reflect the diversity of Alameda County families more accurately, the parent/caregiver survey was made available in Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. First 5 and ASR conducted survey outreach through groups including: participating teachers and ECE professionals, the Research Advisory Group, and community-based organizations serving families. Outreach partners shared unique survey links with the families they serve, which allowed for analysis on how results differ by outreach partner and will be used to inform future outreach efforts. Some of the questions on the parent/caregiver survey were asked in 2019; some of them were derived from surveys developed by the University of Oregon RAPID-EC team; and some were initiated by the Research Advisory Group. All feedback from the Research Advisory Group, along with corresponding changes made to the surveys, is documented in the table available upon request.

Appendix D includes comparisons made between the 2021-22 results and the 2019 results or between the results for Alameda County and the results for a national sample surveyed by the RAPID-EC team at the end of 2021.

TEACHER AND ECE SURVEY

The teacher survey was completed by teachers with students enrolled in kindergarten or TK in Alameda County public schools. The ECE survey was completed by preschool and child care professionals serving children ages three to six in Alameda County. The teacher and ECE surveys asked about the kindergarten readiness skills of the group of children in their classroom, kindergarten transition activities at their school or ECE site, challenges their students and families faced and supports they might need, and how COVID-19 affected their approaches to teaching and family engagement. A link to the teacher survey was emailed to current kindergarten/TK teachers, and a link to the ECE professional survey was emailed to Alameda County ECE professionals through Alameda County's Resource & Referral agencies, California ECE Workforce Registry, and other First 5 Alameda County ECE professional email lists. The kindergarten/TK teacher survey was offered in English, and the ECE professional survey was offered in English, Spanish, and Chinese.

RESEARCH ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS IMPROVE PARENT SURVEY

In Fall 2021, Research Advisory Group members reviewed the parent/caregiver survey to ensure that questions were addressing important issues and that all questions were respectful and clear. For example, based on feedback from the advisory group, some questions were removed for being considered too probing or invasive. This included a question asking parents/caregivers about job loss, a sensitive topic for some parents/caregivers experiencing job loss. In addition, a question on family composition was removed for being considered too invasive. More general questions about parent/caregiver stress were kept in the survey.

RESEARCH ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS IMPROVE TEACHER AND ECE PROFESSIONAL SURVEY

In Fall 2021, Research Advisory Group members reviewed the teacher and ECE professionals' surveys to ensure that questions were addressing important issues and that all questions were respectful and clear. For example, based on feedback from the advisory group, a question was added to gauge teachers' and ECE professionals' ease in communicating with families in their preferred language to capture need for translation services and improved communication between educators and families. See page 78 for details on this finding.

DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

2,015
Parents/caregivers

284
Kindergarten/TK teachers

695
ECE professionals

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS AND RESIDENCE: PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

2,015 PARENT/ CAREGIVER SURVEYS

45% attended licensed centers

12% attended licensed family child care

Race/Ethnicity

- 39% Hisp/Latino
- 17% Black
- 17% Asian/PI
- 10% White
- 7% Multiracial
- 10% Another Race

Language spoken at home
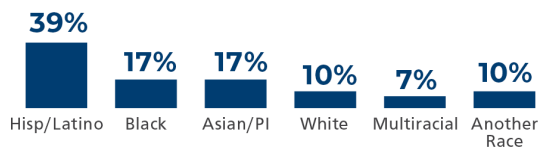
- 73% English
- 31% Spanish
- 7% Chinese
- 16% Another Language
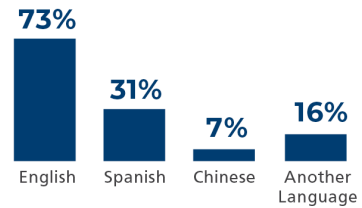
100% of families had at least one child between 3-6 years of age

26% of families resided in priority neighborhoods

50% of families earned under $50K

88% of children were typically developing

FIGURE 3. **MAP OF PARENT/CAREGIVER PARTICIPATION, BY ZIP CODE**

Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)

NUMBER OF SURVEY RESPONSES

0   50   100   150   200   250   300
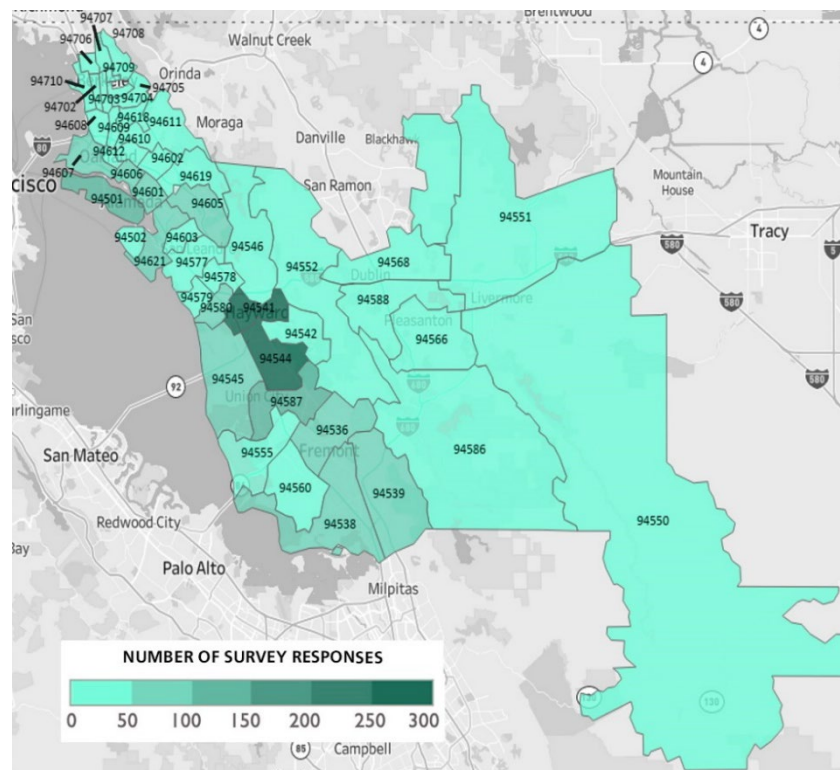
SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS AND SCHOOL LOCATION: ECE PROFESSIONALS

695
ECE
PROFESSIONAL
SURVEYS

48%
had 10+
years of
experience

Race/Ethnicity

- **37%** Asian/PI
- **26%** Hisp/Latino
- **16%** White
- **15%** Black
- **2%** Multiracial
- **4%** Another Race

Language spoken at home

- **82%** English
- **24%** Spanish
- **15%** Chinese
- **11%** Hindi
- **6%** Another Language*

61% worked in center | **39%** worked in family child care setting

17% worked in a priority neighborhood
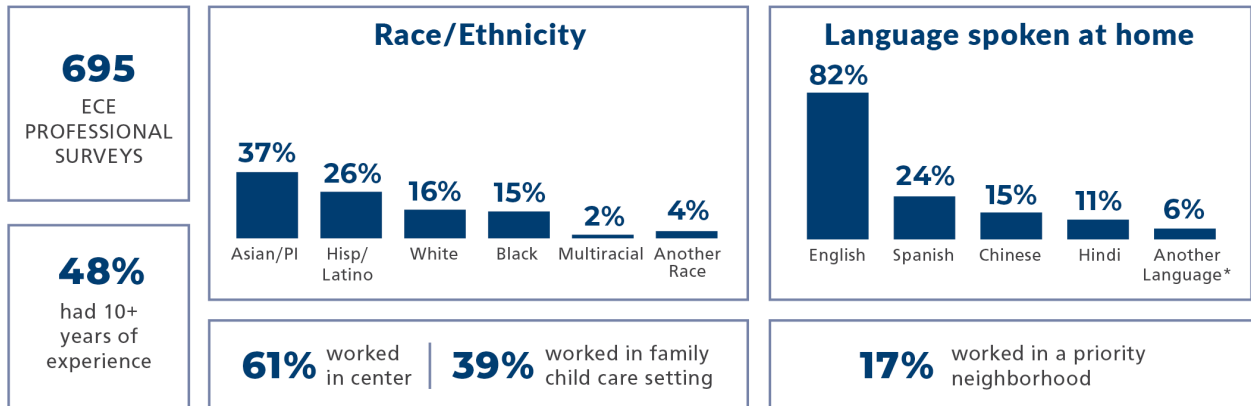
FIGURE 4. **MAP OF ECE PROFESSIONAL PARTICIPATION, BY ZIP CODE**

NUMBER OF SURVEY RESPONSES

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40

Source: ECE Survey (2021-22)

DIVE IN DEEPER

Visit the KRA dashboard online and select the "Participants" tab at the top of the webpage, and scroll down to the "Characteristics of ECE Professionals" section.

284 K/TK TEACHER SURVEYS

KINDERGARTEN

82% taught kindergarten

70% had 10+ years of experience

Race/Ethnicity

- 51% White
- 19% Asian/PI
- 15% Hisp/Latino
- 10% Multiracial
- 3% Black
- 2% Another Race

Language Spoken

- 18% Spanish
- 7% Chinese
- 11% Another Language

TK

18% taught transitional kindergarten

60% had 10+ years of experience

Race/Ethnicity

- 35% White
- 16% Asian/PI
- 10% Hisp/Latino
- 19% Multiracial
- 16% Black
- 4% Another Race

Language Spoken

- 24% Spanish
- 7% Chinese
- 15% Another Language

FIGURE 5. **MAP OF KINDERGARTEN/TK TEACHER PARTICIPATION, BY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

DIVE IN DEEPER

Visit the **KRA dashboard online** and select the "Participants" tab at the top of the webpage, and scroll down to the "Characteristics of Kindergarten and TK Teachers" section.

NUMBER OF SURVEY RESPONSES

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70
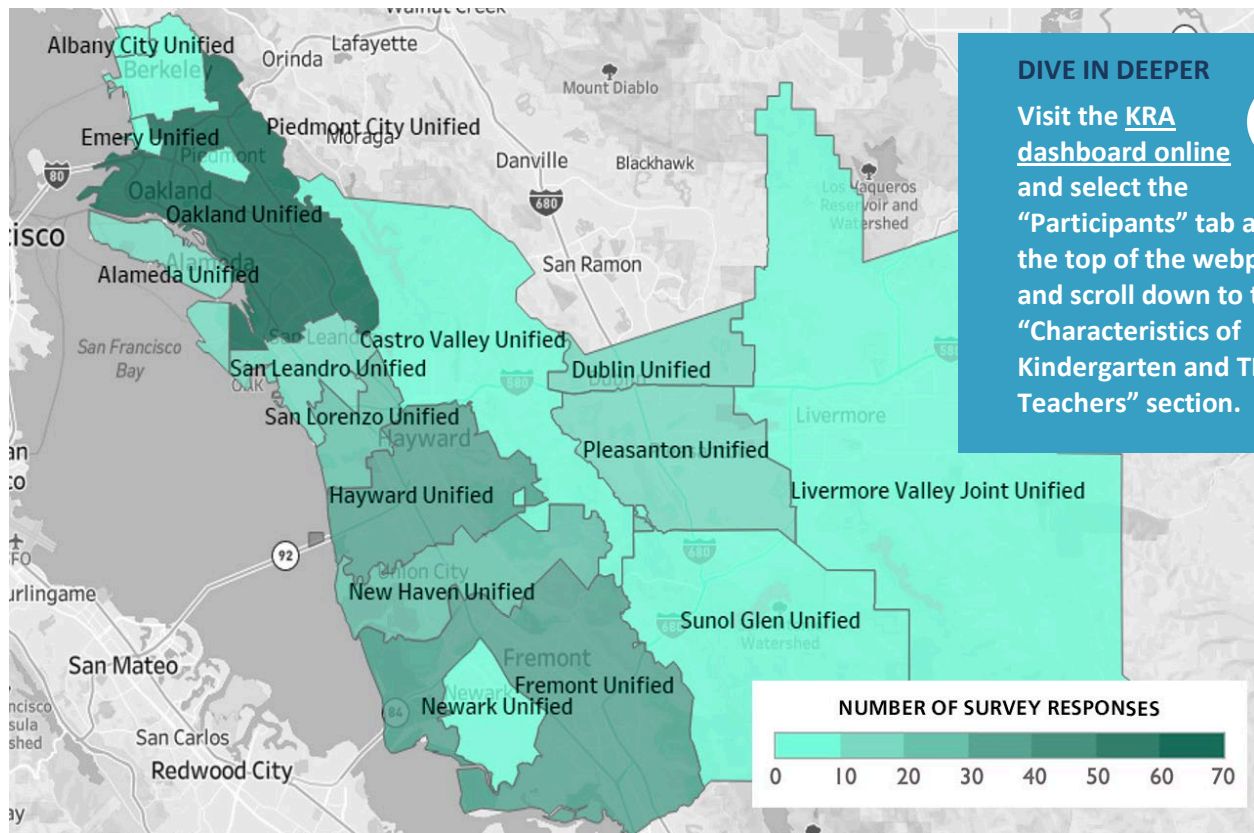
Source: Teacher Survey (2021-22)
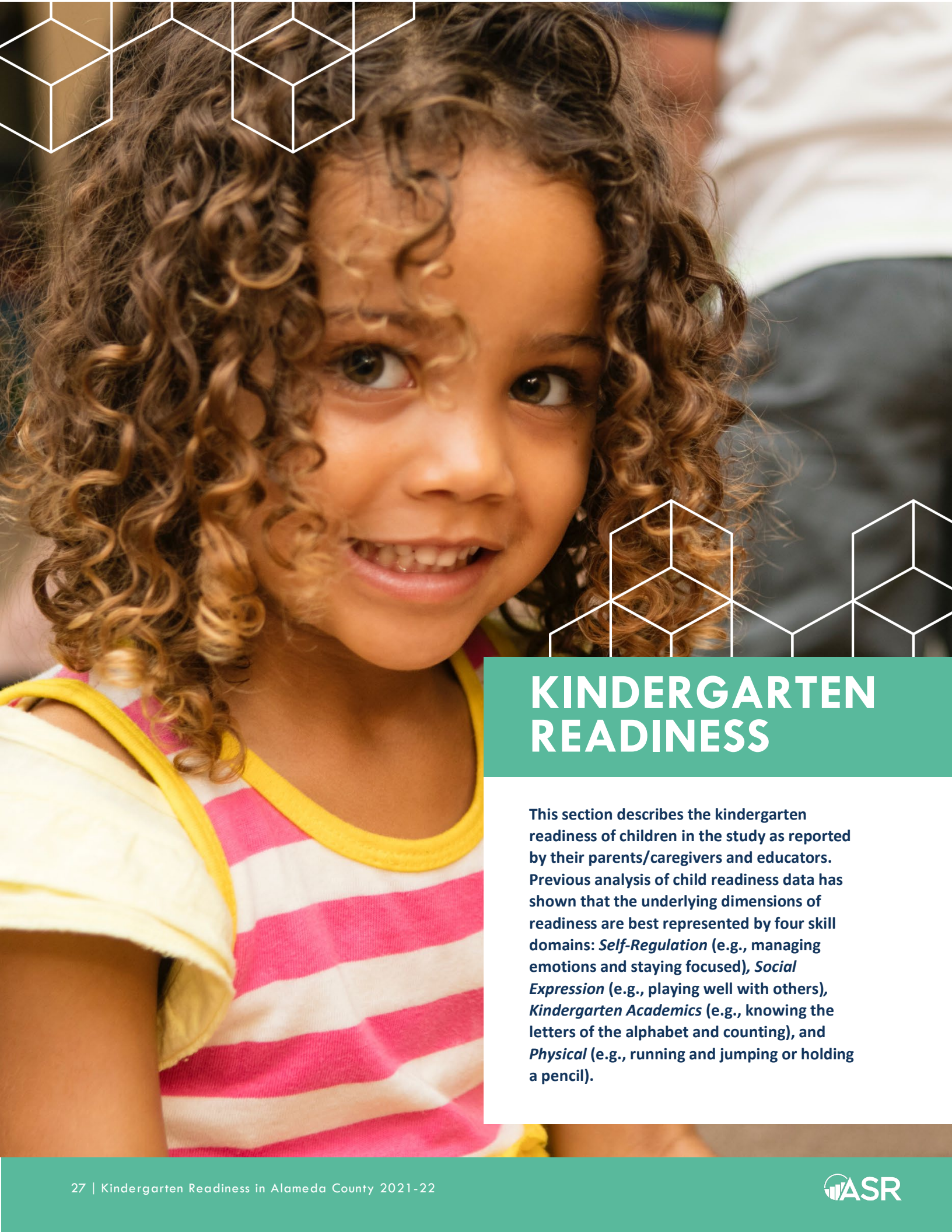
KINDERGARTEN READINESS

This section describes the kindergarten readiness of children in the study as reported by their parents/caregivers and educators. Previous analysis of child readiness data has shown that the underlying dimensions of readiness are best represented by four skill domains: *Self-Regulation* (e.g., managing emotions and staying focused)*, Social Expression* (e.g., playing well with others)*, Kindergarten Academics* (e.g., knowing the letters of the alphabet and counting), and *Physical* (e.g., running and jumping or holding a pencil).

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KINDERGARTEN READINESS

Previous analysis of child readiness data has shown that the underlying dimensions of readiness are best represented by four skill domains. While readiness can be measured using these four domains, conditions to support readiness also include support for the communities children live in, for the parents and guardians supporting children, and support provided to schools and educators.

K ACADEMICS
- Recognizes numbers
- Recognizes shapes
- Recognizes letters
- Counts 20 objects
- Writes own first name
- Produces rhyming words
- Understands details in literature
- Understands basic features of books

SELF-REGULATION
- Stays focused
- Follows rules
- Follows directions
- Plays cooperatively
- Participation in circle time
- Handles frustration well

SOCIAL EXPRESSION
- Eager to learn
- Expresses empathy
- Expresses needs and wants
- Tells about a story/experience

PHYSICAL
- Uses pencil with proper grip
- General coordination

In the analysis that follows, please note that while there are four domains of readiness (academic, social-emotional, self-regulation, and physical) we have combined social-emotional and self-regulation in analyses of readiness to match analysis done in 2019, where these two factors were asked together.

READINESS PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

According to parents/caregivers, ECE professionals, and kindergarten/TK teachers, readiness declined during COVID-19. Parents/caregivers were asked to share their perspective on their child's readiness in these areas in several domains on a scale from 1.00=" Not Yet Ready" to 4.00= "Fully Ready."

PARENTS VOICE CONCERNS ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN'S READINESS

"…Le falta mucho para estar al nivel de kinder…" (My child has a lot to learn to be at the kindergarten level).

– Parent survey respondent

"It's been a struggle…She didn't have a permanent teacher for weeks and she should've been placed in TK due to being in a child development center prior to the pandemic. She wasn't ready for kindergarten."

– Parent survey respondent

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Compared to 2019, parents/caregivers were less likely to assess their child as "fully ready" for kindergarten, and differences in perceived readiness reported by parents/caregivers from 2019 to 2021-22 was significantly lower across all domains.

FIGURE 6.   **PERCENT OF PARENTS/CAREGIVERS WHO SAY CHILD IS READY FOR KINDERGARTEN, BY SKILL DOMAIN AND YEAR**

■ 2019   ■ 2021-22

Domain	2019	2021-22
Overall***	44%	33%
Physical***	82%	42%
Social and self-regulation***	58%	34%
Academic***	59%	39%
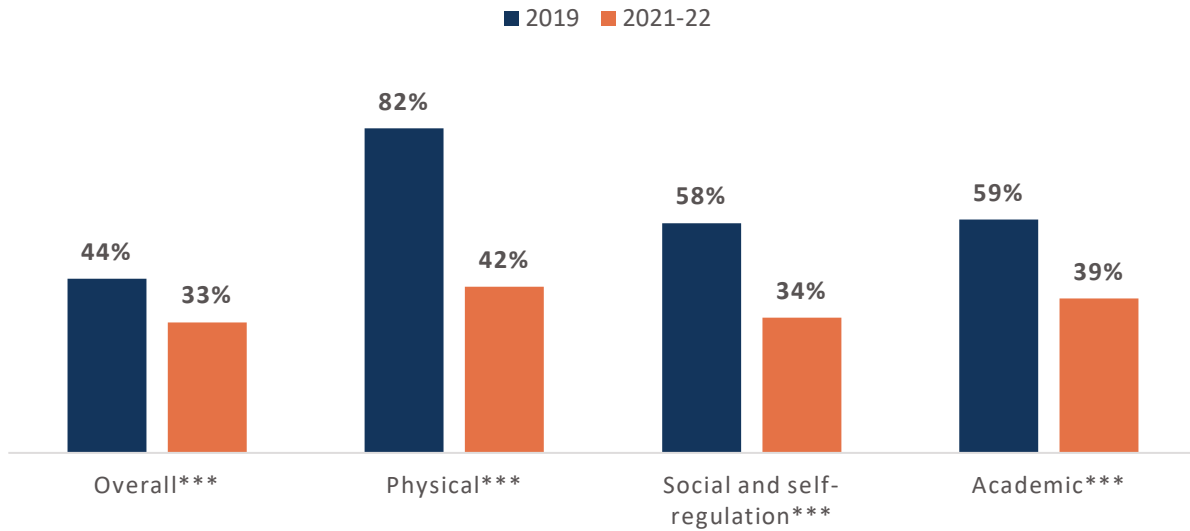
Source: Parent Survey (2019, 2021-22)
Note: N=1,466 (2019); 1,217-1,282 (2021-22, weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the race/ethnicity of young children in the county. On each domain, figures represent the percent of children fully ready (i.e., 4 was selected on the four-point readiness scale). In 2019, parents/caregivers were asked about social and self-regulation skills together. ***Differences are significant at $p < 0.001$.

Assets Associated with Readiness Perceptions of Parents/Caregivers

The strongest predictors of parent/caregiver reports of their child's readiness are related to their access to basic needs (e.g., food, housing, health care) and supportive services and resources. These factors include attendance at pediatric well-child visits, child mental health concern as reported by caregivers, connection to resources from an NRFS site, family income, kindergarten transition supports, and father's use of kindergarten transition supports. The chart below shows the extent to which these factors were <u>independently</u> associated with parent/caregiver reports of their child's readiness, after controlling for the other factors correlated with readiness, including demographics and income.

FIGURE 7.   **PARENT/CAREGIVER PERCEPTIONS OF READINESS, BY ASSETS**

■ Does not have asset   ◆ Has asset

Income $50K or more***	Higher income neighborhood*	Well-child visit attendance***	Parent reported no mental health concerns**	Family participated in NRFS***	Family used K transition supports***	Father used K transition supports***
3.17	3.11	3.28	3.39	3.56	3.17	3.24
2.95	2.95	2.95	3.08	3.06	2.94	2.96

Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=1,905 (weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county. Numbers reflect average overall readiness on a four-point scale (0=Not Ready for K, 4=Fully Ready for K). Difference in proportion analysis shows differences between the marked group and at least one other group are significant at * $p < 0.05$,
**$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$. Estimates are adjusted for other significant factors in the regression model.

FINANCIAL STABILITY

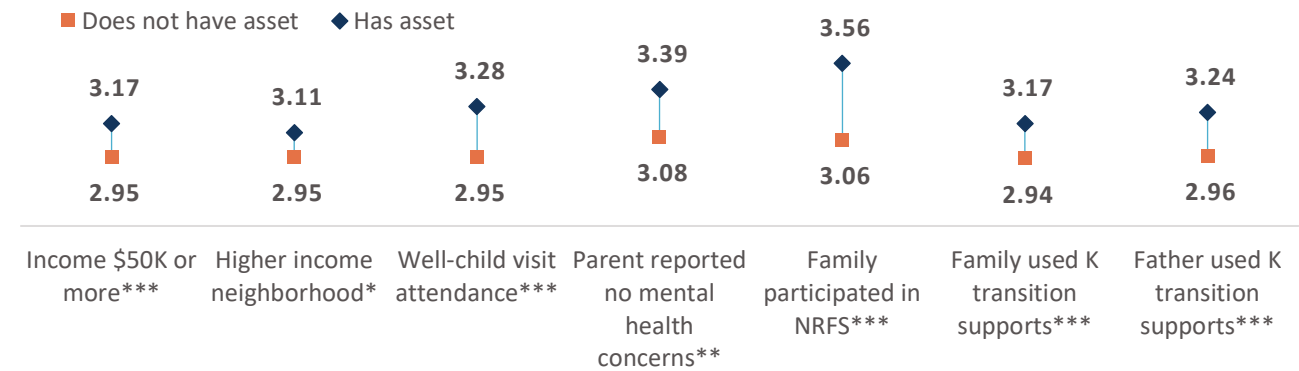|		
	Family income $50k or more	This year, **we found having a higher income and receiving a guaranteed income were linked to higher readiness.**
	Higher income neighborhood	**Children who live in higher-income neighborhoods** (i.e., those not designated as a priority neighborhood) **tend to have higher readiness.**

FAMILY HEALTH & WELL-BEING

	Well-child visit attendance	This year, we found **children who attended their well-child visits during COVID-19 had higher readiness** according to their parents/caregivers.
	Parent reported no mental health concerns	We found **children whose parents reported fewer concerns about mental health had higher readiness** according to their parents/caregivers.
	Family participated in NRFS	**Families who accessed services, including family navigation from the First 5 place-based Neighborhoods Ready for School (NRFS) initiative, rated their child's readiness higher** than families who did not access services, even with similar incomes and in similar neighborhoods.

KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION SUPPORTS

	Family used K transition supports	**Families who reported using kindergarten transition supports rated their child's readiness higher** than those who did not. Supports included attending parent meetings, activities, and orientations at the school or a summer pre-kindergarten program.
	Father used K transition supports	There was a particularly **strong correlation between fathers' use of kindergarten transition supports and children's readiness**, aligned with the findings from previous studies in Alameda County showing the positive role father involvement plays in child development and readiness.

Readiness also improved substantially if children had access to a greater number of these seven assets, as shown in the chart that follows.

FIGURE 8.   **PARENT/CAREGIVER PERCEPTIONS OF READINESS, BY NUMBER OF ASSETS**
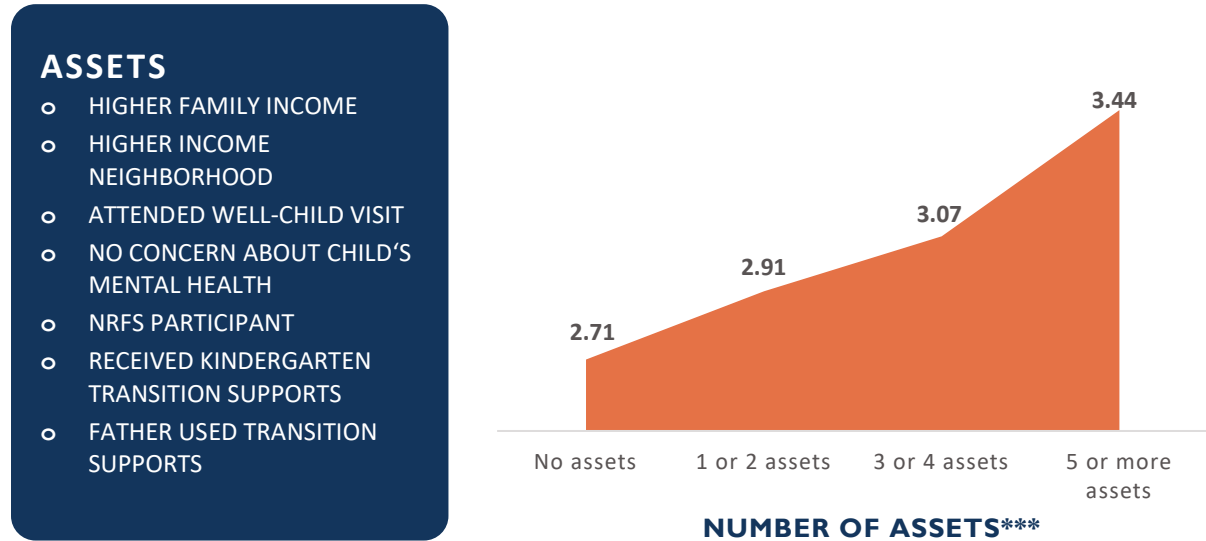
ASSETS
- HIGHER FAMILY INCOME
- HIGHER INCOME NEIGHBORHOOD
- ATTENDED WELL-CHILD VISIT
- NO CONCERN ABOUT CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH
- NRFS PARTICIPANT
- RECEIVED KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION SUPPORTS
- FATHER USED TRANSITION SUPPORTS

No assets	1 or 2 assets	3 or 4 assets	5 or more assets
2.71	2.91	3.07	3.44

NUMBER OF ASSETS***

Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=1,905 (weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county. Numbers reflect average overall readiness on a four-point scale (0=Not Ready for K, 4=Fully Ready for K). *Differences are significant at $p < 0.001$. Estimates are adjusted for other significant factors in the regression model.

Demographic and Socioeconomic Factors Associated with Readiness Perceptions of Parents/Caregivers

This study found some demographic and socioeconomic differences in average overall readiness ratings, after adjusting for other key factors. For example, parents/caregivers of kindergartners rated their children more ready than parents of younger children (those with children in TK classes), holding constant factors like race/ethnicity, income, and health and well-being.

As the chart that follows shows, average parent/caregiver readiness ratings were lowest for Asian/Pacific Islander and Hispanic/Latino children, and highest for children who are multiracial or another race/ethnicity, after controlling for other significant factors related to readiness. Even when controlling for other key factors associated with readiness, children who were Black, multiracial, or another race/ethnicity had higher reported readiness than children who were Hispanic/Latino, White, and Asian/Pacific Islander.

Home language was not an independent predictor of readiness, but we found children in monolingual English-speaking, monolingual Chine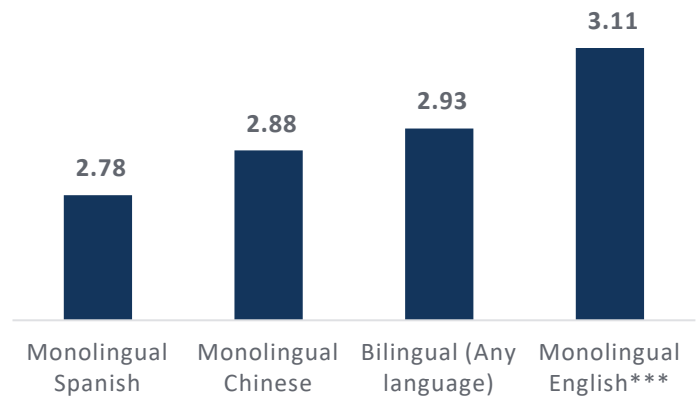se-speaking, and bilingual households had higher readiness than children in monolingual Spanish-speaking households. Bilingual households notably reported higher perceived readiness of their children than all monolingual speaking groups, with the exception of monolingual English-speaking households, a finding that aligns with research on the benefits of bilingualism on outcomes, such as English proficiency and overall academic success.[xvi]
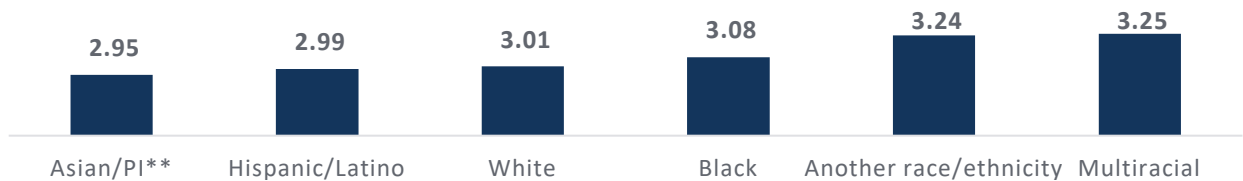
FIGURE 9. PARENT/CAREGIVER PERCEPTIONS OF READINESS, BY LANGUAGE

Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=1,095 (weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county. Numbers reflect average overall readiness on a four-point scale (0=Not Ready for K, 4=Fully Ready for K). Households speaking languages other than those listed here not included in analysis due to small sample size (n=99). *** Difference in proportion analysis shows differences between the marked group and at least one other group are significant at p < 0.001.

FIGURE 10. PARENT/CAREGIVER PERCEPTIONS OF READINESS, BY RACE/ETHNICITY

Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=1,751 (weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county. Numbers reflect average overall readiness on a four-point scale (0=Not Ready for K, 4=Fully Ready for K). "Multiracial" refers to participants who identify as more than one race/ethnicity. "Another race/ethnicity" includes Alaskan Native/American Indian and those who selected "other" and entered a single race/ethnicity other than those listed; these are grouped due to small sample size. ** Difference in proportion analysis shows differences between the marked group and at least one other group are significant at p < 0.01. Estimates are adjusted for other significant factors in the regression model.

This year, we found having a higher income and receiving a guaranteed income were linked to higher readiness, though guaranteed income was *not* an independent predictor. Family income was positively correlated with parent/caregiver reported readiness, even after adjusting for other key factors. Families earning $200,000 or more had children with an average score of 3.58, while families earning less than $50,000 had children with an average score of 2.95.

FIGURE 11. PARENT/CAREGIVER PERCEPTIONS OF READINESS, BY INCOME
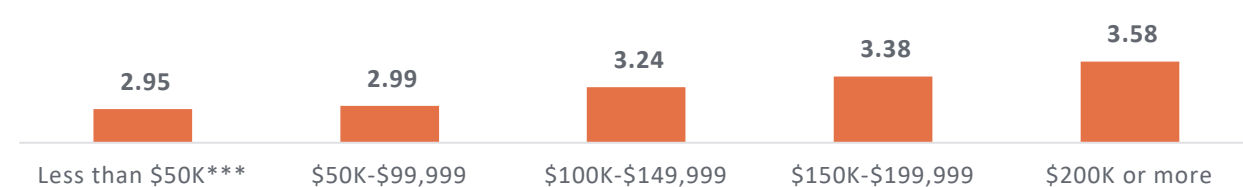
Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=1,667 (weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county. Numbers reflect average overall readiness on a four-point scale (0=Not Ready for K, 4=Fully Ready for K). Difference in proportion analysis shows differences between the marked group and at least one other group are significant at p < 0.001. Estimates are adjusted for other significant factors in the regression model.

Although income impacted parent/caregiver perceptions of readiness, it had a varying effect by racial/ethnic group.

FIGURE 12. **PERCENT OF PARENTS/CAREGIVERS WHO REPORT CHILD IS READY FOR KINDERGARTEN OVERALL, BY RACE/ETHNICITY AND INCOME**

Legend: ■ Under $50K ■ $50K-$99,999 ■ $100K or more

	Under $50K	$50K-$99,999	$100K or more
Hispanic/Latino*	27%	28%	43%
White***	14%	15%	59%
Black	30%	16%	N/A
Asian/PI**	32%	34%	47%
Multiracial*	51%	N/A	67%

Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=1,193 (weighted). Data were weighted to approximate race/ethnicity. Data suppressed for "another race/ethnicity," for Black families earning $100K or more, and for multiracial families earning $50K-$100K due to small sample size. Difference in proportion analysis shows differences between the marked group and at least one other group are significant at *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$.

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Geographic Differences in Reports of Readiness by Parents/Caregivers

We also explored parent/caregiver readiness ratings by zip code. The map that follows shows that readiness ratings were highest in neighborhoods in Berkeley and lowest in neighborhoods in Hayward.

FIGURE 13.   **PARENT/CAREGIVER PERCEPTIONS OF READINESS, BY ZIP CODE**

DIVE IN DEEPER

For a breakdown of readiness by other geographic categories such as city, visit the KRA dashboard online and select the "Kindergarten Readiness" tab at the top of the webpage and select a filter under "Parent Perceptions."
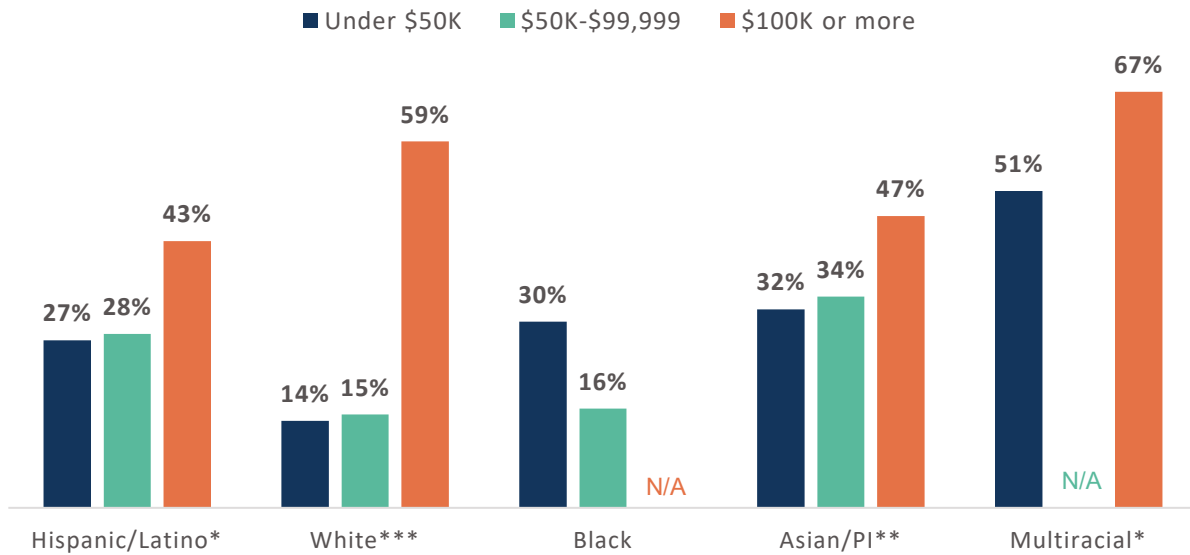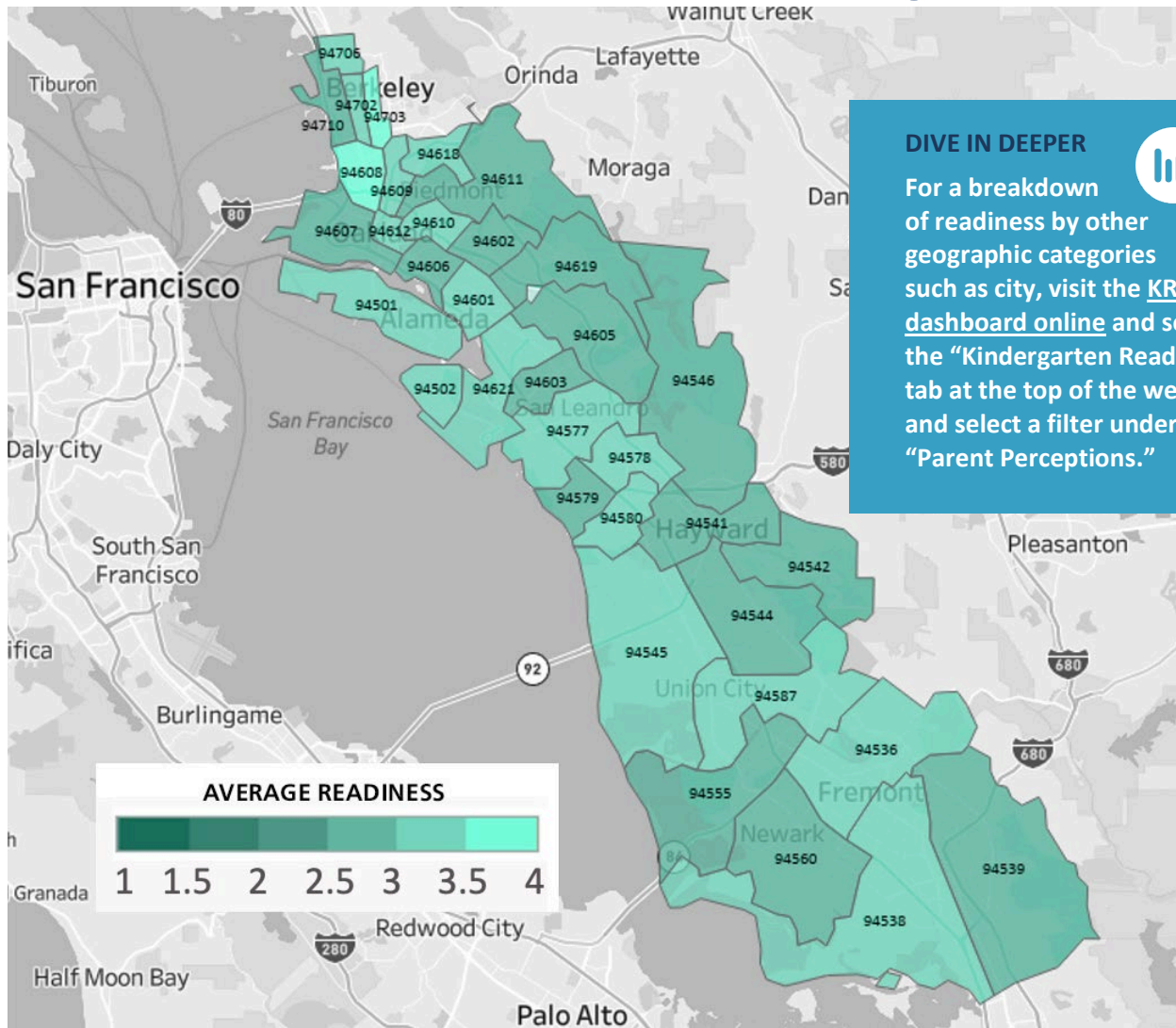
Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=1,175 (weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county. Numbers reflect average overall readiness on a four-point scale (0=Not Ready for K, 4=Fully Ready for K). zip codes with fewer than five participants not shown.

KINDERGARTEN READINESS AND CONCERNS REPORTED BY ECE PROFESSIONALS AND TEACHERS

Readiness across four domains is best represented by: *Self-Regulation* (e.g., managing emotions and staying focused)*, Social Expression* (e.g., playing well with others)*, Kindergarten Academics* (e.g., knowing the letters of the alphabet and counting), and *Physical* (e.g., running and jumping or holding a pencil). Kindergarten/TK teachers and ECE professionals were asked to rate the level of readiness of students in their class overall. In previous years, teachers and ECE professionals assessed students across these four domains individually.

Kindergarten/TK teachers and ECE professionals shared their perspective on children's readiness in 2021 as compared to children who entered before COVID-19 (i.e., Fall 2019 or earlier).

- The majority of kindergarten/TK teachers feel students are less ready now than they were pre-COVID, particularly in the self-regulation and social domains.

- ECE professionals reported similar levels of overall readiness compared to pre-COVID, but identified declines in self-regulation and social skills, similar to TK/kindergarten teachers.

- ECE professionals who worked in a center were more likely to say children are less ready in academic skills.

- Kindergarten teachers were more likely to report being somewhat or very concerned about readiness compared to ECE and TK respondents. Their concerns were highest for self-regulation and social skills.

- ECE professionals working in centers were generally more concerned about readiness than professionals working in family child care homes.

DECLINE IN SELF-REGULATION READINESS IS THE BIGGEST CONCERN

Parents/caregivers and educators reported a decline in kindergarten readiness during COVID-19, especially in the self-regulation and social domains.
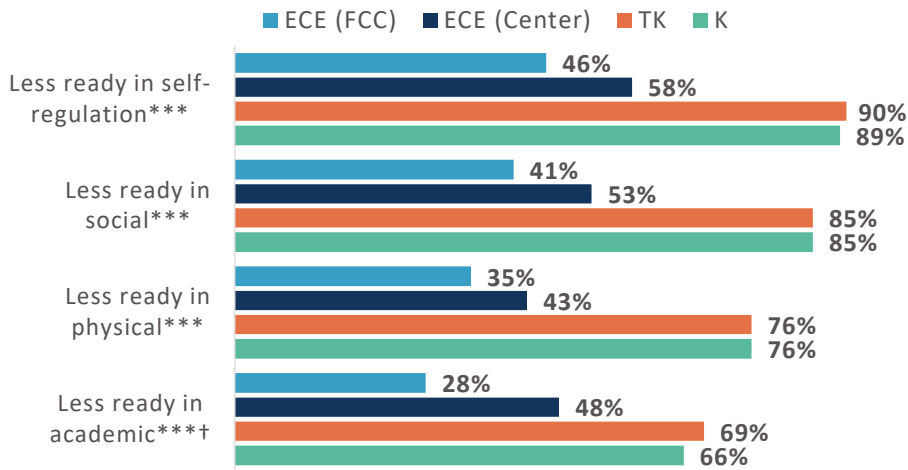
FIGURE 14. **PERCEIVED READINESS OF CHILDREN ENTERING KINDERGARTEN/TK IN FALL 2021 COMPARED TO BEFORE COVID, BY SKILL DOMAIN AND EDUCATOR TYPE**

Legend: ■ ECE (FCC) ■ ECE (Center) ■ TK ■ K

Less ready in self-regulation***
- ECE (FCC): 46%
- ECE (Center): 58%
- TK: 90%
- K: 89%

Less ready in social***
- ECE (FCC): 41%
- ECE (Center): 53%
- TK: 85%
- K: 85%

Less ready in physical***
- ECE (FCC): 35%
- ECE (Center): 43%
- TK: 76%
- K: 76%

Less ready in academic*†**
- ECE (FCC): 28%
- ECE (Center): 48%
- TK: 69%
- K: 66%

FAMILY NEED AND READINESS ARE CONNECTED

Educators who believed families needed a greater number of community resources were also more concerned about children's readiness.

Source: Teacher Survey (2021-22), ECE Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=43-44 (TK teacher, weighted); 195 (K teacher, weighted); 94-96 (ECE (FCC), weighted); 178-180 (ECE (Center), weighted). Data were weighted by zip code/district to approximate the county population of ECE professionals/teachers. Percentages reflect those who reported children were "somewhat less ready" or "much less ready." ***Differences in proportions are significant at p < 0.001. †Just one significant difference in readiness was detected across the two ECE site types [licensed centers ("centers") and licensed family child care centers ("FCC")]: Within the academic domain, licensed centers felt children were less ready compared to licensed family childcare centers.

FIGURE 15. **EDUCATOR CONCERNS ABOUT CHILDREN'S READINESS, BY EDUCATOR TYPE**

Legend: ■ ECE (FCC) ■ ECE (Center) ■ TK ■ K

Self-regulation*†**
- ECE (FCC): 39%
- ECE (Center): 53%
- TK: 60%
- K: 80%

Social***
- ECE (FCC): 37%
- ECE (Center): 45%
- TK: 57%
- K: 79%

Academic*†**
- ECE (FCC): 34%
- ECE (Center): 42%
- TK: 40%
- K: 62%

Physical***
- ECE (FCC): 36%
- ECE (Center): 43%
- TK: 36%
- K: 57%

Source: Teacher Survey (2021-22), ECE Professional Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=47-48 (TK teacher, weighted); 217-220 (K teacher, weighted); 143-144 (ECE (FCC), weighted); 235-237 (ECE (Center), weighted). Data were weighted by zip code/district to approximate the county population of ECE professionals/teachers. Percentages reflect those who reported being "somewhat concerned" or "very concerned." ***Differences between K teachers and ECE professionals are significant at p < 0.001. †Two significant differences in readiness were detected across the two ECE site types [licensed centers ("centers") and licensed family child care centers ("FCC")]: Within the self-regulation and academic domains, licensed centers felt children were less ready compared to licensed family childcare centers.

We've noticed a difference in socialization this year—our students just aren't as socially developed as usual.
– K/TK teacher survey respondent

Child Well-Being and Readiness Reported by ECE Professionals and Teachers

ECE professionals and Kindergarten/TK teachers shared their perspective on children's well-being and families' access to community resources.

- Educators reported that their students were absent, sick, and hungry more frequently now compared to before COVID-19.

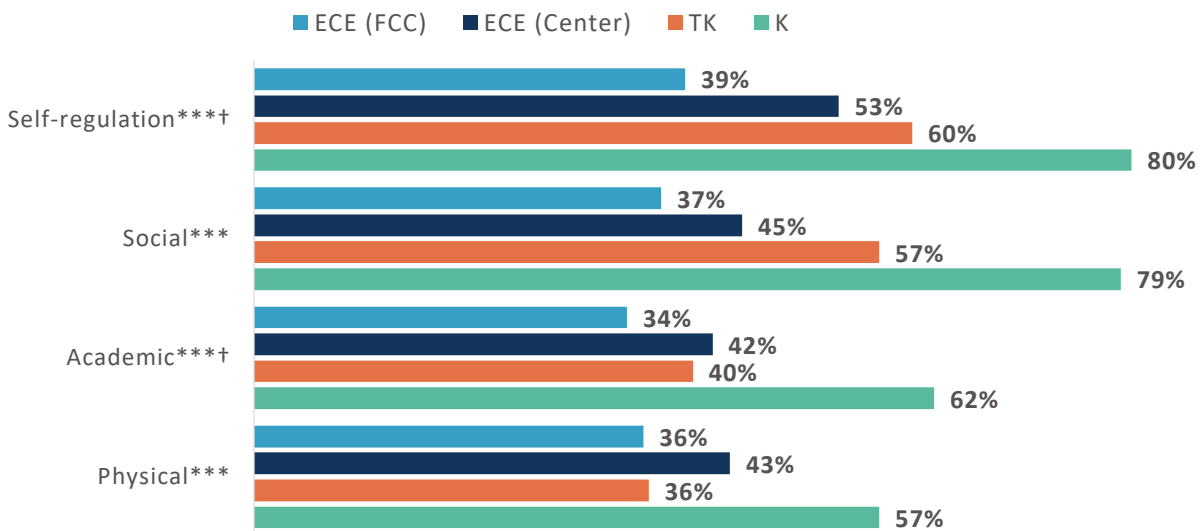- Educators who believed families needed a greater number of community resources were also more concerned about children's readiness.

- Educator concerns about child and family well-being were significantly correlated with concerns about all domains of readiness.

- Educators with more concerns about the well-being of children and families were more likely to say students are less ready now.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: Educators Share Their Concerns

More than 200 educators further described the concerns they had about children in their classrooms.

Many said students struggled with emotion regulation and sharing and playing well with others, which, according to said educators, can be **a barrier to learning and practicing academic skills** like reading.

Teachers wanted more assistance in the classroom but said **staff shortages** made it difficult to offer the one-on-one attention students needed during this unique year. [1]

> **My students do not know how to play together and share. They cannot get in a line, play rock, paper, scissors or tag. All things that had never been an issue before.**

> **I am concerned about children's speech and language development and social skills due to being at home during the pandemic.**

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SUPPORTING READINESS OF COMMUNITIES

"Ready" communities provide support services and resources to children and their families and can positively influence the development of children's readiness skills. This study examined how the access and availability of community supports and community conditions including housing and transit can impact a child's readiness.

ASR

SUPPORTING READINESS OF COMMUNITIES

Supporting the readiness of communities means supporting the basic needs of the families who live there and ensuring they have a thriving neighborhood with a range of assets that create opportunities for families to succeed. As a result of closures and a drastic reduction in available services and supports during the pandemic, children and families missed opportunities for learning, social connection, and linkage to services supporting health, mental health, and access to basic needs, such as food and diapers.

FINANCIAL STABILITY

Sufficient income and supports to ensure families can meet their basic needs for housing, food, utilities, diapers, and resources required to create a safe, healthy, and enriching home environment.

THRIVING NEIGHBORHOODS

Community conditions and a built environment that support family well-being including affordable housing, access to public transportation, and family-friendly spaces.

PROVIDING ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES

First 5 invested over $5 million in <u>distribution of essential supplies</u>, including diapers.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

Financial Stability

- Support policies that **increase job creation and workforce development with livable wages, provide economic supports like guaranteed income, and expand programming that supports families' basic needs** like diapers, freeing up resources to purchase other necessities like child care, housing, and transportation.*

- Strengthen policies and practices that **expand access to quality affordable housing and utility assistance**. Support strategies that eliminate barriers to rental assistance, support rent stabilization and tenant protections, and eliminate utility debt.*

Thriving Neighborhoods

- Invest in **community-driven equitable economic development** for communities impacted by structural racism that has resulted in disproportionate rates of poverty. *

- Increase **identification of and support for children with special needs**. One strategy is to improve connections to early screening and intervention services and systems in the community.*

- Advance policies that **promote family-friendly neighborhoods** through investments in public schools; safe, clean, green parks, playgrounds, and communities; affordable housing; accessible libraries; and financial supports for extracurricular and after-school activities that are affordable for all families.*

- Increase family **leadership opportunities** and **civic engagement.**

- Double-down on **place-based strategies and intentional partnerships** with other public systems, philanthropy, and community-based organizations to sustain investments in Neighborhoods Ready for School communities.

Recommendation identified as a high priority by the Alameda KRA Research Advisory Group.

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KEY FINDINGS FOR SUPPORTING READINESS OF COMMUNITIES

Community conditions support children's readiness.

- As in past research, **family income was strongly related to readiness.**

- The 29 **families in the study who participated in the Oakland Resilient Families guaranteed income pilot reported significantly higher readiness** than other similar families.

- Among ECE professionals and kindergarten teachers, **those who reported high levels of stress were over four times more likely to say they were planning to leave the education field.**

- **Connection to resources was significantly correlated with higher readiness.**

- **65% of families said help connecting to resources was important** to them, but only 12% said they had received this kind of help.

- **Use of community resources by families declined** between 2019 and 2021-22.

- **Racial/ethnic, socioeconomic, linguistic, and geographic differences in community resource use depended on the resource type.** For example, higher-income families were more likely to use resources like parks and libraries, while families with low-income were more likely to access basic needs supports.

- **Families with low-income, families living in lower-income neighborhoods, Black or Hispanic/Latino families, and monolingual Spanish-speaking families were more likely than other families to say community supports are needed.**

- Families who resided in a **higher-income neighborhood reported higher readiness.**

- Research shows a **positive correlation between neighborhood assets and readiness, regardless of family income.**

- The number of **neighborhood assets families reported was lower in 2021-22** compared to 2019.

- **Higher-income families reported greater access to all types of neighborhood assets.** The availability of most assets was **lower for Black respondents and monolingual Spanish-speaking respondents** than for other parents/caregivers.

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ECONOMIC SUPPORTS AND FINANCIAL STABILITY

The pandemic exacerbated poverty, economic stress, and lack of basic needs.[xvii] Parents in this study cite rent, food, and financial concerns as their top needs *right now*. In 2021, several temporary government programs were launched to provide unconditional financial support for families based on need. Locally, a guaranteed income pilot program in Oakland (the Oakland Resilient Families Program) provides $500 per month. A new temporary federal Child Tax Credit provided families with a monthly payment of $250 to $300 per child but has since expired. Over half of parents/caregivers reported that they had received the Child Tax Credit, while 29 families in Oakland said they had participated in the Oakland Resilient Families Program.

FIGURE 16. **OVERALL READINESS REPORTED BY PARENTS/CAREGIVERS, BY PARTICIPATION IN OAKLAND RESILIENT FAMILIES**

■ Did not participate ■ Participated

3.39

2.99

Average readiness**

BENEFITS OF CHILD TAX CREDIT

The Child Tax Credit and Universal Income are programs that are proven to improve the lives of children. It keeps food on tables, rent paid, and allows parents to pay for sports or other fun things children need. They need to be permanent.

— Parent survey respondent
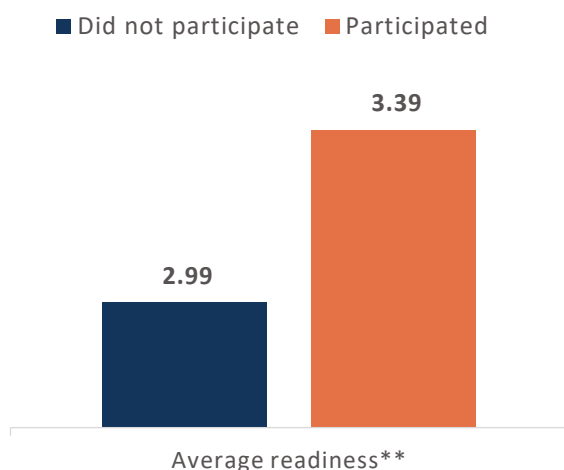
Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=1,371 (weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the race/ethnicity of young children in the county. Numbers reflect average overall readiness on a four-point scale (0=Not Ready for K, 4=Fully Ready for K). Model adjusts for family income. **Difference is significant at $p < 0.01$.

After controlling for income, we found that **families who participated in the Oakland Resilient Families Program reported significantly higher readiness** in their child compared to other families in the sample. However, it should be noted that the sample size was small, and the results may not be generalizable to all families receiving guaranteed income. In addition, the small sample size means these findings cannot be broken down by smaller subgroups such as neighborhood to ensure confidentiality of the data.

Community Resources and Supports

In past research in Alameda County, the use of community resources, specifically among fathers, has been significantly associated with children's kindergarten readiness. Similarly, this year, families who used more community resources were also more likely to say their child is ready for kindergarten. The most widely used community resources in 2021-22 were local parks and libraries. As the Figure 17 on the next page illustrates, **use of all types of community resources declined between 2019 and 2021-22.**

Higher-income families, families in higher-income neighborhoods (see *Appendix D: Methodology* for zip codes included in this group), and parents/caregivers who identify as White were more likely to use parks, libraries, zoos, playgroups, recreational activities, museums, and art/music programs. However, families with low-income, families living in First 5 priority neighborhoods, and parents/caregivers who identify as Hispanic/Latino or Black were more likely to access basic needs and social services, such as help connecting to services, financial workshops, and free resources, including diapers, food and other basic needs, and health/safety supplies.

Compared to households speaking other languages, monolingual English-speaking households were more likely to use several resource types, including museums, zoos, and parks, and bilingual households were more likely to use family navigation services. Monolingual Spanish-speaking households were less likely than other households to use arts/music programs, museums, libraries, parks, and zoos, but were more likely to use ESL classes, parent groups, and free food and diapers. Monolingual Chinese-speaking households were more likely than households speaking other languages to use playgroups, HMG, and free food and diapers.

DIVE IN DEEPER

Visit the KRA dashboard online and select the "Community Resources" tab at the top of the webpage and select your desired filters to see more results of community resources broken down by detailed demographic and geographic groups.
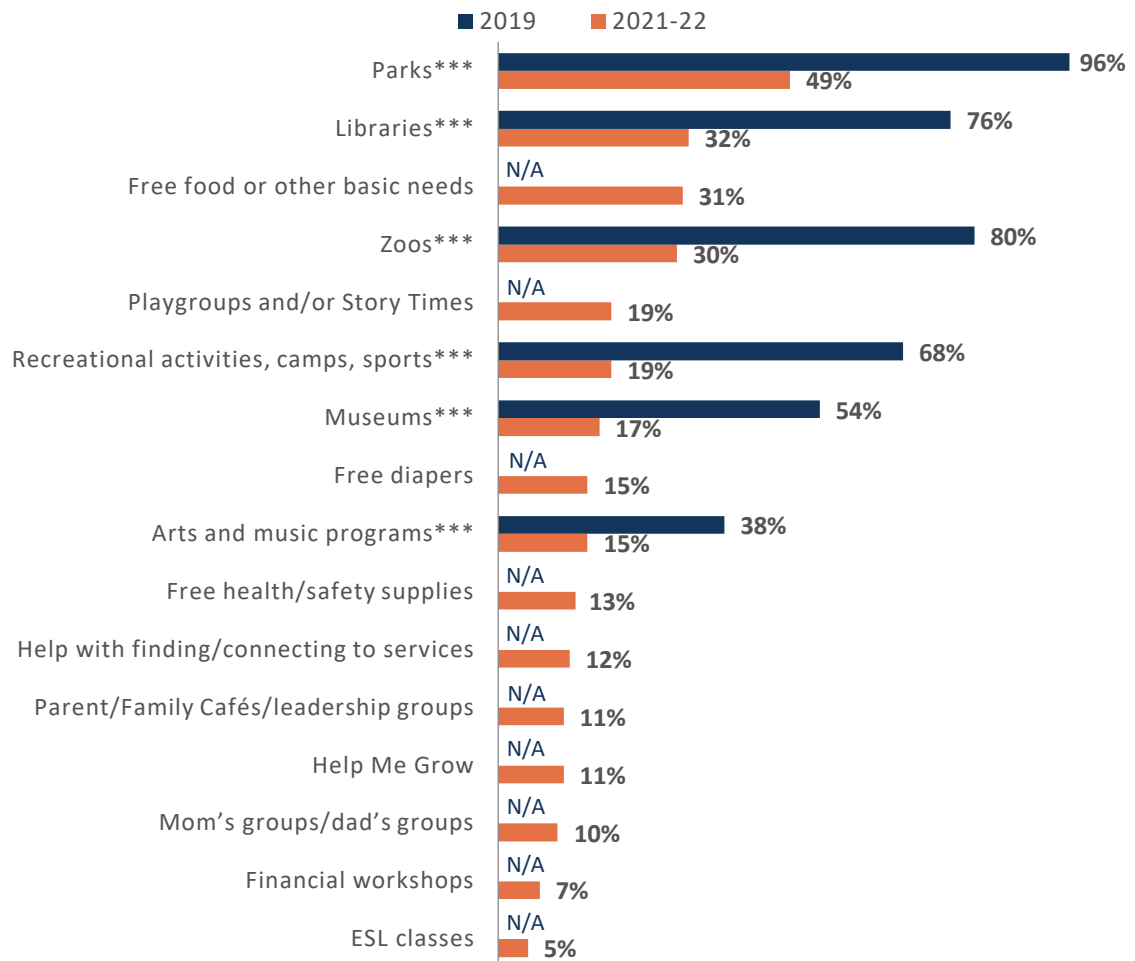
DIRECT INVESTMENTS IN COMMUNITY NEED

First 5 funded the evaluation of Help A Mother Out's diaper distribution, and provided a letter of recommendation for the successful application to the California Commission on the Status of Women for a $25,000 Women's Recovery Response grant.

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FIGURE 17. USE OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES, BY YEAR

■ 2019   ■ 2021-22

Resource	2019	2021-22
Parks***	96%	49%
Libraries***	76%	32%
Free food or other basic needs	N/A	31%
Zoos***	80%	30%
Playgroups and/or Story Times	N/A	19%
Recreational activities, camps, sports***	68%	19%
Museums***	54%	17%
Free diapers	N/A	15%
Arts and music programs***	38%	15%
Free health/safety supplies	N/A	13%
Help with finding/connecting to services	N/A	12%
Parent/Family Cafés/leadership groups	N/A	11%
Help Me Grow	N/A	11%
Mom's groups/dad's groups	N/A	10%
Financial workshops	N/A	7%
ESL classes	N/A	5%

Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=1,124 (2019), 1,565-1,772 (2021-22, weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county. The following were not asked in 2019: ESL classes, mom's groups/dad's groups, Help Me Grow, help with finding/connecting to services, Parent/Family Cafés / leadership groups, financial workshops, playgroups and/or Story Times, free diapers, free food or other basic needs, free health/safety supplies. ***Differences are significant at p < 0.001.

A follow-up question asked participants to indicate which adult family members use these community resources. In 86% of families, community resources were used by a mother, while in 46% of families, the resources were used by a father. Other types of family members were less likely to use these resources.

FIGURE 18. USE OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES, BY FAMILY MEMBER

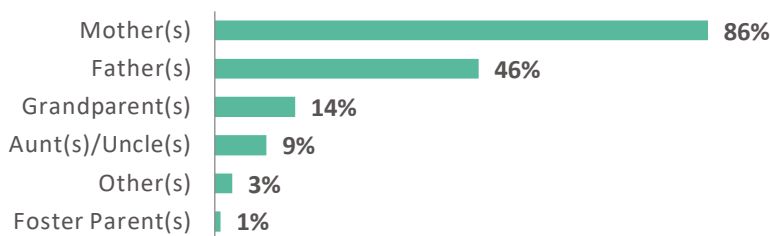| Family Member	Percent
Mother(s)	86%
Father(s)	46%
Grandparent(s)	14%
Aunt(s)/Uncle(s)	9%
Other(s)	3%
Foster Parent(s)	1%

Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=1,565 (2021-22, weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county.

PARENTS WANT TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF SERVICES

More communication is needed with the community to let them know about the help that exists in our area.

— Parent survey respondent

A majority of parents report wanting each of the supports listed below, with the top three most desired supports being free or affordable activities for families, child care, and help with finding and connecting to services. A similar question was asked of ECE professionals and K/TK teachers.

FIGURE 19. **PARENTS REPORT COMMUNITY SUPPORTS FAMILIES NEED**

Support	Percentage
Free/affordable activities for young children*	73%
Free/affordable child care*	69%
Help with finding and connecting to services*	65%
Free/affordable food/nutrition	65%
Free/affordable internet access/Wifi hotspots	65%
Parenting support**	64%
Free/affordable developmental screenings*	64%
Free/affordable technology devices	64%
Free/affordable health care/health insurance**	64%
Free/affordable mental health care	62%
Free/affordable legal help***	60%
Free/affordable transportation**	59%
Housing assistance***	59%
Cash aid/financial assistance***	59%
Assistance with paying utilities***	58%
Job/employment assistance***	57%
Free/affordable diapers***	55%

Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=1,704-1,752 (parent, weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county. Percentages reflect those who reported supports were "somewhat important" or "very important." Differences are significant at ***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS:
Families and Educators Describe the Most Helpful Supports and Those Families Need the Most

> My need for financial assistance, housing/rental assistance, and longer hours for child care has drastically increased due to COVID-19.
>
> – Parent/caregiver

> I do feel families could use resources to help with the feeling of isolation due to COVID.
>
> – K/TK teacher

> There are lingering financial impacts of the economic shutdown, necessitating help for families with basic needs (housing, food).
>
> – Parent/caregiver

> Free food from school has been helpful as well the hotspots when we had remote learning.
>
> – K/TK teacher

When asked what parents/caregivers needed "right now," the need for housing assistance was the most common theme. Among the 642 responses, the most common response described stress for families about currently affording rent, but also deep worry about rents rising as we get further away from rental assistance and eviction moratoriums provided during the pandemic. Housing assistance was closely followed by **food assistance** as the most needed resource. Other top needs for parents/caregivers included **financial assistance** and **diapers**.

A similar question was asked of educators. Close to 300 kindergarten/TK teachers and ECE professionals further described the needs of families in the community, with the most cited needs being **free child care, parenting classes**, and **mental health support** to help families after the long isolation from the pandemic. In addition to support with parenting, educators said families need **housing assistance, financial support, and food aid**.

Close to half of parents/caregivers (960) then responded to a question about the most helpful supports they've received. **Basic needs support was cited as the type of support that has been most helpful**, specifically **food and diapers**. Families also wanted these supports to be "free" or at least "affordable." Other top basic needs cited included **housing and rental assistance** and **financial assistance**, including the Child Tax Credit and help with paying bills.

When asked what community resources have been most beneficial for families, the 157 educators responding to this question most commonly mentioned **food assistance** as the most helpful, especially the food pantry and help with paying for groceries. Many educators also described **technology access**, including hotspots, free devices, and training in how to use devices, as helpful. A third common theme was the importance of social services, such as help with **basic needs** and **help with finding and connecting to resources**.

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Neighborhood Assets

The presence of neighborhood assets was significantly correlated with kindergarten readiness in both the current year and in past research in Alameda County. Most parents/caregivers in the current year reported that they have access to some neighborhood assets like mutual support among neighbors, sidewalks, parks, and grocery stores, but fewer than half of participants reported that their neighborhood has a transit stop, library, gym or recreation center, or family resource center. **In 2021-22, fewer parents/caregivers reported that assets exist in their neighborhood compared to 2019.**

FIGURE 20.   **PREVALENCE OF NEIGHBORHOOD ASSETS, BY YEAR**

■ 2019   ■ 2021-22

Asset	2019	2021-22
Neighbors help each other out***	84%	69%
Neighbors watch out for each other's children***	82%	67%
Has sidewalks or walking paths***	89%	65%
Has a park or playground***	87%	64%
Has a grocery store	N/A	61%
Has a transit stop	N/A	40%
Has a library or bookmobile***	67%	34%
Has a gym, sports league, or rec/community center***	42%	24%
Has a family resource center	N/A	19%
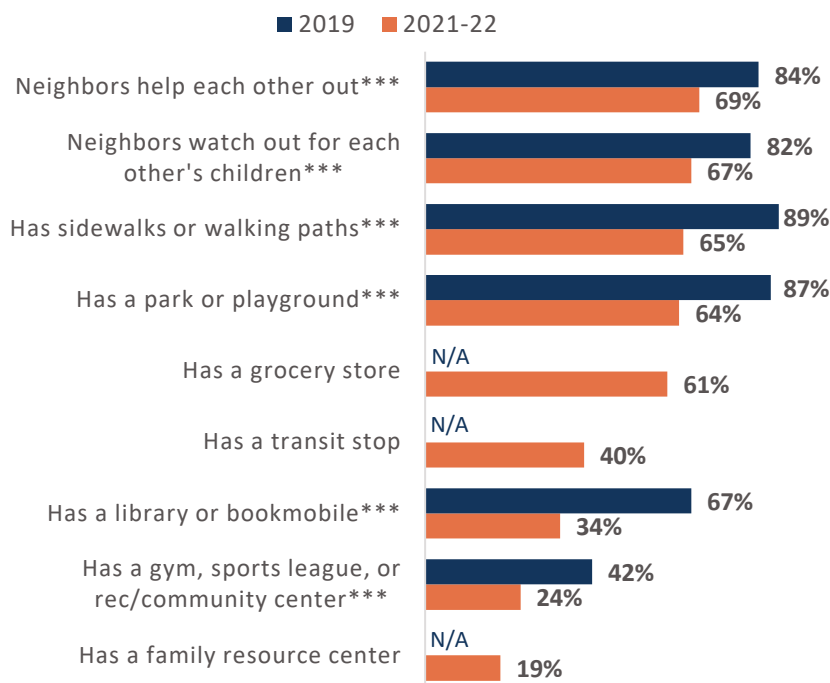
Source: Parent Survey (2019), Parent Survey (2021-22).
Note: N=1,017-1,078 (2019), N=1,741-1,767 (2021-22, weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county. The following were not asked in 2019: Has a grocery store, family resource center, or transit stop. For "neighbors help each other out" and "neighbors watch out for each other's children," percentages reflect those who reported "agree" or "strongly agree." ***Differences are significant at p < 0.001.

Higher-income families reported greater access to all types of neighborhood assets. The availability of mutual support among neighbors was reported by fewer Black and Hispanic/Latino families than families of other races/ethnicities. The availability of other types of neighborhood assets like sidewalks, parks, and libraries was also lower for Black respondents relative to respondents of other races/ethnicities. Monolingual Spanish-speaking families were less likely than families speaking other languages to have access to several of the assets listed, including parks, sidewalks, and libraries.

DIVE IN DEEPER

For more details on neighborhood assets broken down by categories such as race/ethnicity or zip code, visit the KRA dashboard online, select the "Community Resources" tab at the top of the webpage, and select your desired filters.

FIRST 5 ADVOCACY IN SUPPORT OF READINESS

First 5 Alameda supports a wide range of advocacy activities to promote community investments. Highlights include:

Submitted letters of support for AB 2517 (Bonta): It Takes a Village Act to implement new and strengthen existing neighborhood and cradle-to-career networks

In partnership with the City of Oakland, submitted a one-time state budget request to improve Oakland's play spaces for young children and their families.

For families with middle and lower incomes, we see the percent of children fully ready increase as the number of neighborhood assets increases.

FIGURE 21. **PERCENT FULLY READY, BY NUMBER OF ASSETS AND INCOME**
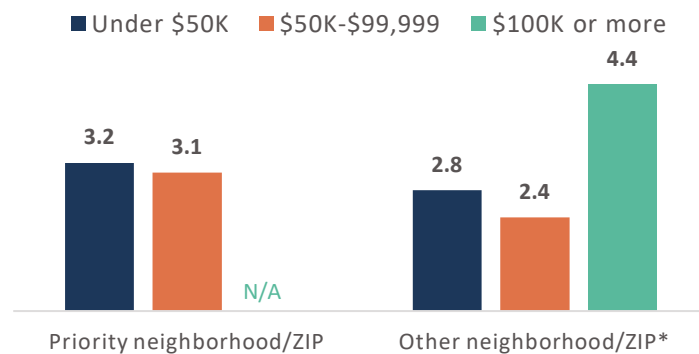
■ Below $50K ■ $50k-$99k ■ $100K or more

Source: Parent Survey (2021)
Note: N=1,741-1,767 (weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county. Ranges represent the number of neighborhood assets selected across three income groups. Fully ready represents a 4 on a four-point scale of readiness.
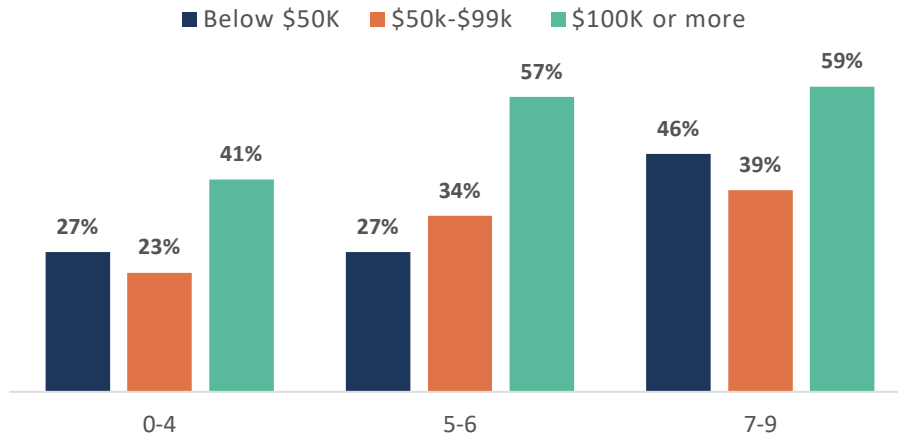
COMMUNITY RESOURCES RELATED TO READINESS

The presence of neighborhood assets and families' use of community resources were significantly correlated with higher readiness.

Families with middle and lower incomes who live in neighborhoods where there has been significant place-based investments, including First 5's NRFS grants, report a greater number of neighborhood assets than families with similar incomes in other neighborhoods. The number of high-income families living in a priority neighborhood was not large enough to analyze neighborhood differences for families in this income bracket.

FIGURE 22. **NEIGHBORHOOD ASSETS, BY NEIGHBORHOOD AND INCOME**

■ Under $50K ■ $50K-$99,999 ■ $100K or more

Source: Parent Survey (2021)
Note: N=1,412 (weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county. Numbers represent average number of neighborhood assets selected. Data suppressed for families earning $100K or more in priority neighborhoods due to small sample size. *Difference between the highest income bracket and the other two income brackets is significant at p < 0.05.

FAMILIES DESIRE COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

We need safe, clean, green spaces for families to access in East Oakland. We need playgrounds that have grass and shade and bathrooms. We need places to gather as neighbors. We need access to the places that we can't afford: zoos, aquariums, museums, etc.

— Parent survey respondent

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The map that follows shows the average number of assets parents/caregivers reported, by zip code. According to parents/caregivers, **neighborhoods in Oakland and Hayward had relatively few assets, while neighborhoods in Berkeley, Union City, and Pleasanton had more assets.**

FIGURE 23.   **NUMBER OF NEIGHBORHOOD ASSETS, BY ZIP CODE**
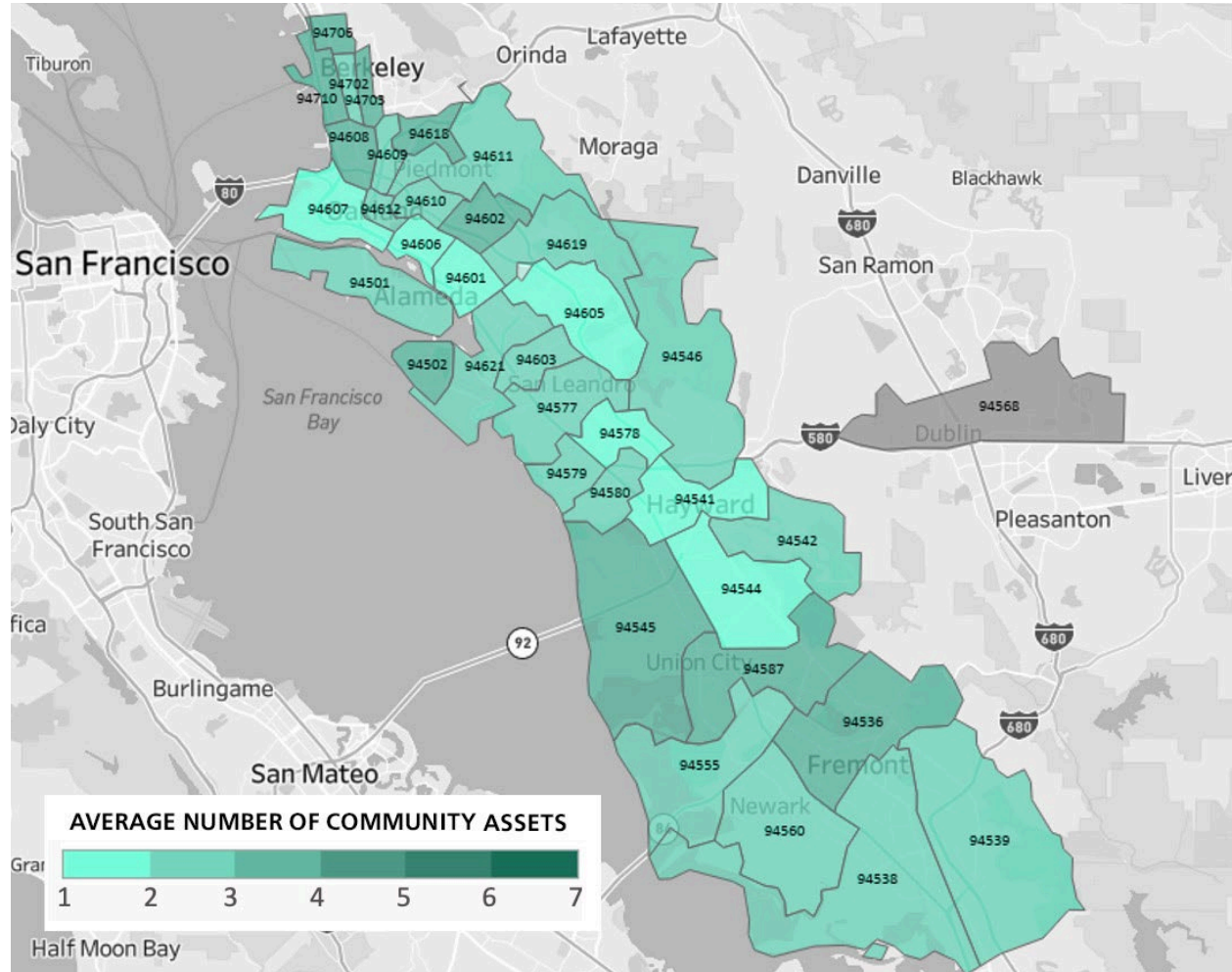
Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=1,748 (weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county. Zip codes with fewer than five participants not shown. Possible range of number of assets is one to nine, but the highest average number of assets was five.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS:
Parent/Caregiver Recommendations for Policymakers

Parents/caregivers offered recommendations for policymakers on what is needed most in their community. Just under half of participants (932) responded to this question.

> We need our children to thrive in a healthy environment.
> We need more of these community resources, where families and children meet up and have fun.
>
> — Parent/caregiver

> Regardless of financial status, it is important to provide affordable activities for young children so that families of all backgrounds can integrate and participate.
>
> — Parent/caregiver

The greatest number (43%) said they want policymakers to fund **affordable, high-quality child care** that helps children develop skills for school.

Many parents/caregivers (23%) also said they would like policymakers to provide families with **basic needs supports** like food, housing, clothing, and diapers, as well as help for children and families experiencing **mental health** challenges and those who have been exposed to trauma.

Respondents (17%) said they hoped leaders would create **safe, clean, and affordable community** spaces they could enjoy with their children, like zoos, museums, and playgrounds, and 17% say investing in **learning supports** that could improve schools.

Parents/caregivers (10%) also reported wanting policymakers to fund **affordable, fun community activities** for children and families like sports and recreation opportunities.

To illustrate what was most important to families participating in this study, the word cloud below shows the most frequently mentioned words in the responses to this question.

ASR

SUPPORTING READINESS OF FAMILIES

The readiness of children for kindergarten expands beyond the child to the preparation and support of families. Supporting families through access to quality early childhood education, access to resources in the community, and access to health and developmental screenings promotes children's development and impacts readiness.

SUPPORTING READINESS OF FAMILIES

Family health and well-being and children's participation in early care and education (ECE) are key predictors of kindergarten readiness. **Discrimination based on racism and classism affects family well-being**. The COVID-19 pandemic limited access to health care and ECE and increased the stress and challenges many children, families, and ECE professionals experienced. This section describes how children and their parents/caregivers are faring, the impact of COVID-19 on ECE participation, and families' experience of discrimination.

FAMILY HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Connection to **community-based resources** through **family navigation** and access to **health and mental health services** that are culturally responsive and include vision, dental, and screenings, and preventative care.

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

Access to affordable, high-quality child care options that meet family needs and preferences, especially for families with low incomes and those most impacted by structural racism.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORTING FAMILIES

Family Health & Well-Being

- Improve systems to expand access to **affordable, culturally responsive mental health services and supports** for families and children within the community. *

- Invest in programs, services, and policies that are affirming and responsive to the cultural and language needs of communities to **address historical inequities and mitigate current experiences of discrimination**.*

- Invest in **family resource centers and provide access to resources and navigation support** as well as programming that promotes community, expansion of social connections/capital, and respite for parents/caregivers and developmental play for children.

- Invest in **parent/caregiver peer groups**, including those that are culturally and gender specific (e.g., dad's groups, Afro-play, LGBTQ+), support networks, community building, and opportunities for leadership.

- Improve systems to **expand access to safety net programs** for children and their parents/caregivers in the community by eliminating barriers like long applications, frequent renewals, and Medi-Cal premiums and co-payments.

- **Continue policies that were implemented during the pandemic to improve access to quality services**, including Medi-Cal continuous eligibility, free healthy school meals for all children, and flexible redetermination processes for CalFresh and WIC.

- Improve timely **access to community supports through family navigation and care coordination**. Strategies include increasing support for technology platforms, family resource centers, family navigators, CalAIM, and programs like Help Me Grow and Alameda County Fathers Corps.

Early Care & Education

- Increase access to **affordable, quality child care options** that meet the needs of families and are open non-traditional hours, support language needs, and celebrate the child's culture. *

- Expand **apprenticeships and workforce pipelines via early care and education for parents** to provide opportunities to earn wages, pursue secondary education, and increase access to ECE.

- Expand **quality development/educational experiences for children in family, friend, and neighbor care** (e.g., partnership with libraries, parks and recreation, faith-based communities, and mobile programming at local parks).

- Increase **child care-based food programs** to support provider and family food security and conditions that support learning.

Recommendation identified as a high priority by the Alameda KRA Research Advisory Group.

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KEY FINDINGS FOR SUPPORTING READINESS OF FAMILIES

Family navigation, health and well-being supports, and early care and education support children's readiness.

- Children who attend **well-child visits** had higher readiness. However, **nearly 4 in 10 (37%) of children missed a health checkup during COVID-19**.

- Among children with **special needs, 28% were unable to access the professional help** they needed during the pandemic.

- Children whose parents/caregivers reported **fewer concerns about their child's mental health** had higher readiness.

- Receiving help from the place-based **Neighborhoods Ready for School (NRFS) initiative was associated with higher readiness.**

- **NRFS families reported using more community resources** than other families.

- Additionally, **child emotional well-being was a top concern** for parents and caregivers, ECE professionals, and kindergarten/TK teachers.

- Past research in Alameda County found **lower levels of parenting stress were linked to higher readiness.**

- The percent of **parents/caregivers reporting high stress levels increased** 13 points during COVID-19.

- **Experiences of discrimination were nearly 10 times higher in the county** relative to a national sample.

- **Black and multiracial parents/caregivers were more than twice as likely as White parents/caregivers to report experiencing discrimination.**

- Past research in Alameda County found **early care and education (ECE) participation predicts higher readiness.**

- **Families reported needing activities for young children and child care the most** when asked what supports they need.

- **Children in higher-income families were significantly more likely to attend licensed child care**, as were children who identify as White, Asian/Pacific Islander, or multiracial. Children in monolingual Spanish-speaking households were less likely than children in households speaking other languages to attend licensed care.

- **75% of families reported barriers to ECE**, primarily due to COVID-related closures and reduced hours and the cost of care.

HEALTH, DEVELOPMENT, AND WELL-BEING

Screenings and Health Care

The survey asked parents/caregivers to report on the health, well-being, and developmental screenings their children had received in the prior year. Nearly two-thirds of children had received a dental screening, approximately half had received a hearing or vision screening, and approximately one-third had received a developmental screening. Just 6% had received an Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) screening. **We see significantly higher reported readiness scores for children who received all types of screenings** (except ACEs)**. However, between 2019 and 2021-22, we observed a decline in the proportion of children who received health and developmental screenings.**

FIGURE 24. **CHILDREN'S HEALTH, WELL-BEING, AND DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENINGS, BY YEAR**

Legend: ■ 2019 ■ 2021-22

Dental: N/A (2019), 65% (2021-22)
Hearing***: 63% (2019), 51% (2021-22)
Vision***: 68% (2019), 49% (2021-22)
Developmental***: 49% (2019), 32% (2021-22)
ACEs: N/A (2019), 6% (2021-22)
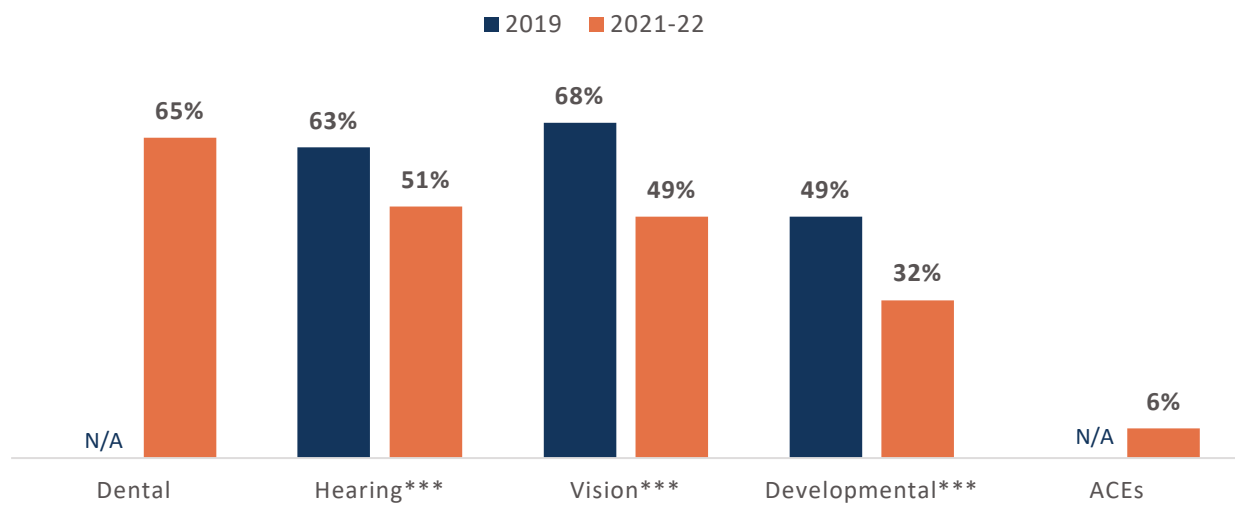
Source: Parent Survey (2019, 2021-22)
Note: N=1,097 (2019), 1,694 (2021-22, weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county. Dental and ACEs screening data not available for 2019. Question asked only about kindergarten students in 2019. ***Differences are significant at p < 0.001.

Well-child visits (WCVs) are critical for children's healthy growth and development. They provide an opportunity to track growth and developmental milestones, identify concerns early and seek specialized care as needed, get scheduled vaccinations to prevent serious illnesses, and discuss parent/caregiver challenges and resources for support. Children who attended well-child visits during the pandemic had higher readiness than those who did not, but many families found it difficult to access health care for their children during COVID-19. We asked parents/caregivers if they had missed a well-child check-up since the pandemic began. **Nearly 4 in 10 children in our sample had missed a well-child check-up,** a rate significantly higher than what was observed in a national comparison sample surveyed by the University of Oregon RAPID-EC team.

FIGURE 25. **CHILDREN WHO MISSED A WELL-CHILD CHECK-UP DURING COVID, ALAMEDA COUNTY**

ALAMEDA COUNTY

37%
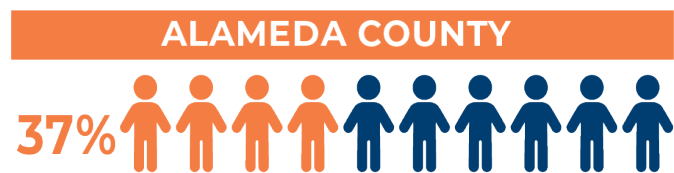
Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=1,757 (weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county.
***Difference compared to national rate is significant at p < 0.001.

Developmental Needs and Help Me Grow Support

According to parents/caregivers, 12% of children in the study had a special need diagnosed by a professional. There were no income differences in the proportion of families who could access help for their child with special needs, but a significantly greater proportion of White and Hispanic/Latino parents/caregivers relative to Black, Asian, and multiracial parents/caregivers said they had difficulty accessing care for their child with special needs.

FAMILY SUPPORT HELP ME GROW ALAMEDA

Help Me Grow (HMG) Alameda County supports families to connect to medical check-ups, with particular focus on Medi-Cal clients; trains providers to offer screenings; and provides the HMG central access point (phone line) for information and care coordination.

In the 2021-22 sample, 11% of parents/caregivers reported that they had received services from Help Me Grow (HMG), a system sponsored by First 5 Alameda County that works to mitigate the impacts of adversity and build protective factors among families to promote young children's optimal development. HMG provides a central access point for child development information and health education, support, and connection to services.

Families who received HMG services were compared to other families on a variety of characteristics and measures of well-being. We found that HMG participants were more likely than other families to be lower-income and to identify as Black. They were also more likely to have a child with special needs, have concerns about their child's readiness for kindergarten, and experience high levels of stress. On the other hand, **HMG participants were more likely to use various community resources to support their families** as the chart that follows shows. Although families not participating in HMG were more likely to use parks, libraries, and zoos, HMG families were more likely to use nearly all other types of resources.

FIGURE 26. **USE OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES, BY HELP ME GROW PARTICIPATION**

■ No HMG ■ HMG

Resource	No HMG	HMG
Parks*	56%	48%
Free food or other basic needs***	28%	41%
Libraries*	38%	30%
Free health/safety supplies***	13%	28%
Zoos*	34%	27%
Playgroups and/or Story Times**	20%	27%
Arts and music programs***	15%	25%
Help with finding/connecting to services***	9%	24%
Free diapers**	16%	23%
Museums	18%	22%
Parent/Family Cafés/leadership groups***	9%	22%
Mom's groups/dad's groups***	10%	20%
Recreational activities, camps, sports	91%	18%
Financial workshops***	5%	13%
ESL classes***	4%	10%

Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=1,565-1,772 (weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county. Differences are significant at ***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: Educators Share Their Concerns About Child and Family Health and Well-Being

Fifty-four kindergarten/TK teachers and 154 ECE professionals provided additional comments on the concerns they had about the health and well-being of both children and families.

A top concern for educators was around **basic needs support for families**, especially for those who had experienced wage loss due to COVID-19. They also described the various **child care, health, employment, learning, and mental health challenges** brought on by COVID-19.

ECE professionals also frequently mentioned worries around being responsible for **identifying COVID-19 symptoms in children and having to shut down** if a student tested positive, resulting in a loss of learning for students and decline in enrollment for centers.

> **COVID has a huge impact on students and families. Any medical symptom that may be related to COVID results in a 6-to-10-day quarantine. This impacts child care, parent's employment, learning, and social development.**
>
> – K/TK teacher

> **I always have concerns if I have to close a classroom due to exposure to COVID. This affects the quality of preparing the children for kindergarten. What is very important during this time is keeping our school safe and healthy. [But] this can take away the moments my staff has with each child.**
>
> – ECE professional

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As part of the <u>Neighborhoods Ready for School strategy</u>, First 5 funds trusted community organizations and family resource centers to build an ecosystem of support for families in the community.

Neighborhoods Ready for School

Neighborhoods Ready for School (NRFS) is a multi-million-dollar place-based initiative funded by First 5 Alameda County to support equity, early childhood development, family health and well-being, and kindergarten readiness. The NRFS grantees provide a variety of services, including connecting children and families to needed services and resources, and are located in higher-need neighborhoods in West Oakland, East Oakland, Union City, and San Antonio. In the current study, 11% of participants had received help from an NRFS site, and they reported higher readiness in their children relative to families who did not receive NRFS support. NRFS families tended to be lower-income and live in priority neighborhoods compared to other families in our study, but there were no racial/ethnic differences among families who participated in NRFS and those who did not.

We found that **NRFS families were more likely than other families to access services and resources in the community.** For example, they were more likely to have used certain kindergarten transition supports (i.e., receive information from the school about kindergarten and attend a summer pre-K program) and have a father who engaged in these supports, have a child who attended their well-child visits during the pandemic, and received the Child Tax Credit. They also were more likely to use various community resources as shown in the chart that follows.
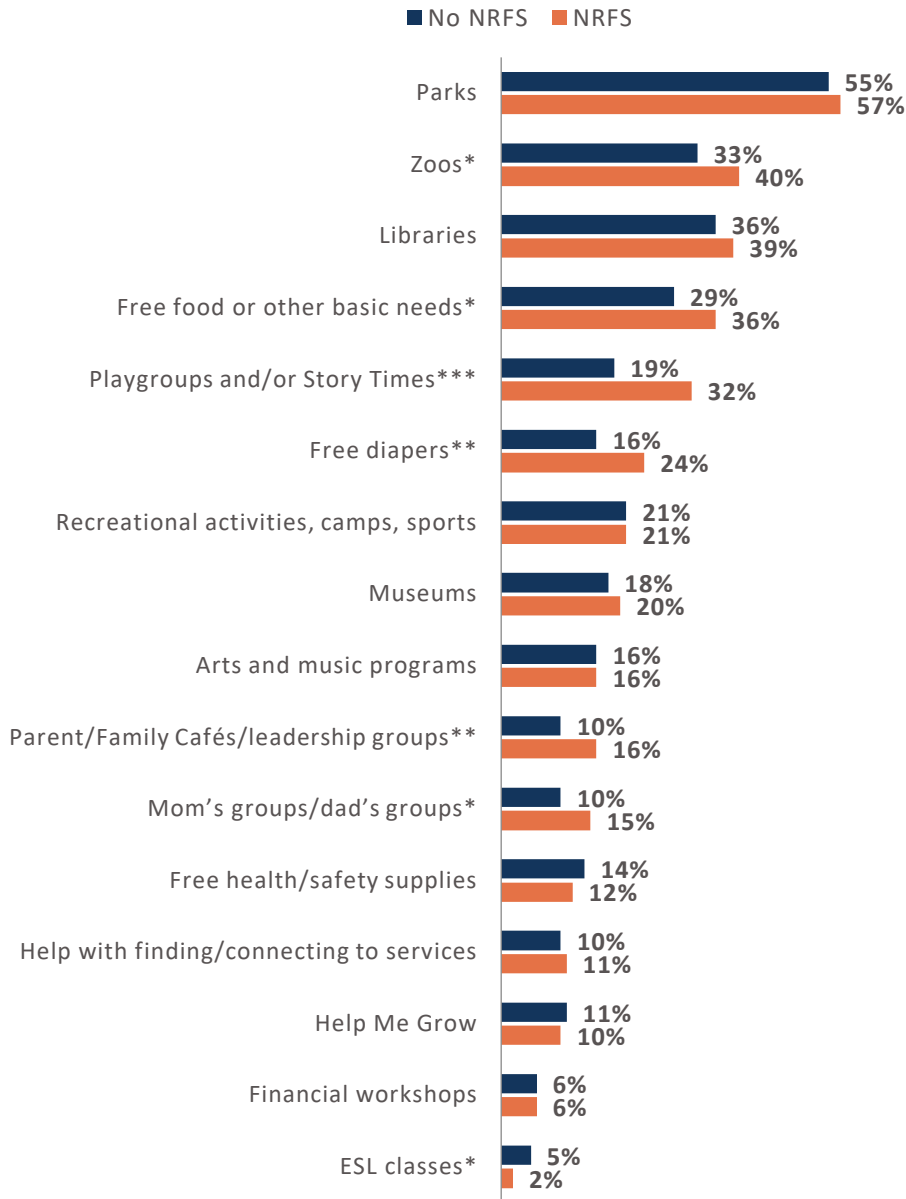
DIVE IN DEEPER

For more details on use of community resources broken down by categories such as family income or race/ethnicity, visit the <u>KRA dashboard online</u>, select your desired filters underneath "Neighborhood Assets" then scroll to the "Community Resources and Supports" section of the page.

ASR

FIGURE 27. **USE OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES, BY NRFS PARTICIPATION**

■ No NRFS ■ NRFS

Resource	No NRFS	NRFS
Parks	55%	57%
Zoos*	33%	40%
Libraries	36%	39%
Free food or other basic needs*	29%	36%
Playgroups and/or Story Times***	19%	32%
Free diapers**	16%	24%
Recreational activities, camps, sports	21%	21%
Museums	18%	20%
Arts and music programs	16%	16%
Parent/Family Cafés/leadership groups**	10%	16%
Mom's groups/dad's groups*	10%	15%
Free health/safety supplies	14%	12%
Help with finding/connecting to services	10%	11%
Help Me Grow	11%	10%
Financial workshops	6%	6%
ESL classes*	5%	2%

Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=1,565-1,772 (weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county. Differences are significant at ***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05.

Educators were asked if they had connected families to an NRFS site. Fifteen percent of ECE professionals, 5% of TK teachers, and 10% of kindergarten teachers had referred families to at least one NRFS site. They were most likely to refer families to the Roots Stay Ready for School, Lincoln Mandela Family Resource Center, or Union City Family Center grantees. Most educators (around 90%) say they had not made a referral to any of the NRFS sites listed.

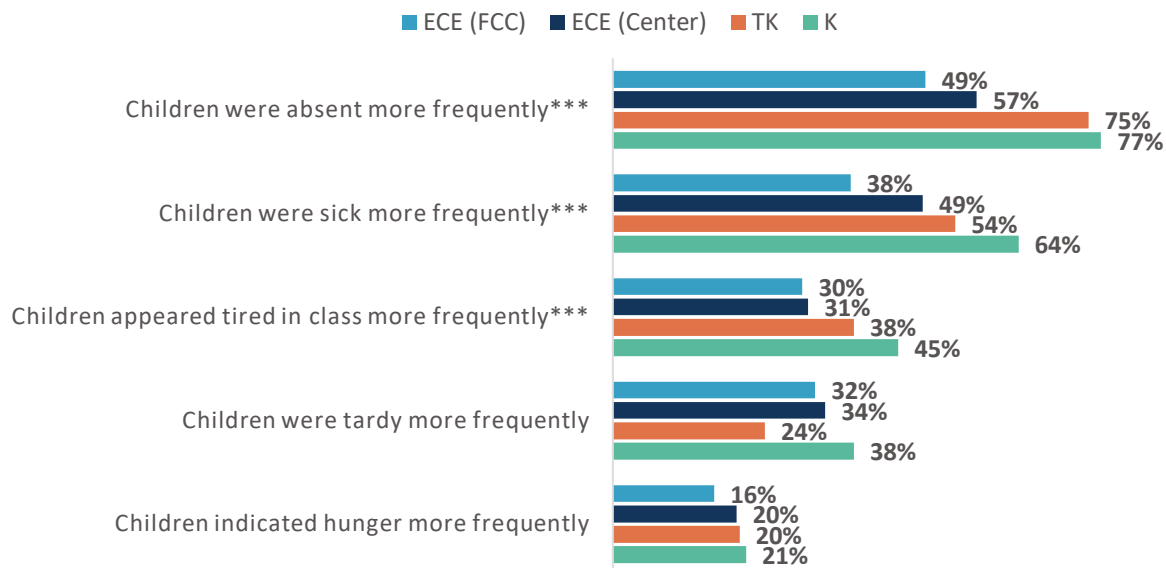## Educator Concerns for Child and Family Well-Being

In past studies, children who came to school with well-being concerns, particularly those exhibiting signs of tiredness or hunger, had lower readiness levels than their peers.

- In the current study, educators who expressed more concerns about the health and well-being of children in their classroom also had more concerns about readiness.

- Most educators reported increases in absences and illness during COVID-19.

The data disaggregated by educator type in the figures below helps to shed light on these differences.

FIGURE 28. **CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND WELL-BEING AND ATTENDANCE CONCERNS IN 2021 COMPARED TO BEFORE COVID, BY EDUCATOR TYPE**

Legend: ■ ECE (FCC) ■ ECE (Center) ■ TK ■ K

Children were absent more frequently***
- ECE (FCC): 49%
- ECE (Center): 57%
- TK: 75%
- K: 77%

Children were sick more frequently***
- ECE (FCC): 38%
- ECE (Center): 49%
- TK: 54%
- K: 64%

Children appeared tired in class more frequently***
- ECE (FCC): 30%
- ECE (Center): 31%
- TK: 38%
- K: 45%

Children were tardy more frequently
- ECE (FCC): 32%
- ECE (Center): 34%
- TK: 24%
- K: 38%

Children indicated hunger more frequently
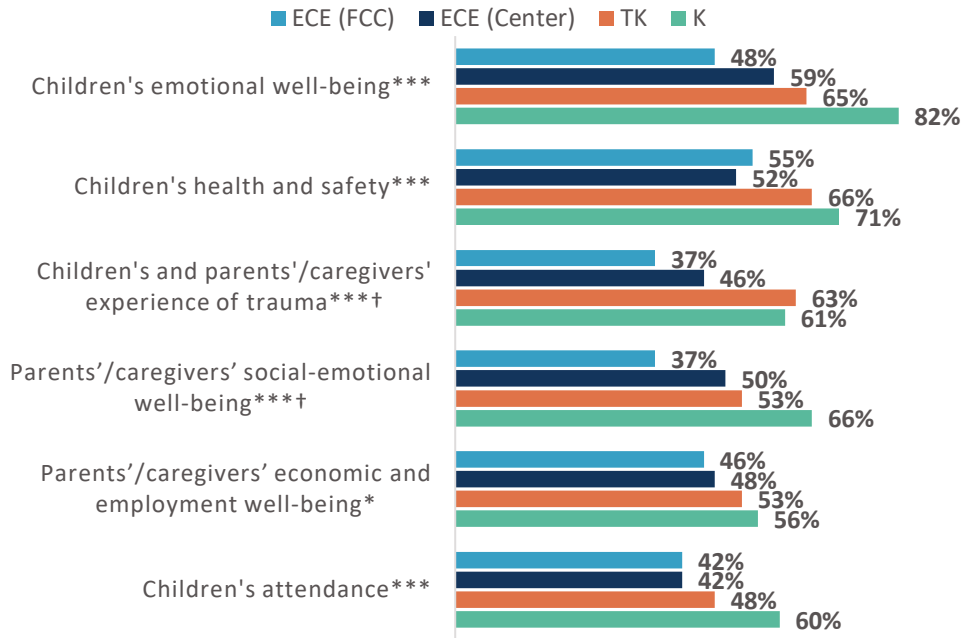- ECE (FCC): 16%
- ECE (Center): 20%
- TK: 20%
- K: 21%

Source: Teacher Survey (2021-22), ECE Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=43-44 (TK teacher, weighted); 194-195 (K teacher, weighted); 143-144 (ECE (FCC), weighted); 235-236 (ECE (Center), weighted). Data were weighted by zip code/district to approximate the county population of ECE professionals/teachers. Percentages reflect those who reported "somewhat more frequently" or "much more frequently." ***Differences are significant at $p < 0.001$. No significant differences in educator concern were detected across the two ECE site types [licensed centers ("centers") and licensed family child care centers ("FCC")].

The chart that follows shows that **educators were most concerned about children's emotional well-being and health and safety**.

FIGURE 29. **EDUCATOR CONCERNS ABOUT CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING, BY EDUCATOR TYPE**

Legend: ■ ECE (FCC) ■ ECE (Center) ■ TK ■ K

Children's emotional well-being***
- ECE (FCC): 48%
- ECE (Center): 59%
- TK: 65%
- K: 82%

Children's health and safety***
- ECE (FCC): 55%
- ECE (Center): 52%
- TK: 66%
- K: 71%

Children's and parents'/caregivers' experience of trauma***†
- ECE (FCC): 37%
- ECE (Center): 46%
- TK: 63%
- K: 61%

Parents'/caregivers' social-emotional well-being****†
- ECE (FCC): 37%
- ECE (Center): 50%
- TK: 53%
- K: 66%

Parents'/caregivers' economic and employment well-being*
- ECE (FCC): 46%
- ECE (Center): 48%
- TK: 53%
- K: 56%

Children's attendance***
- ECE (FCC): 42%
- ECE (Center): 42%
- TK: 48%
- K: 60%

Source: Teacher Survey (2021-22), ECE Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=46-48 (TK teacher, weighted); 217-221 (K teacher, weighted); 143-145 (ECE (FCC), weighted); 235-236 (ECE (Center), weighted). Data were weighted by zip code/district to approximate the county population of ECE professionals/teachers. Percentages reflect those who reported being "somewhat concerned" or "very concerned." Differences are significant at ***$p < 0.001$; *$p < 0.05$. †Just two significant differences in concerns were detected across the two ECE site types [licensed centers ("centers") and licensed family child care centers ("FCC")]: Within the child/parent trauma and parent/caregiver social-emotional well-being, licensed centers had greater concerns compared to licensed family child care centers.

FIGURE 30. **PARENT/CAREGIVER CONCERNS ABOUT THEIR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH BEFORE AND DURING COVID**

- Before COVID: 45%
- During COVID***: 67%
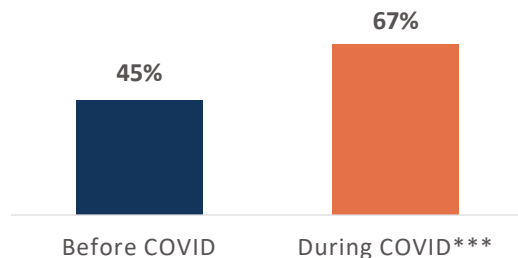
Source: Parent Survey (2021-22).
Note: N=1,713-1,747 (weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county. Percentages reflect those who reported they were concerned "some of the time" or "most of the time." ***Differences are significant at $p < 0.001$.

Parent Concerns for Child and Family Well-Being

A series of questions asked parents/caregivers to report how concerned they were about their child's mental health and well-being. As the chart that follows shows, **parents'/caregivers' concerns about their child's mental health increased during COVID-19**.

Prior to the pandemic, lower-income and Black families were more concerned about their child's mental health than other families in the sample. Since the onset of COVID-19, levels of concern have been high for families of all incomes and highest for White and Hispanic/Latino families compared to families of other races/ethnicities. Monolingual Spanish-speaking parents/caregivers were slightly more likely to express concerns about their child's mental health than parents/caregivers speaking other languages.

Past research in Alameda County found lower levels of parenting stress were linked to higher readiness. Parents/caregivers also reported the degree to which they experienced stress before COVID-19 and in the past week. Alameda County parents/caregivers were more stressed at the time of the survey than they were before COVID-19, and their stress levels were much higher than those of a national comparison sample surveyed by the University of Oregon RAPID-EC team.

STRESS FROM COVID-19

Parent/caregiver stress levels increased significantly during COVID-19.

FIGURE 31. **PARENT/CAREGIVER STRESS BEFORE COVID AND IN THE PAST WEEK, ALAMEDA COUNTY COMPARED TO NATIONAL SAMPLE**
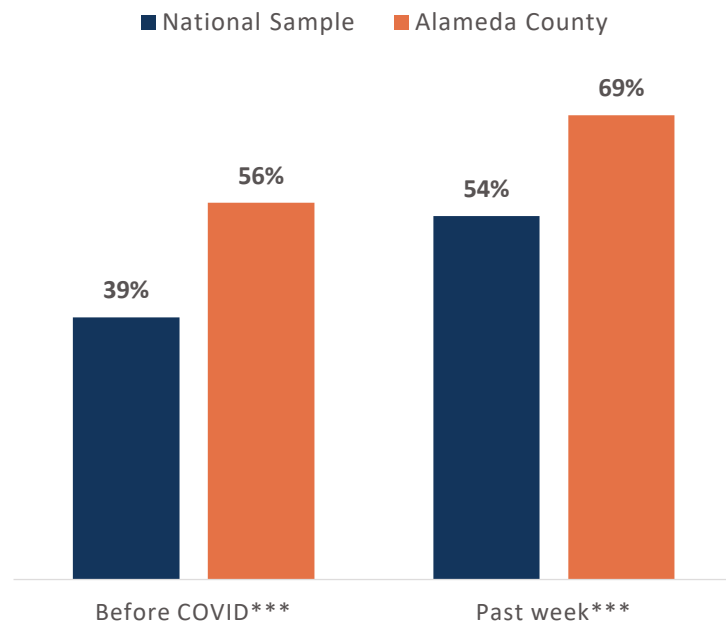
■ National Sample   ■ Alameda County

	Before COVID***	Past week***
National Sample	39%	54%
Alameda County	56%	69%

Source: Parent Survey (2021-22), Center for Translational Neuroscience. RAPID-EC Survey Project.
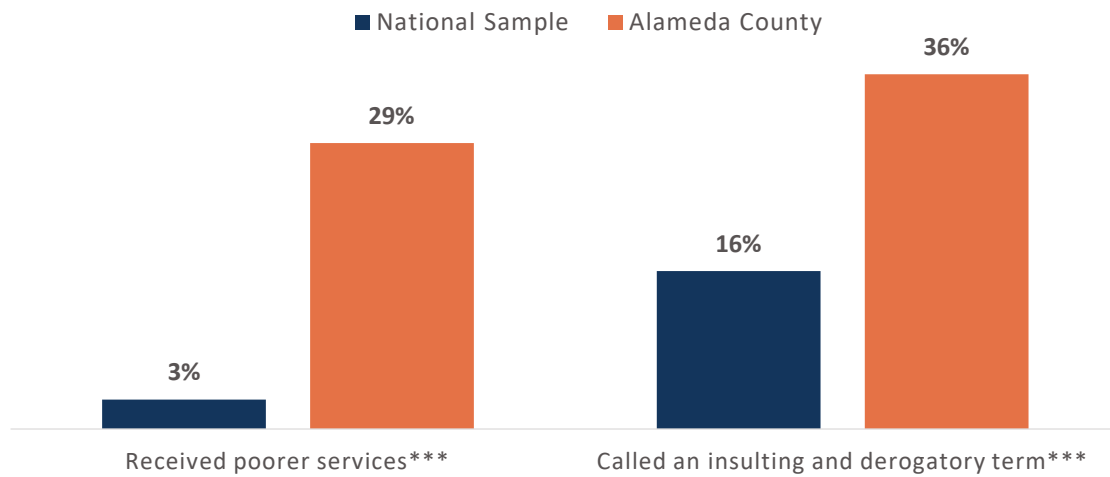Note: N=1,727-1,751 (weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county. Percentages reflect those who reported their stress level as 3 or higher on a 5-point scale. ***Differences are significant at p < 0.001.

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT NEEDED FOR ALL

We need more mental health support for students, their families, and educators.

– K/TK teacher survey respondent

ASR

FIGURE 32. **PARENT/CAREGIVER EXPERIENCES OF RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION, ALAMEDA COUNTY COMPARED TO NATIONAL SAMPLE**

Source: Parent Survey (2021-22), Center for Translational Neuroscience. RAPID-EC Survey Project.
Note: N=1,737-1,750 (weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county. Not shown: N=259-427 who were "unsure" they had ever had these experiences. ***Differences are significant at $p < 0.001$.

RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION EXPERIENCED MOST BY BLACK AND MULTIRACIAL PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

Research shows that racism is related to adverse health outcomes, both physical and emotional. Racism is known to increase chronic stress, which impacts cardiovascular health, increases in body mass index (BMI) and incidence of obesity, hypertension, and poor sleep.[1,2] Furthermore, because maternal stressors can be passed to their infants, there is reason to believe that a mother's high allostatic load, or overall stress load, can influence the allostatic load of her children, thereby making them even more susceptible to stress and other factors leading to poor outcomes.[3]

Parents/caregivers in this study reported whether they had experienced racism or discrimination based on their race/ethnicity. Compared to a national comparison sample surveyed by the University of Oregon RAPID-EC team, significantly more parents/caregivers in Alameda County have received poorer services or been called an insulting and derogatory term.

Relative to White parents/caregivers, Black parents/caregivers were 2.7 times more likely and multiracial parents/caregivers were 2.2 times more likely to report experiencing discrimination. Those who experienced discrimination also reported higher levels of stress overall.

When it comes to discrimination and access to care, parents/caregivers and educators in the F5 Alameda KRA Research Advisory Group noted that discrimination, the stress experienced by parents, and effort of parents to connect to services "are not separate issues" but together are "all linked to well-being and access."

[1] Harrell, C. J. P., Burford, T. I., Cage, B. N., Nelson, T. M., Shearon, S., Thompson, A., & Green, S. (2011). Multiple pathways linking racism to health outcomes. Du Bois review: social science research on race, 8(1), 143-157.
[2] Williams, D. R., Lawrence, J. A., & Davis, B. A. (2019). Racism and health: evidence and needed research. Annual review of public health, 40, 105-125.
[3] Olson DM and Metz GAS. Climate change is a major stressor causing poor pregnancy outcomes and child development. F1000Research 2020, 9(Faculty Rev):1222 (https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.27157.1)

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION ENROLLMENT

Early care and education experience is consistently one of the strongest predictors of kindergarten readiness in Alameda County.[xviii,xix]

Additionally, **three-quarters of families reported at least one barrier to accessing ECE.** The most common challenges included reduced hours and site closures due to COVID-19 as well as the high cost of care. Parents/caregivers in Alameda County were also concerned about their child getting poor care and education, and **concerns about the child's care and education increased during COVID-19.**

ECE continues to be an important kindergarten readiness support that offers children enrichment and allows parents/caregivers to work and financially support their families.
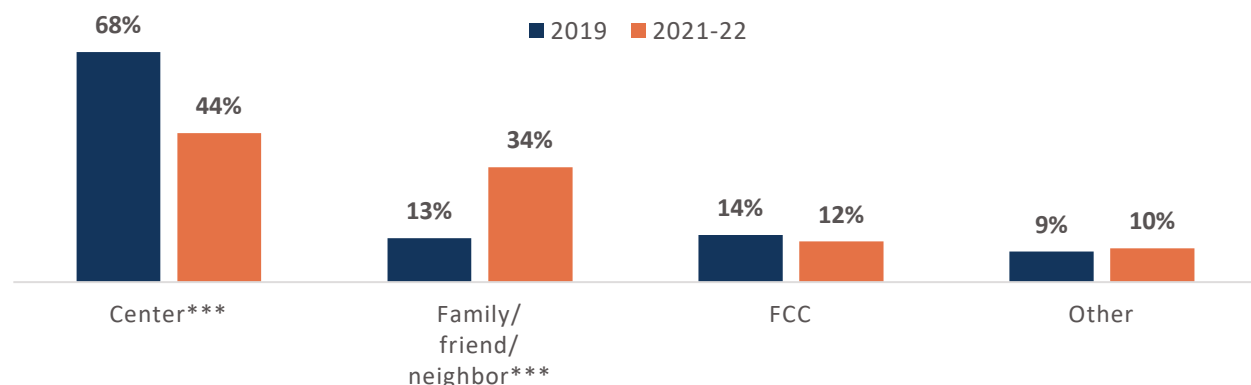
Early Care and Education Attendance

About half of children in the current study attended a licensed preschool or child care center or family child care home (FCC), and about one-fifth had no reported child care experience. **Relative to children in the 2019 sample, fewer children in the 2021-22 sample attended licensed care**, while more were cared for by family, friends, and neighbors. These differences were likely impacted by significant disruptions to ECE site closures due to the pandemic, along with differences in the ages of the children in each study: the 2019 sample included only children entering kindergarten, whereas the 2021-22 sample included children ages 3-6.

Children in higher-income families were significantly more likely to attend licensed child care than children in families with low-income. In addition, families who identify as White, Asian/Pacific Islander, or multiracial were more likely than those who identify as Hispanic/Latino or Black to use licensed care. Children in monolingual Spanish-speaking households were less likely than children in households speaking other languages to attend licensed care.

FIGURE 33. **CHILDREN'S EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION EXPERIENCE**

Legend: ■ 2019 ■ 2021-22

- Center***: 68% (2019), 44% (2021-22)
- Family/friend/neighbor***: 13% (2019), 34% (2021-22)
- FCC: 14% (2019), 12% (2021-22)
- Other: 9% (2019), 10% (2021-22)

Source: Parent Survey (2019), Parent Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=1,469 (2019), 1,677-1,707 (2021-22, weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county. Respondents could select multiple responses, so figures may sum to more than 100%. Data for 2019 limited to children entering kindergarten and reflects participation in infant/toddler or preschool years. "Other" included examples such as summer pre-K, co-ops, playgroups, recreation programs, or before/after school care. ***Differences are significant at $p < 0.001$.

Barriers to Early Care and Education

In 2021-22, families were asked to indicate the barriers to ECE access that they had experienced. **Three-quarters of families reported at least one barrier to accessing ECE.** The most common challenges included reduced hours and site closures due to COVID-19 as well as the high cost of care.

Higher-income families were more likely to report barriers of nearly all types, but middle-income families (i.e., those earning $50,000-$99,999) were most likely to report having difficulty finding and enrolling in a program, and families with low-income were most likely to say there isn't a program nearby. Relative to families of other races or ethnicities, White and Black families were more likely to report the most barriers to ECE. Bilingual families were less likely than other families to report barriers with one exception: they were more likely to say the program was not safe due to COVID-19.
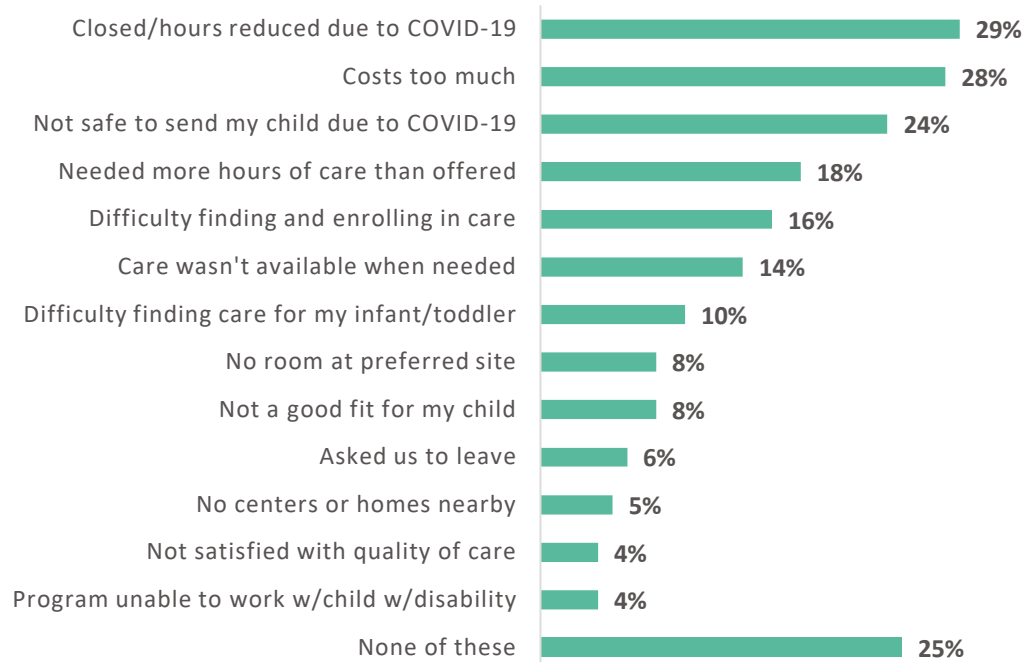

ECE BARRIERS INCLUDE HIGH COST

Families were most likely to have difficulty accessing ECE because of COVID-19 disruptions and the high cost of care.

FIGURE 34. **BARRIERS TO ECE**

Closed/hours reduced due to COVID-19	29%
Costs too much	28%
Not safe to send my child due to COVID-19	24%
Needed more hours of care than offered	18%
Difficulty finding and enrolling in care	16%
Care wasn't available when needed	14%
Difficulty finding care for my infant/toddler	10%
No room at preferred site	8%
Not a good fit for my child	8%
Asked us to leave	6%
No centers or homes nearby	5%
Not satisfied with quality of care	4%
Program unable to work w/child w/disability	4%
None of these	25%

Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=1,677 (2021-22, weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county. Respondents could select multiple responses, so figures may sum to more than 100%.

[ECE] programs should provide ongoing, quality professional development for all staff.
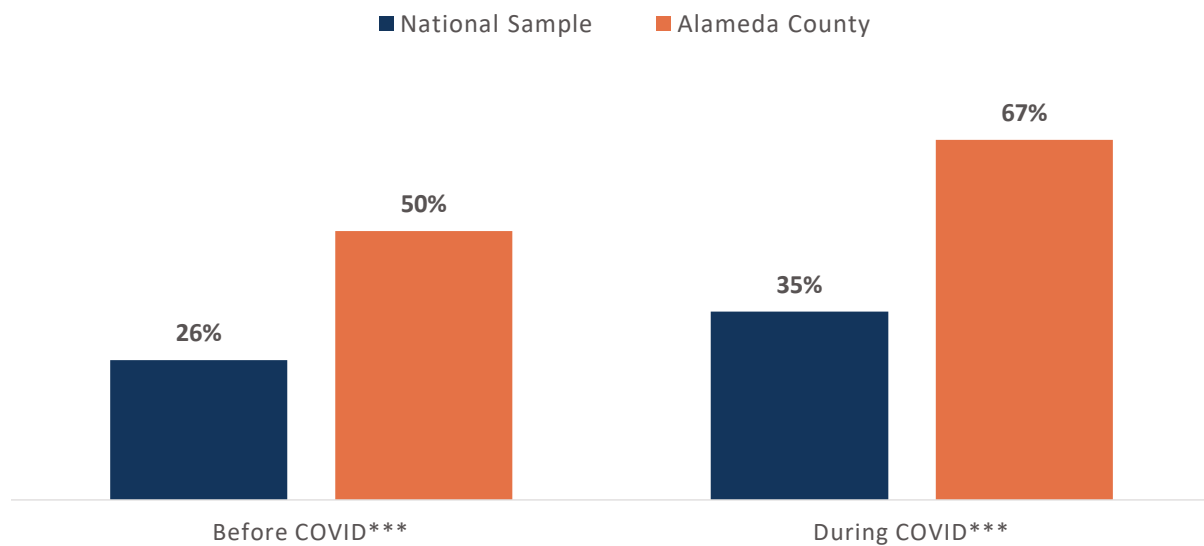
– Parent survey respondent

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Parent/Caregiver Concerns about Early Care and Education

In Alameda County and nationally, parent/caregiver concerns about ECE have increased during COVID-19. Moreover, concerns are greater for Alameda County parents/caregivers than those surveyed by RAPID-EC across the country (see Figure 34).

Before the pandemic, families with low-income and those who identify as Black reported higher levels of concern than other families. During COVID-19, however, concerns were high regardless of family income and were highest among White parents/caregivers. Monolingual Spanish-speaking and monolingual Chinese-speaking parents/caregivers expressed more concerns about their child's care and education than monolingual English-speaking and bilingual parent/caregivers.

FIGURE 35. **PARENT/CAREGIVER CONCERNS ABOUT THEIR CHILD GETTING POOR CARE AND EDUCATION BEFORE AND DURING COVID, ALAMEDA COUNTY COMPARED TO NATIONAL SAMPLE**

Legend: ■ National Sample ■ Alameda County

Before COVID***: National Sample 26%, Alameda County 50%
During COVID***: National Sample 35%, Alameda County 67%

Source: Parent Survey (2021-22), Center for Translational Neuroscience. RAPID-EC Survey Project.
Note: N=1,713-1,747 (weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county. Percentages reflect those who reported they were concerned "some of the time" or "most of the time." ***Differences are significant at p < 0.001.

SUPPORTING READINESS OF SCHOOLS

"Ready" schools support educators' training and experiences in the classroom, as well as promote the use of transition supports and effective communication with families. This section describes educators' backgrounds, training needs and experiences, and information about how COVID has impacted educators' work hours, wages, and stress.

SUPPORTING READINESS OF SCHOOLS

This year's research added new questions for educators not asked in previous research, especially related to the impacts of COVID-19 on stress levels, changes in hours worked, and wages for educators. The findings indicate the **importance of kindergarten transitions for families and support for educators and systems.** Access to kindergarten transition supports, like parent-teacher meetings and orientations, has been found to be predictive of readiness in our prior research and in the current study.[1] The data in this section illustrate the resources available to support ECE professionals and kindergarten/TK teachers (referred to as a group herein as "educators"). We examined educators' background, training, and experience, including how their experience has been affected by COVID-19.

KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION SUPPORT

Access to events and activities that ensure families' smooth transition, such as parent-teacher meetings, home visits, and kindergarten orientations, plus policies and practices that engage fathers and other historically underrepresented family members.

SUPPORTED EDUCATORS & SYSTEMS

Collaboration between systems, including ECE, transitional kindergarten to 12th grade, and community organizations to better support ECE professionals, teachers, and families with resources and services.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORTING SCHOOLS

Kindergarten Transition Supports

- **Expand access to kindergarten readiness activities and transition supports** that are accessible to all families within their community. Supports include summer programs, playgroups, parent support, school events, and activities for children in K/1st grade who missed opportunities because of the pandemic.

- Promote policies and practices that intentionally **engage and welcome fathers and historically underrepresented family members in programs and services** from prenatal to the kindergarten transition.

Supported Educators & Systems

- Increase access to affordable, quality **mental health and self-care resources** for ECE professionals and educators as well as mental health consultation for the classroom to support child educational achievement.*

- Support **communication, collaboration, and partnerships** between the home, informal care settings, early care and education professionals, community programs, and schools to facilitate the transition to TK/kindergarten.*

- Support policies and practices that **expand family navigation and care coordination services at ECE settings and schools to promote community partnerships** that help connect families to available programs and services in the community.*

- Provide educators with **supports to mitigate learning loss** (i.e. smaller teacher-to-child ratios in kindergarten), **professional development and training** to support students' wellbeing (social-emotional and child development, anti-bias/equity in teaching).

- Advance policies and supports for **professional development, capacity building, workforce diversification, and equitable compensation and working conditions** that support providers and quality care.

*Recommendation identified as a high priority by the Alameda KRA Research Advisory Group.

KEY FINDINGS FOR SUPPORTING READINESS OF SCHOOLS

COVID-19 has caused high degrees of stress for families and educators.

- According to parents/caregivers, ECE professionals, and kindergarten/TK teachers, **readiness declined during COVID-19.**

- **Use of kindergarten transition supports, especially among fathers, was linked to higher readiness.**

- **Use of kindergarten transition supports dropped from 2019** (e.g., 87% visited the school in 2019, while 44% visited in 2021-22).

- **Some transition supports were more likely to be offered by elementary schools in 2021-22** compared to 2019 (e.g., parent-teacher meetings, home visits), while others were less likely (e.g., kindergarten orientations).

- **Stress among ECE professionals and kindergarten/TK teachers increased during COVID-19** and is highest among kindergarten teachers, relative to TK teachers and ECE professionals.

- ECE professionals and kindergarten/TK teachers who reported **high levels of stress were over four times more likely than those with low stress levels to say they plan to leave the profession.**

- **ECE professionals experienced the greatest changes to their hours and income** during COVID-19 compared with kindergarten and TK teachers: 49% reported decreased hours, 43% decreased wages, and 57% decreased household income.

- 70% of ECE professionals, 58% of TK teachers, and 46% of kindergarten teachers said they **need training in Social-Emotional Learning (SEL).**

- ECE professionals and kindergarten/TK teachers are **most likely to have access to COVID-19 supplies and least likely to have access to mental health/self-care resources.**

- **Fewer than one-third of ECE professionals have access to supports for families** like family services referral lists (29%), translation support (21%), and child mental health consultants (19%).

ASR

KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION SUPPORTS

Access to kindergarten transition supports, like parent-teacher meetings and orientations, **has been found to be predictive of readiness in our prior research and in the current study.**[1] For both K and TK classrooms and ECE sites, **some types of transition supports, such as visits to school, as well as the participation rates of families in transition support activities declined from 2019 to 2021-22.** And while transition supports are utilized in different ways across different groups, we consistently found that **father use of the transition supports was significantly associated with readiness.**

Some transition supports were more likely to be offered by schools in 2021-22 compared to 2019, such as **parent-teacher meetings.** Parent-teacher meetings were mainly conducted remotely, possibly increasing accessibility for parents not able to attend in-person meetings. **Other transition supports were less likely to be offered** such as kindergarten orientations, likely due to limitations of in-person gatherings.

First 5 has responded to this finding by using an equity index to invest in kindergarten transition supports in elementary schools throughout the county, with more funding allocated to districts in divested communities (see Appendix C for a map of equity scores by school district and funding amounts).

Transition Supports Used or Reported by Families

In the current study, families who used more kindergarten transition supports, especially when the supports were used by fathers, gave their children higher readiness ratings. This section describes the transition supports used by families and available supports at ECE sites and elementary schools. Parents/caregivers shared the type of kindergarten transition supports they used or received. **Engagement in transition supports declined between 2019 and 2021-22,** but in both years, one of the most common activities was visiting the elementary school.

Parents/caregivers from higher-income households were more likely to use most of these supports. Racial/ethnic differences in use varied by support type, with Black families most likely to have attended a summer pre-K program or received home visits, Hispanic/Latino and White families most likely to have attended activities or events, Asian/Pacific Islander and multiracial families most likely to have received information about what the child might learn or have attended a meeting orientation, and White and multiracial families most likely to have visited the elementary school or met the child's kindergarten teacher. Families living in First 5 priority neighborhoods (see *Methodology* for zip codes included in this group) were more likely to attend parent meetings, but less likely to attend activities or events at the school or a summer pre-K program, compared to families who lived in other neighborhoods.

COVID-19 MIXED IMPACT ON USE OF TRANSITION TO K SUPPORTS

Teachers reported declines during COVID-19 in some types of transition supports at their school (e.g., kindergarten orientation), but an increase in other types (e.g., parent-teacher meetings and home visits with families).

SUPPORTS FOR TRANSITION TO K IMPORTANT FOR FATHERS

Use of kindergarten transition supports by parents/caregivers, especially fathers, was positively correlated with readiness, but overall use of the supports declined in 2021.

DIVE IN DEEPER

For more details on use of transition supports broken down by categories such as school, school district, or language of family, visit the KRA dashboard online, select the "Transition Supports" tab at the top of the webpage, and select your desired filters underneath "Parent Perceptions."
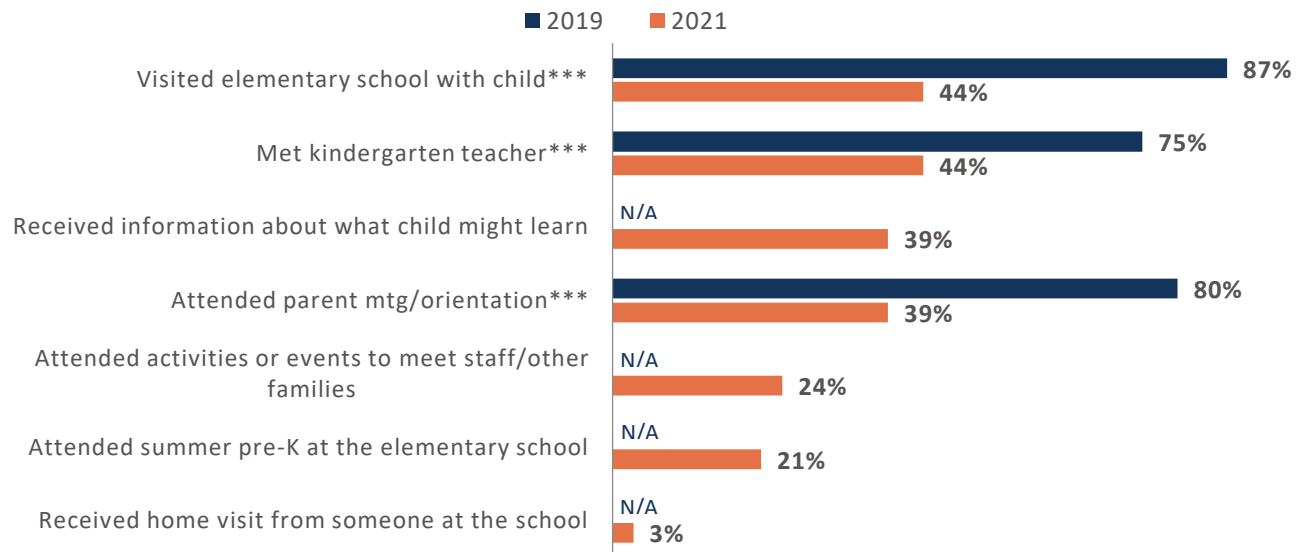
Language differences in kindergarten transition support use also varied by support type. Compared to parents/caregivers speaking other languages, monolingual English-speaking parents/caregivers were more likely to visit the school, meet the child's teacher, and attend summer pre-K; bilingual parents/caregivers were more likely to attend events and less likely to attend summer pre-K; monolingual Spanish-speaking parents/caregivers were more likely to attend an orientation and less likely to attend summer pre-K; and monolingual Chinese-speaking parents/caregivers were less likely to attend events or summer pre-K and meet the child's teacher.

FIGURE 36. KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION SUPPORTS USED OR REPORTED BY FAMILIES, BY YEAR

■ 2019 ■ 2021

Support	2019	2021
Visited elementary school with child***	87%	44%
Met kindergarten teacher***	75%	44%
Received information about what child might learn	N/A	39%
Attended parent mtg/orientation***	80%	39%
Attended activities or events to meet staff/other families	N/A	24%
Attended summer pre-K at the elementary school	N/A	21%
Received home visit from someone at the school	N/A	3%

Source: Parent Survey (2019, 2021-22)
Note: N=1,109 (2019); 966-987 (2021-22, weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the race/ethnicity of young children in the county. The following were not asked in 2019: Attended activities or events to meet the school staff/, other families, attended summer pre-K at the elementary school, received information about what your child might learn, received home visit from someone at the elementary school. ***Differences are significant at p < 0.001.

Participants also indicated which adult family members used or received these transition supports. Supports were used by mothers in 85% of families and by fathers in 44% of families. As mentioned previously, **father use of the transition supports was significantly associated with readiness**. Families in which fathers used these supports were more likely to be higher-income and identify as Asian/Pacific Islander, relative to other families.

ALAMEDA COUNTY FATHERS CORPS

First 5 invests in the Alameda County Fathers Corps, a collaborative focused on empowering and supporting fathers, service providers, agencies, systems, and the wider community to raise awareness of the critical role of fathers and father figures and the benefits of active father involvement on young children's development; provide training and support to service providers with implementation of the Father-Friendly Principles; and advocate for more father-specific and father-friendly services.

Kindergarten Transition Supports

The most common kindergarten transition support offered by kindergarten/TK schools was sharing information with families about what their child might learn, reported by 67% of teachers, followed by a kindergarten orientation, reported by 64% of teachers. Fewer than half of teachers reported other types of transition supports. **Some transition supports were more likely to be offered by schools in 2021-22 compared to 2019 (e.g., parent-teacher meetings,** likely due to meetings being done remotely**), while others were less likely (e.g., kindergarten orientations,** likely due to limitations of in-person gatherings).

Access to kindergarten transition supports, like parent-teacher meetings and orientations, has been found to be predictive of readiness in our prior research and in the current study.[1] First 5 has responded to this finding by using an equity index to invest in kindergarten transition supports in elementary schools throughout the county, with more funding allocated to districts in divested communities (see Appendix C for a map of equity scores by school district and funding amounts). It will be important to continue to invest in ECE sites and elementary schools in underserved neighborhoods to improve the learning and transition experiences of young children.

Kindergarten Transition Grants Demonstrate First 5's Commitment of Research to Action

Since 2008, First 5 Alameda County's Kindergarten Readiness Assessment has shown disparities in readiness based on factors largely due to socioeconomics. During the COVID-19 crisis these factors have been even more adversely impacted.

In 2019, we learned that over two-thirds of classes with mostly fully ready students were in schools with at least three kindergarten transition supports (e.g., orientations, school events, and parent-teacher meetings), compared to 45% of classrooms with fewer supports and where most children were not fully ready.

In response to COVID-19, First 5 established a Community Resilience Fund with Kindergarten Transition Grants to school districts to assist educational partners to expand transition supports during this time of increased need.

Grants were awarded with an equity lens such that priority use of funds be made to support BIPOC families, immigrant families, and those experiencing poverty.

Funds were allocated on the basis of an *Equity Index*, a weighted composite of the following factors: number of kindergarten students and classrooms, percent of student body using free and reduced lunch, diversity of student body, COVID-19 transmission rates, previous KRA participation and readiness results (see map in Appendix C for more detail of equity index scores and kindergarten transition funding amounts by school district).

Districts were encouraged to leverage existing First 5 partnerships including Neighborhoods Ready for School and The Early Learning Communities Network.
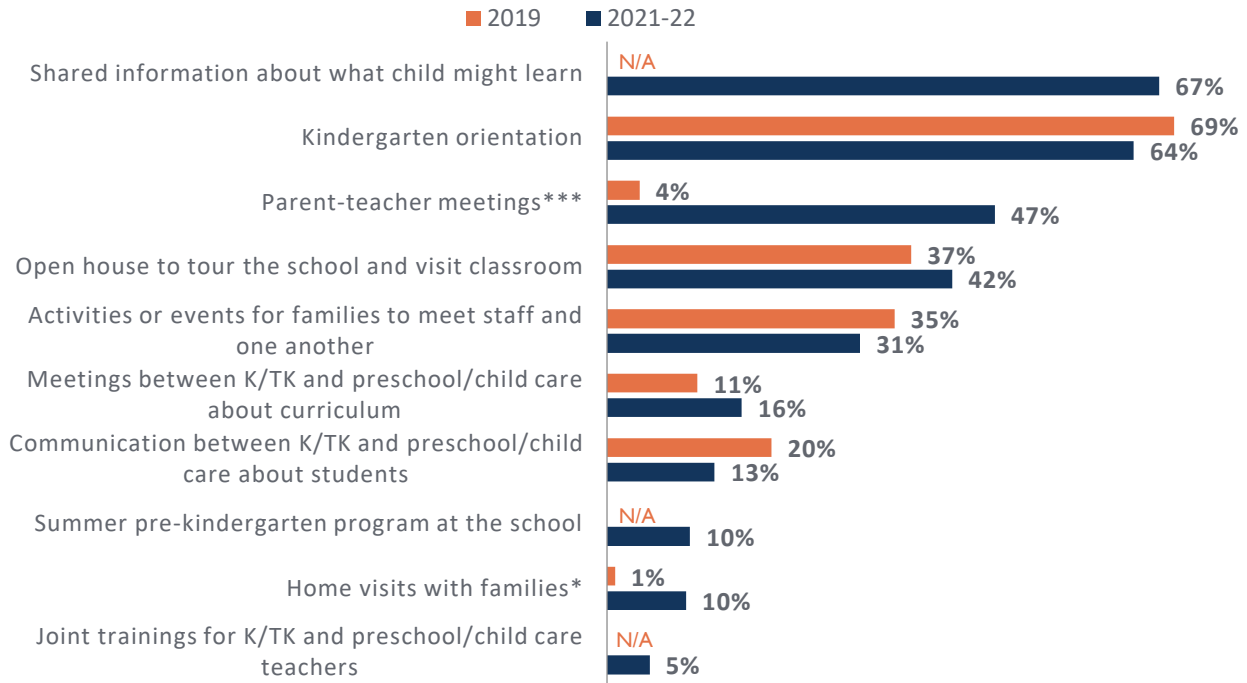
Fourteen school districts and six charter schools received Kindergarten Transition Grants. Districts could choose how to spend their funds.

Many grants were used to increase staff funding levels to support transition activities. This included one-on-one student assessments, parent educational workshops and meetings (in-person and virtual), *School Readiness Camp*, and educator professional development.

In addition, all grantees used funds to pay for materials and supplies, including gift cards and basic needs relief, personal protective equipment, and technology such as Wifi hotspots, tablets, and other electronics for at-home learning.

FIGURE 37. **KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION SUPPORTS OFFERED BY KINDERGARTEN/TK SCHOOLS, BY YEAR**

Legend: ■ 2019 ■ 2021-22

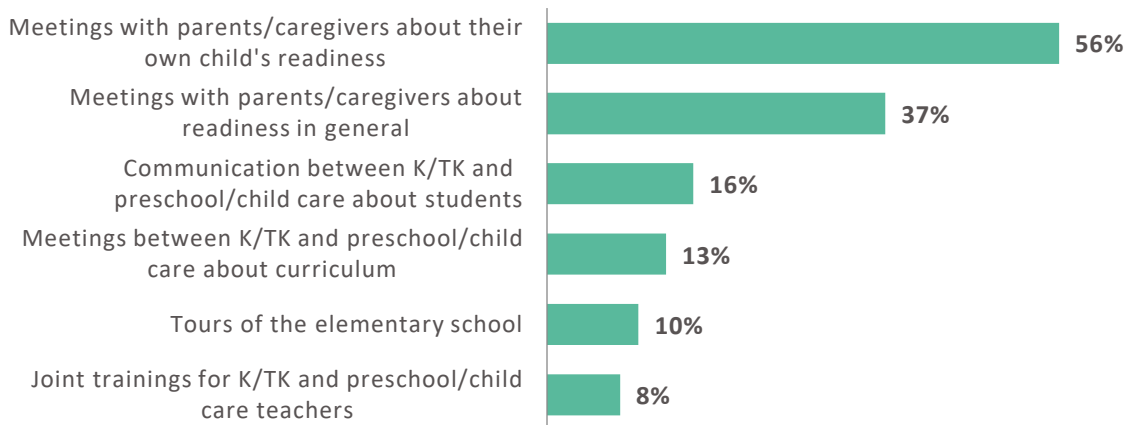| Support	2019	2021-22
Shared information about what child might learn	N/A	67%
Kindergarten orientation	69%	64%
Parent-teacher meetings***	4%	47%
Open house to tour the school and visit classroom	37%	42%
Activities or events for families to meet staff and one another	35%	31%
Meetings between K/TK and preschool/child care about curriculum	11%	16%
Communication between K/TK and preschool/child care about students	20%	13%
Summer pre-kindergarten program at the school	N/A	10%
Home visits with families*	1%	10%
Joint trainings for K/TK and preschool/child care teachers	N/A	5%

Source: Teacher Survey (2019), Teacher Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=74 (2019); 266 (2021-22, weighted). Data were weighted by district to approximate the county population of teachers. The following were not asked in 2019: Information about what child might learn, joint trainings for K/TK and preschool/child care teachers, and summer pre-kindergarten program at the school. Differences are significant at ***p < 0.001; *p < 0.05.

ECE sites were most likely to offer meetings with parents/caregivers to support the kindergarten transition compared to other transition supports. All other transition supports were reported by fewer than half of the ECE professionals. Licensed centers were more likely than licensed family child care homes to offer transition supports, with the exception of joint trainings for kindergarten/TK and preschool/child care teachers, which were offered at a similar rate regardless of site type.

FIGURE 38. **KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION SUPPORTS OFFERED BY ECE SITES**

Support	Percent
Meetings with parents/caregivers about their own child's readiness	56%
Meetings with parents/caregivers about readiness in general	37%
Communication between K/TK and preschool/child care about students	16%
Meetings between K/TK and preschool/child care about curriculum	13%
Tours of the elementary school	10%
Joint trainings for K/TK and preschool/child care teachers	8%

Source: ECE Survey (2021-22)
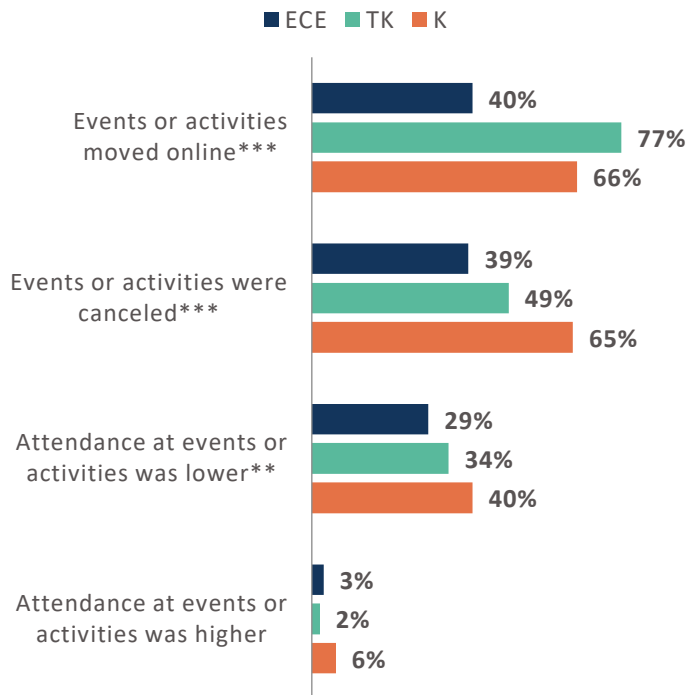Note: N=379 (weighted). Data were weighted by zip code to approximate the county population of ECE professionals.

Educators reported several ways in which kindergarten transition supports had changed at their school or site due to COVID-19, with the most common response being that events or activities were moved online. **Kindergarten and TK teachers were more likely than ECE professionals to report changes to their kindergarten transition support offerings.** Likewise, center-based ECE sites were more likely than family child care homes to report changes to their supports. Most educators reported no change in families' attendance at transition events or activities during COVID-19.

FIGURE 39. **HOW KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION SUPPORTS CHANGED DUE TO COVID, BY EDUCATOR TYPE**

■ ECE ■ TK ■ K

Events or activities moved online***
- ECE: 40%
- TK: 77%
- K: 66%

Events or activities were canceled***
- ECE: 39%
- TK: 49%
- K: 65%

Attendance at events or activities was lower**
- ECE: 29%
- TK: 34%
- K: 40%

Attendance at events or activities was higher
- ECE: 3%
- TK: 2%
- K: 6%

Source: Teacher Survey (2021-22), ECE Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=48 (TK teacher, weighted); 219 (K teacher, weighted); 379 (ECE, weighted). Data were weighted by zip code/district to approximate the county population of ECE professionals/teachers. Differences are significant at ***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01.

DISTANCE LEARNING IMPACTS CONNECTION TO FAMILIES

It has been difficult to get to know my families. The majority of my interactions have been online through messaging and Zoom.

– Kindergarten teacher

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS:
Families Share Their Kindergarten Experiences During COVID-19

Families who had children attending kindergarten or TK were asked to describe their child's school experience last year (2020-21) and this year (2021-22), and 530 parent/caregivers provided responses.

Some families who had children attending kindergarten/TK in 2020-21 **struggled with the online format of schooling, finding it stressful, ineffective, and difficult to keep their child focused.**

On the other hand, other parent/caregivers cited **supportive and flexible teachers** as the reason the online teaching worked for their child.

This school year (2021-22), parents/caregivers were **excited to have their children back in the classroom** after extended periods of time at home due to COVID-19-related school closures.

Parents/caregivers were especially **grateful for the teachers** who have made a return to the classroom possible.

Still, parents/caregivers were concerned about continued **school closures interrupting the school year**, along with the impact that limited access to consistent preschool and/or child care during COVID-19 may have had on children's ability to transition into kindergarten.

Parents/caregivers were especially **concerned about children's socialization skills**.

> **My kids were having to do Zoom and it was hard to keep them engaged...and having only one computer at home is also hard.**
> – K/TK parent/caregiver

> **The teacher was awesome; she kept the students on task and followed with some homework to ensure they understood. My child learned a lot and she didn't have any struggles when she joined 1st grade.**
> – K/TK parent/caregiver

> **[My daughter] is really hands-on and social, so being in-person with kids her age has been sooo life changing for her. We've seen an almost overnight change in her abilities and social skills.**
> –K/TK parent/caregiver

> **It was very difficult for him/her to adapt to kindergarten for so long in confinement, but he/she has come a long way and is learning more than when he/she was at home.**
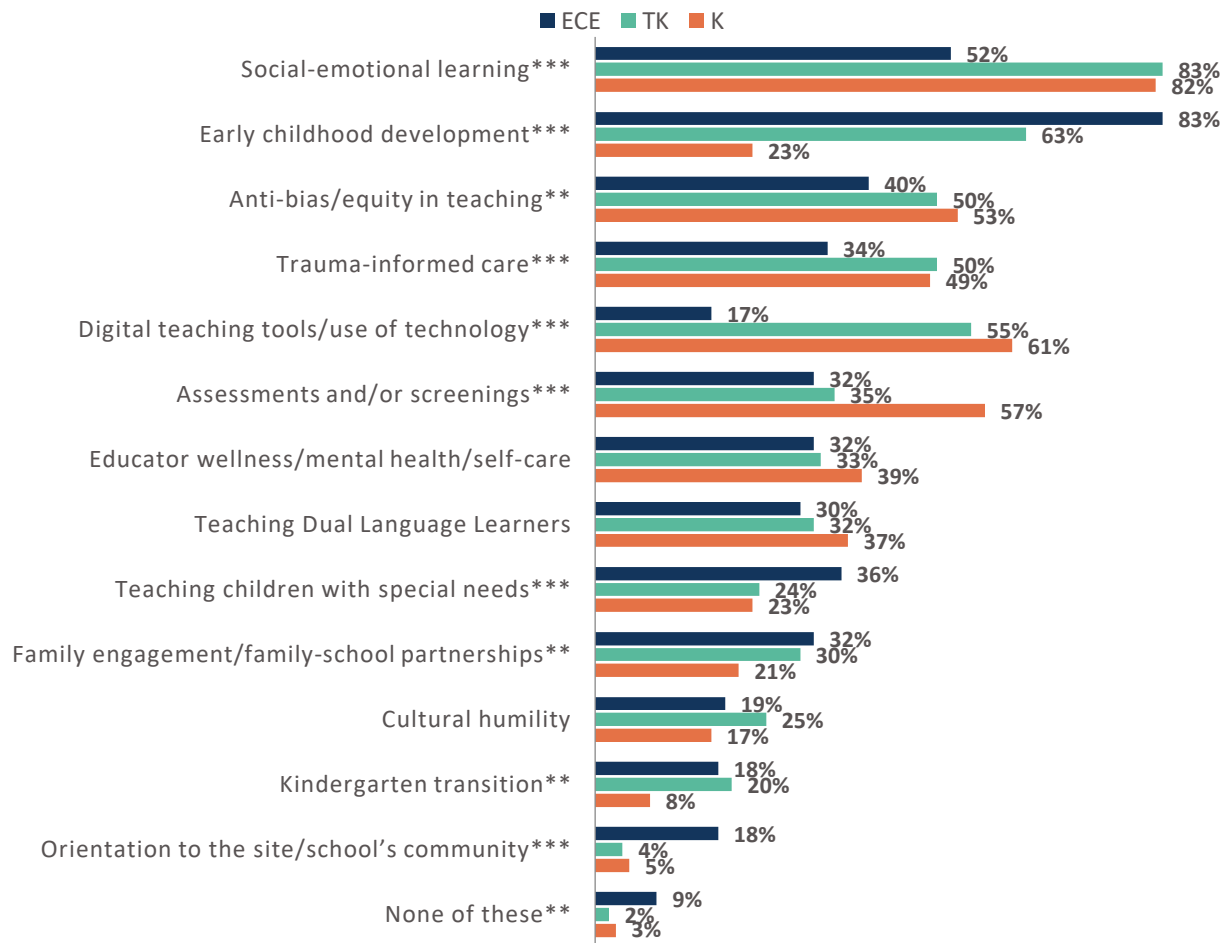> – K/TK teacher

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SUPPORTED EDUCATORS AND SYSTEMS

Educator Training, Experience, and Access to Resources

Educators also reported the professional development they had received in the past three years. For ECE professionals and TK teachers, **the most common types of professional development included early childhood development and social-emotional learning** (SEL), whereas kindergarten teachers were most likely to have received trainings on SEL **and digital teaching tools**.

FIGURE 40. **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EDUCATORS RECEIVED IN PAST THREE YEARS, BY EDUCATOR TYPE**

■ ECE   ■ TK   ■ K

Training type	ECE	TK	K
Social-emotional learning***	52%	83%	82%
Early childhood development***	83%	63%	23%
Anti-bias/equity in teaching**	40%	50%	53%
Trauma-informed care***	34%	50%	49%
Digital teaching tools/use of technology***	17%	55%	61%
Assessments and/or screenings***	32%	35%	57%
Educator wellness/mental health/self-care	32%	33%	39%
Teaching Dual Language Learners	30%	32%	37%
Teaching children with special needs***	36%	24%	23%
Family engagement/family-school partnerships**	32%	30%	21%
Cultural humility	19%	25%	17%
Kindergarten transition**	18%	20%	8%
Orientation to the site/school's community***	18%	4%	5%
None of these**	9%	2%	3%

Source: Teacher Survey (2021-22), ECE Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=50 (TK teacher, weighted); 233 (K teacher, weighted); 379 (ECE, weighted). Data were weighted by zip code/district to approximate the county population of ECE professionals/teachers. Differences are significant at ***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01.

EDUCATIONAL BOOKS ON POLICE BRUTALITY AND RACIAL INJUSTICE SHARED WITH FAMILIES

In the wake of the George Floyd protests as the nation's focus turned to police brutality and systemic racial injustice, our families and staff worked to provide context and historic perspective for our students. We researched and trained staff on appropriate ways of discussing these complex issues with preschool aged children. For each classroom, we were able to purchase 12 titles/books that focused on different cultures representing families in our program. These books that families have now in their home library will be used years to come as they are age appropriate for up to 12 years old!

-Kindergarten Transition Grant recipient
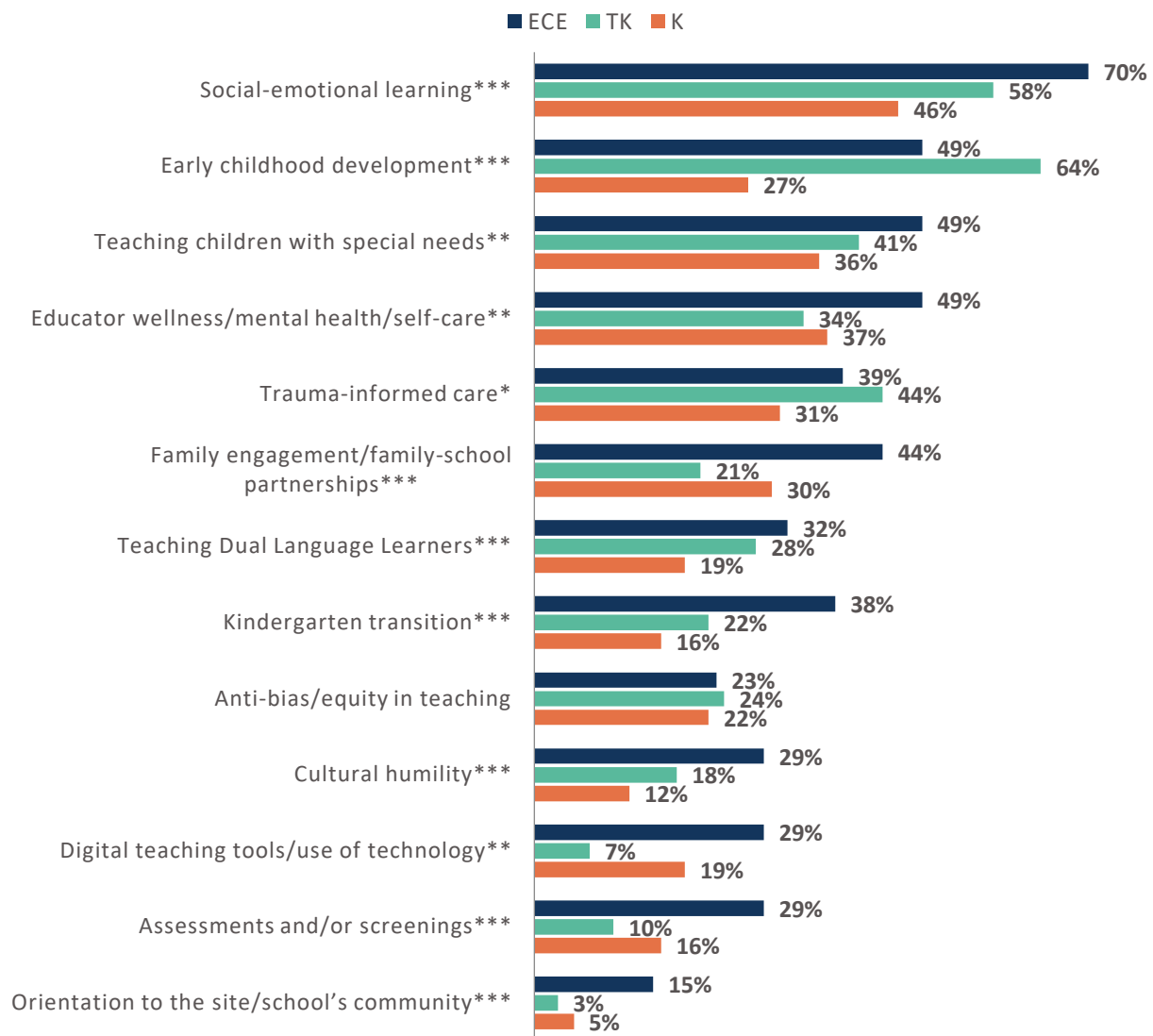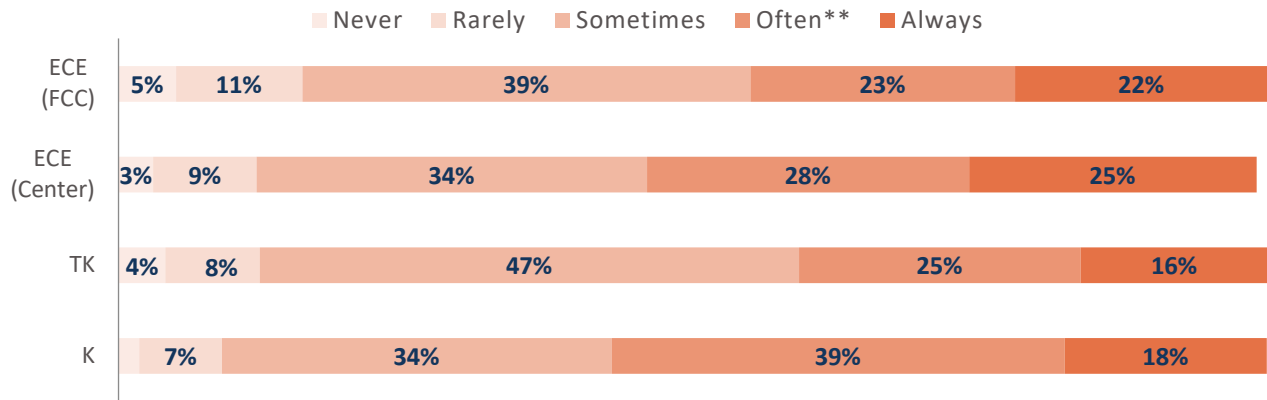
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Educators said **SEL training was the most received and also the most commonly needed.** ECE professionals and kindergarten teachers report needing **training on teaching children with special needs** and on **educator wellness**, while TK teachers needed training on **early childhood development** and **trauma-informed care**. ECE professionals were more likely than kindergarten/TK teachers to need training on most of the topics listed. Likewise, ECE professionals in family child care homes were more likely than those in centers to need many of these trainings.

FIGURE 41.   **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EDUCATORS NEED MOST, BY EDUCATOR TYPE**

Legend: ■ ECE ■ TK ■ K

Topic	ECE	TK	K
Social-emotional learning***	70%	58%	46%
Early childhood development***	49%	64%	27%
Teaching children with special needs**	49%	41%	36%
Educator wellness/mental health/self-care**	49%	34%	37%
Trauma-informed care*	39%	44%	31%
Family engagement/family-school partnerships***	44%	21%	30%
Teaching Dual Language Learners***	32%	28%	19%
Kindergarten transition***	38%	22%	16%
Anti-bias/equity in teaching	23%	24%	22%
Cultural humility***	29%	18%	12%
Digital teaching tools/use of technology**	29%	7%	19%
Assessments and/or screenings***	29%	10%	16%
Orientation to the site/school's community***	15%	3%	5%

Source: Teacher Survey (2021-22), ECE Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=50 (TK teacher, weighted); 233 (K teacher, weighted); 379 (ECE, weighted). Data were weighted by zip code/district to approximate the county population of ECE professionals/teachers. Differences are significant at ***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05.

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About half of ECE professionals, 41% of TK teachers, and 57% of kindergarten teachers said they have access to ongoing professional development "often" or "almost always." There were no differences in access to ongoing professional development by ECE site type.

FIGURE 42. EDUCATOR ACCESS TO ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, BY EDUCATOR TYPE

Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often** | Always

Educator	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often**	Always
ECE (FCC)	5%	11%	39%	23%	22%
ECE (Center)	3%	9%	34%	28%	25%
TK	4%	8%	47%	25%	16%
K		7%	34%	39%	18%

Source: Teacher Survey (2021-22), ECE Survey (2021-22)
Note: 49 (TK teacher, weighted); 221 (K teacher, weighted); 143 (ECE (FCC), weighted); 236 (ECE (Center), weighted). Data were weighted by zip code/district to approximate the county population of ECE professionals/teachers. ** Difference in proportion analysis shows differences between the marked group and at least one other group are significant at p < 0.01. No significant differences in educator concern were detected across the two ECE site types [licensed centers ("centers") and licensed family child care centers ("FCC")].

IN THEIR OWN WORDS:
Educators Value Social-Emotional Trainings and Desire More

A total of 695 ECE professionals and 237 kindergarten/TK teachers further described the trainings they had received.

Educators reported that the most valuable trainings were **social-emotional learning trainings**, followed by general training on **childhood development**, especially for ECE professionals, and **curriculum development**, especially for kindergarten/TK teachers.

Educators indicated that they most **need trainings right now to address the social and emotional impacts of COVID-19** on their students, including the effects on behavior in the classroom.

Educators also described a need for up-to-date trainings on topics like **teaching students with special needs and ongoing education about what is developmentally appropriate** at each age.

> **Social-Emotional Learning because many of my students didn't have the opportunity to participate in preschool and/or TK in person due to the pandemic.**
> – K/TK teacher

> **Social-emotional—to help with the increasing emotional and social needs of the children, especially after the pandemic.**
> – ECE professional

> **Student behaviors this year are unlike anything teachers have ever seen. Every teacher I know is completely overwhelmed and exhausted, yet PDs typically cover the usual academic topics as opposed to how to deal with behaviors.**
> – K/TK teacher

> **We enroll a lot of special needs children but I feel I need more training to support their growth better.**
> – ECE professional

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F5 RESPONDS TO COVID SUPPLY NEEDS

First 5 partnered with Alameda County Social Services Agency and Supplybank.org to distribute 880 air purifiers to 440 family child care providers.

Most educators reported that they had access to COVID-19 supplies, health and safety guidance, and before- or after-school care. **Resources that were less common included mental health and self-care resources for educators** and health professionals/consultants. ECE professionals were more likely to have guidance on cleaning and sanitation practices and social distancing, whereas kindergarten/TK teachers were more likely to have access to translation support, culturally relevant books and materials, guidance, and lesson plans for online teaching, technology and equipment to support remote learning, and child mental health professionals/consultants.

DIVE IN DEEPER

For more details on results of teacher and ECE survey results broken down by categories such as school district, ECE type, or city visit the KRA dashboard online, select the "ECE Sites and Schools" tab at the top of the webpage and select your desired filters.

EDUCATORS NEED SELF-CARE RESOURCES

Few educators have access to mental health and self-care resources for themselves.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES LOWER FOR FCC PROFESSIONALS

Family child care home professionals reported lower access to resources than center-based ECE professionals.

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FIGURE 43. RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO EDUCATORS, BY EDUCATOR TYPE

Legend: ■ Family child care center ■ Licensed center ■ TK ■ K

COVID-19 supplies (e.g., cleaning, masks)*
- 78%
- 85%
- 96%
- 85%

Guidance on cleaning and sanitation practices***
- 71%
- 83%
- 49%
- 52%

COVID-19 health and safety guidance for families
- 68%
- 84%
- 84%
- 75%

Before/after school care at the school
- N/A
- 60%
- 63%

Guidance on teaching with social distancing***
- 18%
- 23%
- 29%
- 36%

Enough classroom resources and materials
- 34%
- 63%
- 51%
- 54%

Culturally relevant books and classroom materials*
- 31%
- 51%
- 59%
- 46%

Developmental screenings
- 23%
- 43%
- N/A

Family services referral lists
- 23%
- 32%
- 42%
- 30%

Translation support to communicate with families***
- 16%
- 24%
- 52%
- 45%

Guidance on teaching online*
- 18%
- 23%
- 36%
- 24%

Curricula/lesson plans for online/at-home learning*
- 18%
- 21%
- 21%
- 27%

Child mental health professionals/consultants***
- 12%
- 23%
- 48%
- 44%

Technology/equipment to support remote learning***
- 15%
- 20%
- 71%
- 54%

Health professionals/consultants**
- 10%
- 21%
- 34%
- 19%

Mental health/self-care resources for educators
- 17%
- 17%
- 25%
- 23%

None of these**
- 7%
- 2%
- 0%
- 0%

F5 SUPPORTS FCC EXPANSION

Alameda County Quality Counts (QRIS) program, administered by First 5 Alameda, provides quality improvement supports for the mixed delivery system—centers, family child care (FCC) providers, and family friend and neighbor (FFN) providers—with coaching, training, professional development, technical assistance, and financial incentives and supports that include learning networks for each type of child care delivery setting, ensuring technical support, and fostering leadership and community. First 5 plans to expand the number of licensed FCC providers participating and benefiting from Alameda County Quality Counts, building peer support. First 5 also partners with libraries and family resource centers to support quality developmental programming for those children who are not in a licensed early educational setting.

Source: Teacher Survey (2021-22), ECE Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=50 (TK teacher, weighted); 233 (K teacher, weighted); 143-144 (ECE (FCC), weighted); 236 (ECE (Center), weighted). Data were weighted by zip code/district to approximate the county population of ECE professionals/teachers. Developmental screenings not asked of K/TK teachers and before/after school care not asked of ECE professionals. Differences are significant at
***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$.

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS:
Educators Desire Mental Health Supports in the Wake of COVID-19

One hundred forty-four ECE professionals and 85 K/TK teachers provided additional comments on the resources available to them and the resources they need.

Currently, some **ECE professionals reported they have access to helpful trainings and resources** such as 4Cs classes, Hively to connect with families, and SEEDS and DRDP trainings.

K/TK teachers highlighted their access to new technology to help them in the classroom, such as smartboards.

> I have concerns about the social-emotional health of the children as they have come back to school.
>
> – ECE professional

However, educators also discussed the types of resources they still need. In particular, educators cited the **need for COVID-19-related supports**, but more than masks and hand sanitizer, they wanted on-site **mental health counselors** to address the mental health needs of children.

Even those educators with access to mental health counselors and resources say **the supports they have are not meeting the need and are not delivered quickly enough.**

> We have a mental health counselor, and I would like for them to be more accessible and to be able to see more students. There is a lot of need for mental health right now. Students have survived a pandemic the last two years and their mental health needs are evident. The more we can get students to have access to a counselor, SEL, trauma recovery, the better off they will be.
>
> – K/TK teacher

> The mental health professionals are only able to come every other week for about 30 minutes. It's not enough time to see where my class's needs are. They are trying their very best to help, but it takes so long for resources to come down the pipeline…
>
> – K/TK teacher

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Educator stress levels increased during COVID-19, and those who reported higher levels of stress were over four times more likely to plan on leaving the education field.

EDUCATOR STRESS AND FUTURE PROFESSIONAL PLANS

COVID-19 has caused high degrees of stress for both families and educators. **ECE professionals and kindergarten/TK teachers indicated that they are currently experiencing higher levels of stress than they were before COVID-19.** This was particularly the case for kindergarten teachers. There were no differences in ECE professionals' stress levels based on their site type.

FIGURE 44.   STRESS BEFORE COVID AND IN THE PAST WEEK, BY EDUCATOR TYPE

Legend: ECE (FCC) | ECE (Center) | TK | K

Before COVID***: 35%, 40%, 39%, 51%
Past week***: 60%, 54%, 81%, 88%
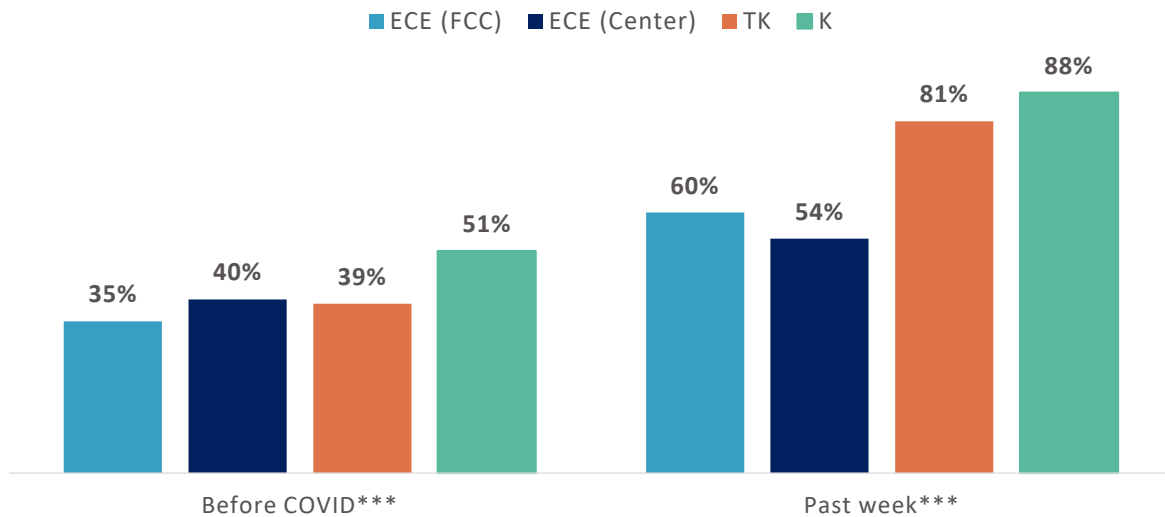
Source: Teacher Survey (2021-22), ECE Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=45-46 (TK teacher, weighted); 213 (K teacher, weighted); 142-144 (ECE (FCC), weighted); 236 (ECE (Center), weighted). Data were weighted by zip code/district to approximate the county population of ECE professionals/teachers. Percentages reflect those who reported their stress level as 3 or higher on a 5-point scale. ***Differences are significant at p < 0.001. No significant differences in educator concern were detected across the two ECE site types [licensed centers ("centers") and licensed family child care centers ("FCC")].

DIVE IN DEEPER

For more details on results broken down by categories such as school district, ECE type, or city, visit the KRA dashboard online, select the "ECE Sites and Schools" tab at the top of the page and select your desired filters.

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Some educators also reported changes in their hours or income during the pandemic. **ECE professionals were significantly more likely to report reductions in their hours or income than kindergarten and TK teachers**. Among ECE professionals, those working in family child care homes were more likely than those working in centers to report hours and income changes.

FIGURE 45. **CHANGES IN HOURS AND INCOME, BY EDUCATOR TYPE**

Legend: ECE (FCC), ECE (Center), TK, K

Decrease in hours***†: 59%, 42%, 6%, 3%
Decrease in wages***†: 63%, 30%, 2%, 3%
Decrease in household income***: 75%, 46%, 15%, 18%

The stress educators experienced during the pandemic has caused some to consider leaving the education field. **Overall, 15% of kindergarten teachers, 13% of TK teachers, and 6% of ECE professionals were planning to leave the education field within the next five years.** Another 4-5% of kindergarten/TK teachers and 11% of ECE professionals plan to stay in the education field but teach a different age or grade. There were no differences among ECE professionals in their future plans based on site type. However, among both ECE professionals and kindergarten/TK teachers, those who reported high levels of stress were over four times more likely to say they were planning to leave the education field. Also, kindergarten/TK teachers who were planning to leave the field had significantly more years of experience than those who were planning to stay in the field, but years of experience was unrelated to the future plans of ECE professionals.

FIGURE 46. **EDUCATORS' FUTURE PROFESSIONAL PLANS, BY EDUCATOR TYPE**

Legend: Leave field***, Stay in field, but teach different ages/grade*, Stay in field and teach same ages/grade

ECE (FCC): 5%, 8%, 87%
ECE (Center): 7%, 12%, 81%
TK: 13%, 4%, 83%
K: 15%, 5%, 80%

F5 SUPPORTS ECE EDUCATORS

First 5 jointly funds Alameda County's ECE Apprenticeship Program to provide CalWORKs participants training, advanced degrees, and employment in ECE settings; advocated for additional investments in the model.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS:
ECE Professionals Worry About the Impact of Universal TK on Their Sites While Teachers Mostly Support It

California is expanding Transitional Kindergarten (TK) over the next several years so that by the 2025-26 school year, all four-year-old children will be eligible for the program.

ECE professionals and kindergarten/TK teachers were asked about how this policy would affect them and their school or site; 695 ECE professionals and 226 K/TK teachers responded to the question.

ECE professionals expressed worries about how universal TK will impact their sites. They were deeply concerned about the potential for low enrollment in their programs that could lead to having to close their doors completely.

K/TK teachers, on the other hand, felt universal TK will be immensely beneficial to increase children's readiness skills and improve access to kindergarten preparation for lower-resourced neighborhoods and families.

That said, **K/TK teachers cited concerns about having enough classroom space and enough teachers** to adequately accommodate the influx of new students that schools will experience.

> **Wow! I didn't know this. This is the age I teach in my home daycare program. This will hurt my program.**
>
> – ECE professional

> **Universal TK will be amazing! It will help teachers keep their jobs, help students be ready for kindergarten, and provide free "child care" for families.**
>
> – K/TK teacher

> **This will be huge, especially as I teach in a neighborhood with very little access for families to attend preschool.**
>
> – K/TK teacher

> **There is no physical space to accommodate additional classes. There are not enough classrooms with bathrooms or access to the age-appropriate playground. This is already an issue. It poses safety risks because very young children have to leave the classroom unattended to use the bathroom.**
>
> – K/TK teacher

> **I teach Junior Kindergarten so it will have a big impact on my program. For me I will consider renewing my license to be able to teach TK.**
>
> – ECE professional

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FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Several questions on the teacher and ECE professional surveys assessed the relationship between the school or ECE site and the families they serve.

One question asked whether the educator was able to communicate with families in the families' preferred language. **About 7 in 10 ECE professionals, half of TK teachers, and 57% of kindergarten teachers said they could "often" or "always" communicate with families in their preferred language. Family child care home professionals were much more likely than center-based professionals to say they could communicate with their families.** Across all educators, those who were bilingual were also able to communicate more easily in families' preferred language.

FCCS AND FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Family child care home professionals were much more likely than center-based professionals to say they could communicate with their families.

FIGURE 47. **EDUCATORS' ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE WITH FAMILIES IN FAMILIES' PREFERRED LANGUAGE, BY EDUCATOR TYPE**

■ Never ■ Rarely ■ Sometimes** ■ Often** ■ Always***

Educator Type	Never	Rarely	Sometimes**	Often**	Always***
ECE (FCC)		4%	16%	18%	61%
ECE (Center)	9%		24%	38%	27%
TK		5%	42%	36%	15%
K	4%	7%	32%	41%	16%
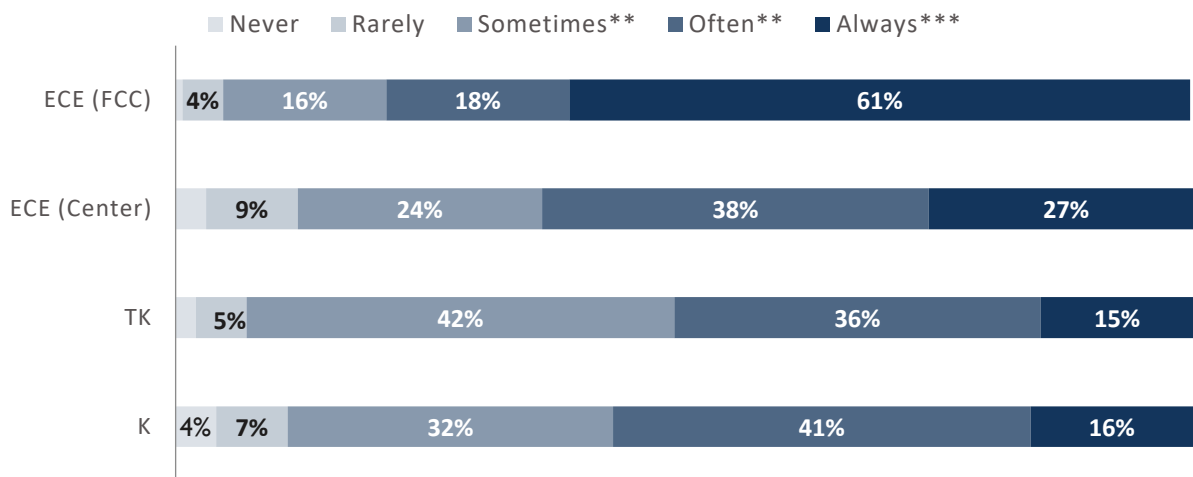
EDUCATORS REPORT ON COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

About 8 in 10 Family Childcare Center staff, 7 in 10 licensed center staff, 57% of kindergarten teachers, and half of TK teachers said they could "often" or "always" communicate with families in their preferred language.

Source: Teacher Survey (2021-22), ECE Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=48 (TK teacher, weighted); 222 (K teacher, weighted); 144 (ECE (FCC), weighted); 236 (ECE (Center), weighted). Data were weighted by zip code/district to approximate the county population of ECE professionals/teachers. Differences are significant at ***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01. †Significant differences were detected across results when comparing the two ECE site types [licensed centers ("centers") and licensed family child care centers ("FCC")].

Another question on the surveys asked about the parent-teacher conferences educators offer each year and how that changed during COVID-19. **Kindergarten and TK teachers generally offered the same number of conferences in the current school year as they did before the pandemic, but just under half of ECE professionals said they were now offering fewer conferences.** Relative to center-based professionals, more family child care home professionals are offering fewer conferences now compared to before COVID-19.

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS:
Educators Are Concerned About Engagement with Families but Plan to Continue Virtual Meeting Options

Educators also were asked about how engaging with families at their school or site had been affected by COVID-19.

Common responses among the 695 ECE professionals and 230 K/TK teachers responding to this question included having to communicate through Zoom or email only, and **not being able to engage with families as deeply** because sites were closed to parents/caregivers.

Still, some educators **plan to continue to offer virtual meetings as an option**, especially for parents whose work schedules make in-person meetings difficult.

When asked to describe how their teaching approach changed due to COVID-19, educators said that **wearing masks and social distancing have posed challenges for teaching**, especially when trying to teach letters and pronunciation.

At the same time, educators explain that the need to take time to sanitize hands or ensure social distancing is being adhered to has led to a **more relaxed pace** in the classroom and the COVID-19 precautions have caused educators to identify and incorporate **new ways of playing and learning**, such as spending more time outdoors learning about nature.

> **The socialization with families was not the same; we had to stop the physical interactions to communicate with parents.**
>
> – ECE professional

> **The online option has actually increased parent-teacher conferences, and I will continue to offer this option to parents post-COVID. It's much easier for many families due to scheduling, travel, and child care issues.**
>
> – K/TK teacher

> **Teaching phonics and phonemic awareness is more challenging because I have to have a mask on, which muddles sounds and articulation.**
>
> – K/TK teacher

> **We also had to cut much of our … non-essential standards to make time for all the sanitizing and hand washing we do. BUT the kids are happier, and I am a happier teacher too because of the slower pace.**
>
> – K/TK teacher

> **We … added Nature-Based learning to our curriculum to support the CDC's recommendation of increased outdoor time for fresh air and social distancing.**
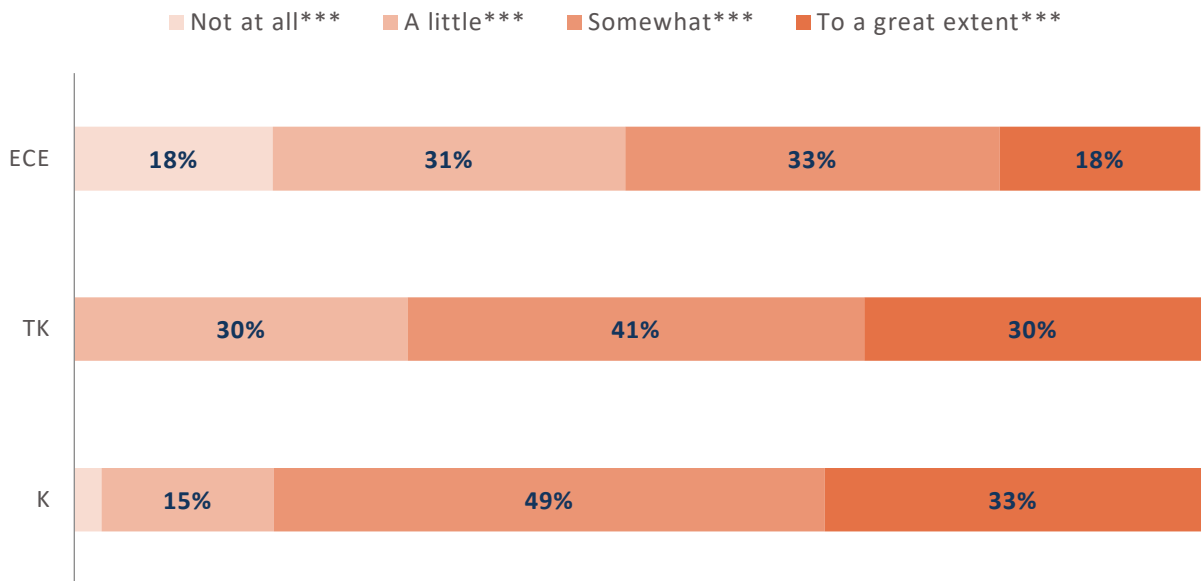>
> – ECE professional

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Teaching During COVID-19

COVID-19 forced many educators to make adaptations in their classrooms. **The vast majority of educators reported that they had changed their teaching approach** at least "a little" during the pandemic, **but kindergarten/TK teachers were more likely than ECE professionals to report substantial changes to their teaching approach**. There were no differences in reported changes to teaching approach based on ECE professionals' site type.

FIGURE 48. CHANGED TEACHING APPROACH DUE TO COVID, BY EDUCATOR TYPE

■ Not at all***   ■ A little***   ■ Somewhat***   ■ To a great extent***

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	To a great extent
ECE	18%	31%	33%	18%
TK		30%	41%	30%
K	15%	49%		33%

Source: Teacher Survey (2021-22), ECE Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=44 (TK teacher, weighted); 195 (K teacher, weighted); 357 (ECE, weighted). Data were weighted by zip code/district to approximate the county population of ECE professionals/teachers. Differences are significant at ***p < 0.001.

SMALLER CLASS SIZES DURING COVID HELPED

We can see the difference post-COVID while our classes are smaller. We are better able to meet children's needs. There are fewer behavioral problems.

– ECE professional

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS:
Educators Want Policymakers to Address Class Size, Staffing, and Teacher Wages

Educators were asked to share their recommendations with policymakers; 579 ECE professionals and 206 kindergarten/TK teachers responded to this question.

Kindergarten/TK teachers are hopeful policymakers will **address large class sizes and understaffed schools by providing funding** for more teachers and staff, including classroom aides, school counselors, nurses, lunch staff, and staff that can connect families to community resources.

Kindergarten/TK teachers say **increasing staff and resources at schools would improve their ability to teach successfully.**

> We need more teachers and lower class sizes. Teaching 27 kindergarteners is doable but I am not able to give them all that they need with just me in the room; so actually lower class sizes or pay for support staff.
>
> – K/TK teacher

Kindergarten/TK teachers also asked policymakers to provide more for **support for teachers through higher wages and benefits and increased funds for classroom supplies.**

ECE professionals similarly urged policymakers to provide more funding for their staff and their programs and to provide more support to the whole community following the devasting effects of COVID-19.

> We need funds for the classroom. I receive $12/child per year....and dig into my own pockets for copies, activities, and manipulatives. Some years I spend $2000. – K/TK teacher
>
> – K/TK teacher

For example, respondents said that to retain staff and improve program quality, the ECE field needs **higher wages and benefits for ECE professionals, increased funding for ECE programs, and more affordable training opportunities for ECE professionals.**

> Family child care needs to be looked at as early education and not babysitting. Our field needs higher pay and free health care. We need more grants to purchase the materials we need.
>
> – ECE professional

Kindergarten/TK teachers responding to the question urged policymakers to **increase child care and social services in their community**, including financial assistance, mental health services, affordable housing, health care, and access to food.

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CONCLUSION

The 2021-22 Alameda County KRA offers valuable data and insights into the state of kindergarten readiness in the county, conditions that affect readiness, and the impact of COVID-19 on families and educators. (See Appendix A for a summary of the key findings and recommendations.)

Supporting Kindergarten Readiness Through an Early Childhood System
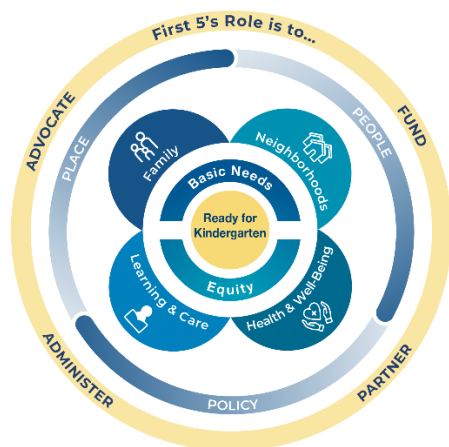
Through First 5's role in the early childhood system of care, we will continue to work to increase kindergarten readiness by centering equity and ensuring that families can meet their basic needs. Our Policy Agenda to Advance Equity outlines key priorities to support conditions associated with readiness: **Neighborhoods, Health & Well-Being, Learning & Care, and Family. In each of these arenas, our approach involves Place, People, and Policy.** The 2021-22 KRA findings, as well as policy recommendations developed in collaboration with participants in the KRA Research Advisory Group, reinforce First 5's policy priorities and focus areas. (See Appendix B.)

Partnership with Communities, Families, and Systems

Building an equity-centered early childhood system of care requires the prioritization, commitment, and investment of a cross-section of stakeholders, including parent advocates and leaders, public systems, community-based organizations, and philanthropic organizations. Partnerships are also crucial to ensure that systems serving families—education, health, social services, and others—are integrated and coordinated, including warm hand offs between systems to support families in accessing the care, resources, and services they need. In service to equity, First 5 partners with parents/caregivers, providers, and community-based organizations to incorporate diverse voices and experiences in our work to continuously improve and refine our strategies and investments.

Using the 2021-22 KRA as Data for Action

Below are ways the findings and recommendations from the 2021-22 KRA report may be used by different groups to improve conditions for kindergarten readiness in our county.

For Parent Advocates and Leaders: Advocating for services and resources, such as affordable housing, job creation with livable wages, parks, libraries, etc., located in areas that have been underserved due to racist and classist public policies.

For Public Systems: Investment and program design that speaks to the needs expressed by parents/caregivers, educators, and other community members, such as family navigation and connection to resources, including basic needs and health care.

For Community-Based Organizations: Community building, advocacy, and fund development to address the specific needs of the communities and populations served.

For Philanthropic Organizations: Identifying promising strategies to seed with investment and build evidence for taking to scale and integration into public systems.

Through **partnerships, collaboration, and strategic investment**, our county can help to create the conditions required for all children to enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

In partnership with the community, First 5 is addressing many of the recommendations of the 2021-22 Alameda County KRA with policy advocacy and investments. **Collaborative efforts to support families, communities, and ECE professionals, teachers, and care and education systems will help the community recover from the pandemic and ensure children in the county are healthy and thriving.**

ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Applied Survey Research (ASR) is a social research firm dedicated to helping people build better communities by creating meaningful evaluative and assessment data, facilitating information-based planning, and developing custom strategies. The firm has more than 40 years of experience working with public and private agencies, health and human service organizations, city and county offices, school districts, institutions of higher learning, and charitable foundations. Through community assessments, program evaluations, and related studies, ASR provides the information that communities need for effective strategic planning and community interventions.

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APPENDIX A. TABLE OF KEY FINDINGS, PARENT/CARGEGIVER SUBCOMMITTEE & RESEARCH ADVISORY GROUP INPUT, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUPPORT COMMUNITIES: FINANCIAL STABILITY	
PARENT/CAREGIVER SUBCOMMITTEE & RESEARCH ADVISORY GROUP (ADVISORY GROUP) INPUT	
Parent/Caregiver Discussion	Advisory Group Discussion
• Highlight relationship between universal basic income (UBI) and school readiness. • Provide UBI to families with young children. • Prioritize the voices and experiences of low-income communities. • Because of high transportation costs, provide free bus passes.	• Highlight families' access to UBI/money and strong connection to school readiness. • Support parents with income to meet basic needs. • Families need housing supports, access to food, and flexible, healthy, and quality school meals. • Reduce barriers to economic supports (rental assistance and pandemic debt due to restrictions in government programs). • Continue school meal programs when children are not in school (P-EBT).
KEY FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT
• As in past research, family income was strongly related to readiness. • The 29 families in the study who participated in the Oakland Resilient Families guaranteed income pilot reported significantly higher readiness than other similar families.	• Support policies that **increase job creation and workforce development with livable wages, economic supports like guaranteed income, and expand programming that supports families' basic needs** like diapers, freeing up resources to purchase other necessities like child care, housing, and transportation.* • Strengthen policies and practices that **expand access to quality affordable housing and utility assistance.** Support strategies that eliminate barriers to rental assistance, support rent stabilization and tenant protections, and eliminate utility debt.*

Recommendation identified as a high priority by the Alameda KRA Research Advisory Group.

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SUPPORT COMMUNITIES: THRIVING NEIGHBORHOODS

PARENT/CAREGIVER SUBCOMMITTEE & RESEARCH ADVISORY GROUP (ADVISORY GROUP) INPUT

Parent/Caregiver Discussion	Advisory Group Discussion
- Provide financial assistance for extracurricular and after-school activities to promote gross motor skills. - Leverage resources available and make them widely known in the community, especially for extracurricular activities. - No school closures, especially in communities serving Black and Brown children. - Impact of community violence on children.	- Support community partnerships. - Schools are safe places. If closed, they won't be replaced with community spaces for children/families.

KEY FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT
Connection to resources was significantly correlated with higher readiness. **65% of families said help connecting to resources was important** to them, but only 12% said they had received this kind of help. **Use of community resources by families declined** between 2019 and 2021-22. **Racial/ethnic, socioeconomic, linguistic, and geographic differences in community resource use depended on the resource type.** For example, higher-income families were more likely to use resources like parks and libraries, while families with low-income were more likely to access basic needs supports. **Families with low-income, families living in lower-income neighborhoods, Black or Hispanic/Latino families, and monolingual Spanish-speaking families were more likely than other families to say community supports are needed.** - Families who resided in a **higher-income neighborhood reported higher readiness.** - Research shows a **positive correlation between neighborhood assets and readiness**, regardless of family income. - The number of **neighborhood assets families reported was lower in 2021-22** compared to 2019. **Higher-income families reported greater access to all types of neighborhood assets.** The availability of most assets was **lower for Black respondents and monolingual Spanish-speaking respondents** than for other parents/caregivers.	- Invest in the **local economic development** to support job creation and advance living wages, particularly for Black and Brown communities impacted by the structural racism that has resulted in disproportionate rates of poverty.* - Increase **identification of and support for children with special needs**. One strategy is to improve connections to early screening and intervention services through pediatric visits and systems in the community.* - Advance policies that **promote family-friendly neighborhoods** through investments in public schools; safe, clean, green parks, playgrounds, and communities; affordable housing; accessible libraries; and financial supports for extracurricular and out-of-school activities that are affordable for all families.* - Increase family leadership opportunities and civic engagement. - Double-down on **place-based strategies and intentional partnerships** with other public systems, philanthropy, and community-based organizations to sustain investments in Neighborhoods Ready for School communities.

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SUPPORT FAMILIES: FAMILY HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

PARENT/CAREGIVER SUBCOMMITTEE & RESEARCH ADVISORY GROUP (ADVISORY GROUP) INPUT

Parent/Caregiver Discussion	Advisory Group Discussion
- Invest in support for medical check-ups. - Connect medical needs at schools. - Increase access to health care. - Address stressors not related to income. - Parents need mental health supports. - Connections to resources after screenings and for families with concerns. - Support connections to pediatricians.	- Support parents with connections to child health check-ups; dental supports are a high need. - Highlight the needs of families with children with special needs and families experiencing trauma. - Need to understand the data around boys of color in the broader research. - Make services available at places where families are actually located. - Services need to be more accessible and not feel discriminatory. - Parent health and well-being supports child health/well-being. - Impact of stress also seen in birth disparities. - Support for families with children with special needs. - Increase community navigation to make resources known to families and make sure they are accessible (services available and affordable).

KEY FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT
- Children who attend **well-child visits** had higher readiness. - Nearly **4 in 10 (37%) of children missed a health check-up during COVID-19**. - Among children with **special needs, 28% were unable to access the professional help** they needed during the pandemic. - Children whose parents/caregivers reported **fewer concerns about their child's mental health** had higher readiness. - Receiving help from the place-based **Neighborhoods Ready for School (NRFS) initiative was associated with higher readiness.** **NRFS families reported using more community resources** than other families. - Child **emotional well-being was a top concern** for parents/caregivers, ECE professionals, and kindergarten/TK teachers.	- Improve systems to expand access to **affordable, culturally responsive mental health services and supports** for families and children within the community.* - Invest in programs, services, and policies that are affirming and responsive to the cultural and language needs of communities to **address historical inequities and mitigate current experiences of discrimination**.* - Invest in **family resource centers and provide access to resources and navigation support** as well as programming that promotes community, expansion of social connections/capital, and respite for parents/caregivers and developmental play for children. - Invest in **parent/caregiver peer groups**, including those that are culturally and gender specific (e.g., dad's groups, Afro-play, LGBTQ+), support networks, community building, and opportunities for leadership. **Improve systems to expand access to safety net programs** for children and their parents/caregivers in

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- Past research in Alameda County found lower levels of parenting stress were linked to higher readiness.

- The percent of parents/caregivers reporting high stress levels increased 13 points during COVID-19.

- Experiences of discrimination were nearly 10 times higher in the county relative to a national sample.

- Black and multiracial parents/caregivers were more than twice as likely as White parents/caregivers to report experiencing discrimination.

the community by eliminating barriers like long applications, frequent renewals, and Medi-Cal premiums and co-payments.

- **Continue policies that were implemented during the pandemic to improve access to quality services**, including Medi-Cal continuous eligibility, free healthy school meals for all children, and flexible redetermination processes for CalFresh and WIC.

- Improve timely **access to community supports through family navigation and care coordination**. Strategies include increasing support for technology platforms, family resource centers, family navigators, CalAIM, and programs like Help Me Grow Alameda County and Alameda County Fathers Corps.

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SUPPORT FAMILIES: EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

PARENT/CAREGIVER SUBCOMMITTEE & RESEARCH ADVISORY GROUP (ADVISORY GROUP) INPUT

Parent/Caregiver Discussion	Advisory Group Discussion
• Highlight the need to support child care on two fronts: affordable access for families and pay equity for providers. • Need continued enrollment in ECE activities/child care. • Need quality education.	• Make quality child care affordable and accessible. • Pay teachers living wages. • Support FCCs with food for children. • Family child care providers need mental health supports for staff. • Family child care providers need more guidance and connections to supports that promote K-readiness.

KEY FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT
• Past research in Alameda County found **early care and education (ECE) participation predicts higher readiness**. • **Families reported needing activities for young children and child care the most** when asked what supports they need. • **Children in higher-income families were significantly more likely to attend licensed child care**, as were children who identify as White, Asian/Pacific Islander, or multiracial. Children in monolingual Spanish-speaking households were less likely than children in households speaking other languages to attend licensed care. • **75% of families reported barriers to ECE**, primarily due to COVID-related closures and reduced hours and the cost of care.	• Increase access to **affordable, quality child care options** that meet the needs of families and are open non-traditional hours, support language needs, and celebrate the child's culture.* • Expand **apprenticeships and workforce pipelines via early care and education for parents/caregivers** to provide access to secondary education. • Expand **quality development/educational experiences for children in family, friend, and neighbor care** (e.g., partnership with libraries, parks and recreation, faith-based communities, and mobile programming at local parks). • Increase **child care-based food programs** to support provider and family food security and conditions that support learning.

SUPPORT SCHOOLS: KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION SUPPORTS

PARENT/CAREGIVER SUBCOMMITTEE & RESEARCH ADVISORY GROUP (ADVISORY GROUP) INPUT

Parent/Caregiver Discussion	Advisory Group Discussion
• Connect families with parenting resources. • Parents need additional resources.	• Emphasizing the role of father and dismantle the myth around fathers/father figures, especially men of color. • Highlight K transition programs. • Activities for children and families to engage together. • K readiness and transition supports through kindergarten and 1st grade. • Make programs accessible by reducing paperwork to participate.

KEY FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT
• According to parents/caregivers, ECE professionals, and kindergarten/TK teachers, **readiness declined during COVID-19**. • Use of kindergarten transition supports, especially among fathers, was linked to higher readiness. • **Use of kindergarten transition supports dropped from 2019** (e.g., 87% visited the school in 2019, while 44% visited in 2021-22). • **Some transition supports were more likely to be offered by elementary schools in 2021-22** compared to 2019 (e.g., parent-teacher meetings, home visits), while others were less likely (e.g., kindergarten orientations).	• **Expand access to kindergarten readiness activities and transition supports** that are accessible to all families within their community. Supports include summer programs, playgroups, parent support, school events, and activities for children in K/1st grade who missed opportunities because of the pandemic. • Promote policies and practices that intentionally **engage and welcome fathers and historically under-represented family members** in programs and services from prenatal to the kindergarten transition.

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SUPPORT SCHOOLS: SUPPORTED EDUCATORS & SYSTEMS

PARENT/CAREGIVER SUBCOMMITTEE & RESEARCH ADVISORY GROUP (ADVISORY GROUP) INPUT

Parent/Caregiver Discussion	Advisory Group Discussion
• Create strategies and support to emphasize the direct relationship between quality early education and fair salaries. • Equitable wages for ECE professionals and teachers. • Address deep learning and social loss that children in K and 1st grade are experiencing this year through better teacher-student ratios. • Facilitate information meetings for parents about resources and events in the community through partnerships with local elementary schools and agreements/relationships with principals. • Connect schools with medical supports. • More communication and transparency with families.	• Teachers and families stressed about learning loss; need to refocus what success looks like; provide teachers with resources and self-care. • Workforce and families often the same population in need of supports—teachers and ECE professionals need better compensation with higher wages. • Schools should provide drop-in access to resources. • Support K transitions and use of family navigators. • Make schools safe, trusting environments. • Use school space to support family activities. • Smaller kindergarten class sizes and social-emotional trainings to better support students and teachers.

KEY FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT
• **Stress among ECE professionals and kindergarten/TK teachers increased during COVID-19** and is highest among kindergarten teachers, relative to TK teachers and ECE professionals. • ECE professionals and kindergarten/TK teachers who reported **high levels of stress were over four times more likely than those with low stress levels to say they plan to leave the profession.** • **ECE professionals experienced the greatest changes to their hours and income during COVID-19**: 49% reported decreased hours, 43% decreased wages, and 57% decreased household income. • 70% of ECE professionals, 58% of TK teachers, and 46% of kindergarten teachers said they **need training in Social-Emotional Learning (SEL).** • ECE professionals and kindergarten/TK teachers are **most likely to have access to COVID-19 supplies and least likely to have access to mental health/self-care resources.** • **Fewer than one-third of ECE professionals have access to supports for families** like family services referral lists (29%), translation support (21%), and child mental health consultants (19%).	• **Increase access to affordable, quality mental health and self-care resources** for ECE professionals and educators as well as mental health consultation for the classroom to support child educational achievement.* • Support **communication, collaboration, and partnerships** between the home, informal care settings, early care and education professionals, community programs, and schools to facilitate the transition to TK/kindergarten.* • Support policies and practices that **expand family navigation and care coordination services at ECE settings and schools to promote community partnerships** that help connect families to available programs and services in the community.* • Provide educators with **supports to mitigate learning loss** (i.e. smaller teacher-to-child ratios in kindergarten), **professional development and training** to support students' wellbeing (social-emotional and child development, anti-bias/equity in teaching). • Advance policies and supports for **professional development, capacity building, workforce diversification, and equitable compensation and working conditions** that support providers and quality care.

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APPENDIX B. EXAMPLES OF FIRST 5 PRIORITY EFFORTS

Support Communities

FINANCIAL STABILITY

Program Investments

- Invested over $5mil in distribution of essential supplies, including diapers.
- Worked with family-serving shelters and provided capital awards, supply stipends, and technical assistance.

Policy Advocacy

- Advocated for increases in economic supports for families at local, state, and federal levels, e.g., child tax credits, diaper banks, supports for CalWORKs.
- Funded the evaluation of Help A Mother Out's diaper distribution and provided a letter of recommendation for the successful application to the California Commission on the Status of Women for a $25,000 Women's Recovery Response grant.
- Signed on to an open letter from the National Collaborative for Infants and Toddlers, laying out a vision for increased investments in prenatal-to-three issues in 2022 and beyond.
- Provided public comment to support Stable Rents and Stable Families campaign to strengthen rental protections for the unincorporated communities in Alameda County.
- Provided public comment in support of AB 2053: The Social Housing Act (Lee) to connect early childhood and affordable and stable housing.
- Submitted a comment letter to the City of Oakland's General Plan Housing Element highlighting the housing needs of families with young children and early care and education professionals living in Oakland and Alameda County.
- Signed-on to a federal letter urging Congress to include housing investments in the revised budget reconciliation bill.

THRIVING NEIGHBORHOODS

Program Investments

- As part of the Neighborhoods Ready for School strategy, First 5 funds trusted community organizations and family resource centers to build an ecosystem of support for families in the community.
- Provide training and coaching in early identification to newly recruited family child care providers.
- HMG trains providers to offer their families early screenings and offers direct screening through the Developmental Screening Program; provides care coordination and navigation support to families referred to the Central Access Point (phone line); and conducts community outreach and networking events to stay on top of available services and resources.

Policy Advocacy

- Signed on to a [budget letter](#) requesting that the California legislature and administration increase wage replacement rates for low-wage workers in the State Disability Insurance and Paid Family Leave programs.

- In partnership with the City of Oakland, submitted a [one-time state budget request](#) to improve Oakland's play spaces for young children and their families.

- Funded an [evaluation](#) of our place-based Neighborhoods Ready for School strategy to inform policy advocacy and public investments.

- Partnered with parents and caregivers to inform the design, implementation, and interpretation of the [2021-22 Kindergarten Readiness Assessmen](#)t as part of a research to action approach and commitment to equity.

- Submitted a letter of support for [AB 2517 (Bonta)](#) which proposes to establish a two-year California Coordinated Neighborhood and Community Services grant program to implement new, and strengthen existing, neighborhood and regional cradle-to-career networks to reduce inequities and increase economic mobility in communities across California through integrated place-based support systems.

- Advocated to ensure equitable implementation of CalAIM; submitted a [letter](#) to the state budget subcommittees in response to the state's proposed sunset of the Child Health and Disability Prevention program.

Support Families

FAMILY HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Program Investments

- [Help Me Grow (HMG) Alameda County](#) supports families to connect to medical check-ups, with particular focus on Medi-Cal clients; trains providers to offer screenings; and provides the HMG central access point (phone line) for information and care coordination.

- Awarded $1.45 million from the Alameda Alliance for Health for an expanded partnership through HMG program to support access to pediatric preventative care, care management, and quality improvement.

- Fund DULCE at Highland Hospital to provide health, family, and legal services to families.

- As part of the Alameda County Emergency Child Care Response Team, partnered with Samuel Merritt University School of Nursing and ECE providers to provide health consultation support through the [Health Heroes program](#).

- Support for Afrocentric playgroups, promotora programming. Promotores and community health workers are liaisons between their communities and health providers, social service providers, and resources.

- Lead on a regional grant application with Contra Costa to support Afghan family resettlement, funding planning and direct services, engaging in community events and advocacy.

- Participation in workgroup led by the Alameda County Office of Dental Health to improve access to dental care for the 0-5 age group through communication, outreach, and integration with primary care.

- Partner with the Alameda Alliance, federally qualified health centers, and UCSF Benioff Children's hospital on efforts to expand care coordination and navigation to services through pediatric sites.

- Our Cultural Access Services program provides language supports, promotes cultural humility and appreciation of the county's diverse population through interpretation and translation for First 5 and partner programs to increase access to community-based services.

- Fund parent and caregiver supports, such as Dad-scussions, Parent Cafés, and culturally specific playgroups, through the work in each of the Neighborhoods Ready for School sites.

Policy Advocacy

- Submitted a letter in support of AB1995, a proposal to eliminate monthly Medi-Cal premiums or copayments so that low-income households can put resources toward other essential needs.

- In support of continuous Med-Cal eligibility, AB2402, Diana Garcia, Data and Policy Analyst, gave testimony (beginning at the 2:36:50 mark) at the California State Assembly.

- Submitted a letter in support of SB 65 the California Momnibus bill, which would re-imagine maternal health to improve perinatal outcomes, close racial disparities in maternal and infant mortality and morbidity, and improve data collection and research on socioeconomic factors that contribute to negative birth outcomes.

- Provided the California Department of Health Care Services feedback on a draft of the Medi-Cal Community Health Worker Provider Manual to ensure that its language supports implementation to advance health equity.

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

- Named administrator of Measure C: Children's Health and Child Care Initiative for Alameda County. Measure C creates a half-percent (0.5%) sales tax, estimated to raise ~ $150 million per year, to provide support and enhancements for child care, preschool, early education, and pediatric health care in Alameda County. Measure C provides an opportunity to expand access to subsidized early care and education for thousands of families in Alameda County.

Program Investments

- Awarded $1,000,000 from Alameda County Social Services Agency in American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) to build a countywide child care centralized eligibility list (CEL) that will help caregivers access subsidized child care.

- Expanded number of licensed family child care providers participating and benefiting from Alameda County Quality Counts, building peer support.

- Jointly funded Alameda County's ECE Apprenticeship Program to provide CalWORKs participants training, advanced degrees, and employment in ECE settings; advocated for additional investments in the model.

- HMG care coordination and family navigation services provide connections to services and supports for parents and caregivers, as well as emotional support.
- Supported child care providers with technical assistance in English, Spanish, and Chinese for the statewide [Minor Renovation and Repair Grant Request for Applications](#) for both centers and family child care.
- Support libraries to provide children's books in multiple languages, offer playgroups, provide [take-home resources for parents, including over 1000 literacy kits](#), and provide developmental screening and referral on-site through HMG.

Policy Advocacy

- Provided a letter of support for Food with Care: [SB 1481](#) (Becker) that would provide free daily meals to children in child care by enabling all child care providers to qualify for the highest level of reimbursements for the meals they serve.
- Wrote to the Federal Alameda County Delegation urging them to support child care in the reconciliation process.
- Signed-on and wrote to our Federal Alameda County Delegation for their support on the [Healthy Meals, Healthy Kids Act](#) designed to strengthen school meals, child care food programs, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and other federal nutrition programs for children.

Support ECE Professionals, Teachers, and Care and Education Systems

KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION SUPPORTS

Program Investments

- Funded school districts in Alameda County, using an equity index, to support [kindergarten transition programming](#) (educational materials, books, tablets) and supports for families (basic needs).
- Leader of [Alameda County Fathers Corps](#), a collaborative focused on empowering and supporting fathers, service providers, agencies, systems, and the wider community to raise awareness of the critical role of fathers and father-figures and the benefits of active father involvement on young children's development; provide training and support to service providers with implementation of the [Father-Friendly Principles](#); and advocate for more father-specific and father-friendly services.
- Awarded grants to community-based organizations to provide drop-in groups to support fathers in addressing their challenges in accessing public and community supports.

Policy Advocacy

- Alameda County Fathers Corps advocates for local systems change and has championed a state resolution on the adoption of the [Father-Friendly Principles.](#)

Support ECE Professionals, Teachers, and Care and Education Systems

SUPPORTED EDUCATORS & SYSTEMS

- Named administrator of [Measure C: Children's Health and Child Care Initiative](#) for Alameda County. Measure C creates a half-percent (0.5%) sales tax, estimated to raise ~ $150 million per year, to provide support and enhancements for child care, preschool, early education, and pediatric health care in Alameda County. Measure C provides an opportunity to improve compensation for the early care and education workforce.

Program Investments

- Expand participation in the number of providers participating in Quality Counts program for quality improvement, coaching, professional learning communities, and quality grants.
- Investing in training (over 4.5k attendees and 11k [YouTube views](#)) to strengthen providers' and families' understanding of best practices for early education, mental health, family support, health, and administration.
- Financially support school districts with kindergarten transition efforts, including through the [Community Resilience Fund](#) grants allocated using an equity index.
- Partnered with Alameda County Social Services Agency and Supplybank.org to [distribute 880 air purifiers to 440 family child care providers.](#)
- Administered [$3 million in family child care grants](#) provided by Alameda County Social Services Agency from CARES Act funds.
- Invest in the [CARE Family Resource Navigation](#) program, which has been effective in supporting families experiencing homelessness with child care and access to basic needs.
- Distributed over [12,000 backpacks with supplies](#) to incoming kindergarteners through schools and community partners.

Policy Advocacy

- Provided public comment to the Alameda County Behavioral Health — Mental Health Services Act Plan FY 2022-23 to highlight the need for infant and early childhood mental health services and supports through investments in the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health workforce and Consultation programs.
- Submitted a [letter](#) to the state supporting the Rate and Quality Stakeholder Workgroup's recommendations for investments in the workforce and for an equitable rate reimbursement system.
- Promote coordination between school districts and the early care and education mixed delivery system in planning for implementation of Universal Transitional Kindergarten/Prekindergarten.

ASR

APPENDIX C. MAP KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION GRANTS BY SCHOOL DISTRICT (WITH EQUITY SCORE)
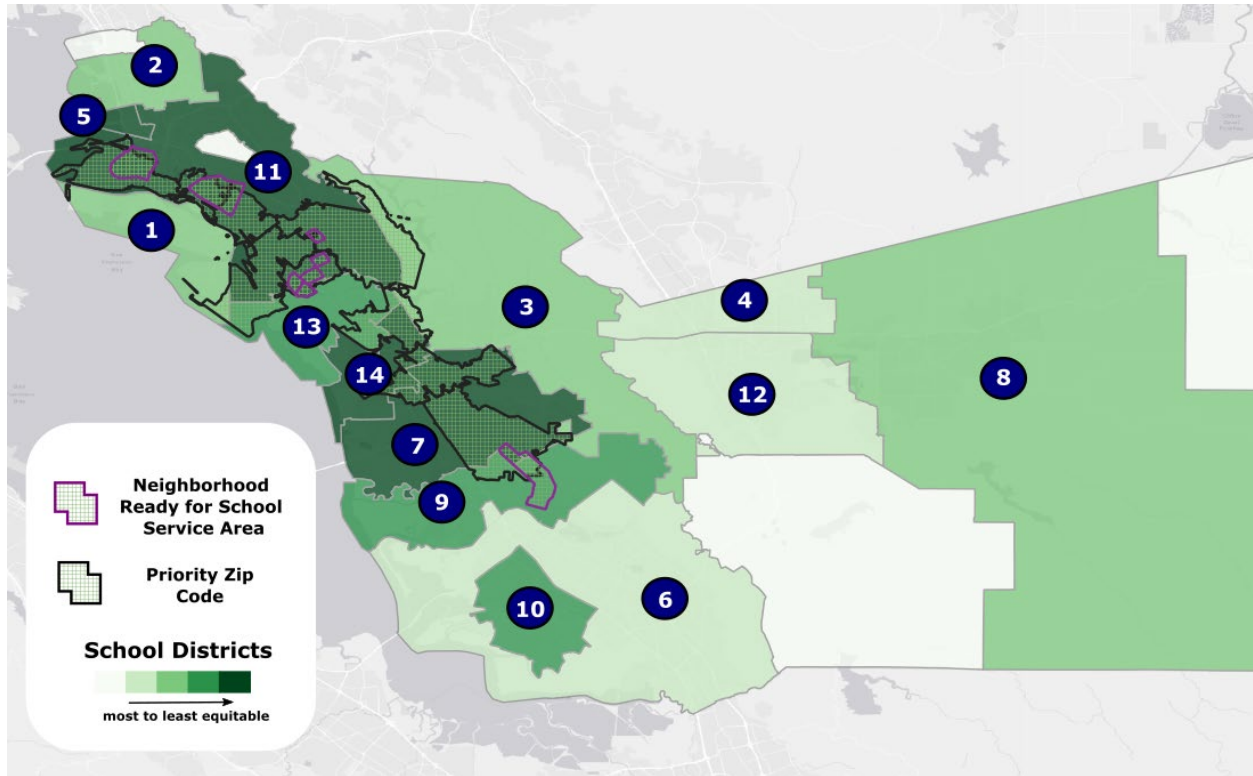
ID	District	Equity Score	Funding	ID	District	Equity Score	Funding
1	Alameda Unified	.022	$63,344	8	Livermore Unified	.028	$72,889
2	Berkeley Unified	.023	$62,185	9	New Haven Unified	.061	150,596
3	Castro Valley Unified	.02	$60,066	10	Newark Unified	.065	$132,912
4	Dublin Unified	.004	$53,153	11	Oakland Unified	.165	$442,670
5	Emery Unified	.143	$107,603	12	Pleasanton Unified	.005	$53,314
6	Fremont Unified	.012	$73,151	13	San Leandro Unified	.096	$176,377
7	Hayward Unified	.24	$357,330	14	San Lorenzo Unified	.105	$182,513

Equity Index is calculated as a weighted composite of indices of student need at each Alameda County school district. Seventy-five percent of the index score is a function of baseline factors including the % of students enrolled in free or reduced lunch and 3rd grade ELA and math scores. Twenty-five percent of the index score is a function of adjustment factors including % of students of color, COVID rate, % of students who are English language learners, and number of students who participated in the 2019 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (greater participation in the assessment included a boost in the index).

APPENDIX D. METHODOLOGY AND STUDY SAMPLE

WHO COMPLETED THE STUDY?

The 2021-22 assessment involved educators,[1] children, and families from across the county, but oversamples of participants were recruited in priority school districts, neighborhoods, and zip codes. These priority areas were identified by First 5 based on an equity index of assets and needs and/or were areas in which First 5 has made significant place-based Neighborhoods Ready for School grants, and recent investments in kindergarten readiness supports. This oversample was selected to allow us to better analyze data by race/ethnicity, income, and neighborhood. The First 5 priority neighborhoods and zip codes are also priority areas for Alameda County, where the County has targeted resources and supports to address COVID-19 and other health disparities. **For countywide results presented in this report, we statistically adjusted the data to be representative of the county overall.** However, it should be noted that teachers, ECE professionals, and parents/caregivers participated in the readiness study voluntarily. This means that the information presented in this report describes only the students and families assessed, who may differ in important ways from students and families who did not participate. The remainder of this section describes the characteristics of participants.

Child and Family Characteristics

There were 2,015 parents/caregivers who participated in the study. The table below shows parent/caregiver participation rates by zip code. Zip code data were unavailable for 195 families (~10% of completed surveys) because the zip code question was optional. We also asked families living in 94541, 94578, and 94580 if they lived in either the Ashland or Cherryland neighborhoods; 54 lived in Ashland and 166 lived in Cherryland. The final sample was very close to the sample we targeted for recruitment and outreach.

FIGURE 49. **PARENT/CAREGIVER SAMPLE, BY ZIP CODE**

Zip Code	% Total Unweighted	% Total Weighted
Priority Zip Codes	**45%**	**26%**
94541 (includes Cherryland)	14%	4%
94544	13%	5%
94601	5%	4%
94603	2%	3%
94605	3%	3%
94606	4%	2%
94607	2%	1%
94578 (includes Ashland)	2%	3%
Other Zip Codes	**55%**	**74%**

Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)

All families had children ages 3-6, 18% had children under 3, and 32% had children 7 or older. The total number of children families had is provided in the table below.

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[1] We use the term 'educator' throughout this report to refer to ECE professionals, kindergarten teachers, and TK teachers, but recognize that not all professionals identify themselves using this term.

FIGURE 50. **NUMBER OF CHILDREN OF PARENTS/CAREGIVERS IN THE SAMPLE**

Age	Children
Under 3 years	399
3 years	561
4 years	594
5 years	834
6 years	470
7 years or older	916

Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)

A subset of parents/caregivers had a child in kindergarten or TK: 1,257 parents/caregivers (62%) had a child attending kindergarten or TK in the 2021-22 school year, and 1,183 (59%) had a child who attended kindergarten or TK in the prior year (2020-21). In addition, there were 129 parents/caregivers who reported that their child could have attended kindergarten or TK in the 2020-21 school year, but they opted to not enroll their child; these parent/caregivers were more likely to live in Hayward than in other cities.

FIGURE 51. **NUMBER OF PARENTS/CAREGIVERS WITH KINDERGARTEN/TK STUDENTS, BY SCHOOL YEAR**

	Parents/Caregivers
Child in K/TK in 2021-22	1,257
Child in K/TK in 2020-21	1,183
Child right age for K/TK in 2020-21 but did not attend	129

Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)

Parents/caregivers marked any of the languages children heard most often in the home. Families spoke primarily English or Spanish at home.

FIGURE 52. **LANGUAGES SPOKEN MOST OFTEN IN THE HOME, ALL PARTICIPANTS**
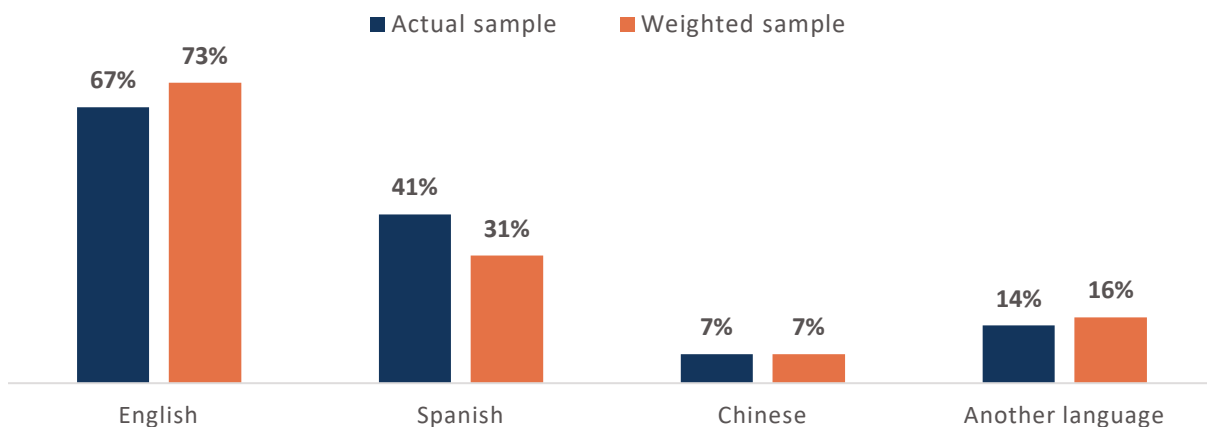
Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=1,534 (2019), 1,958 (2021-22, unweighted), 1,742 (2021-22, weighted). Percentages do not sum to 100% because parent/caregivers could mark more than one language. Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county. "Another language" includes Hindi, Punjabi, or other South Asian language; Farsi, Dari, Arabic, or other Middle Eastern language; Vietnamese; Tagalog or other Filipino language; Korean; Mam; Russian; Hmong.

Like the full sample, the subset of participants with a child in kindergarten/TK spoke primarily English and Spanish at home. Participants in the current study were more likely to speak English or Spanish and less likely speak another language relative to participants in the 2019 KRA.

FIGURE 53.   **LANGUAGES SPOKEN MOST OFTEN IN THE HOME, K/TK PARTICIPANTS**
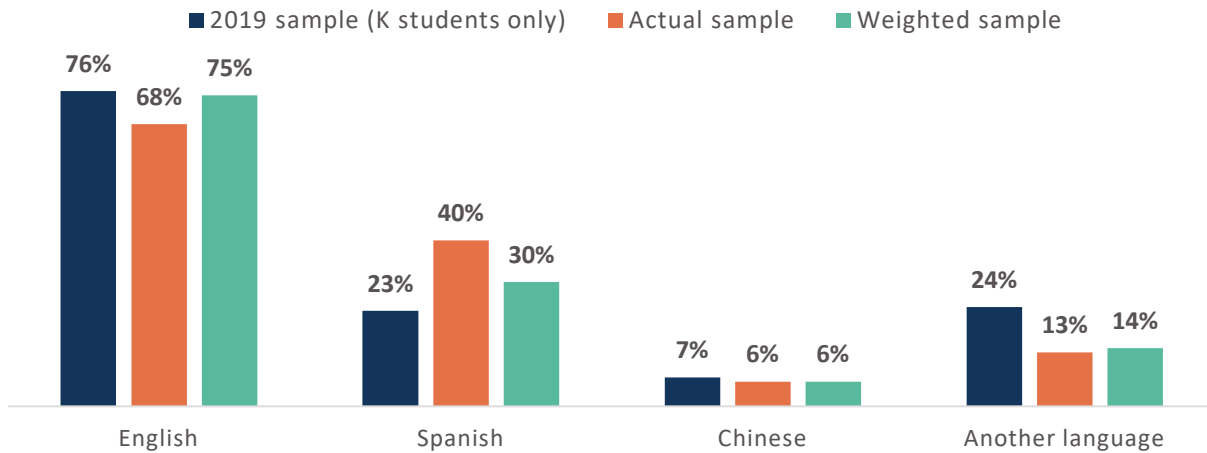
Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=1,534 (2019), 1,226 (2021-22, unweighted), 1,162 (2021-22, weighted). Percentages do not sum to 100% because parent/caregivers could mark more than one language. Data were weighted to approximate the race/ethnicity of young children in the county. "Another language" includes Hindi, Punjabi, or other South Asian language; Farsi, Dari, Arabic, or other Middle Eastern language; Vietnamese; Tagalog or other Filipino language; Korean; Mam; Russian; Hmong.

The greatest proportion of children in the study were Hispanic/Latino. Less than one in five were from the category "another race/ethnicity." Another race/ethnicity includes Alaska Native/American Indian, Arab/Middle Eastern, and those who selected "other" on the survey. The total number of respondents in each of these groups was too small for analysis and was thus combined throughout the report.

FIGURE 54.   **CHILDREN'S RACE/ETHNICITY, ALL PARTICIPANTS**
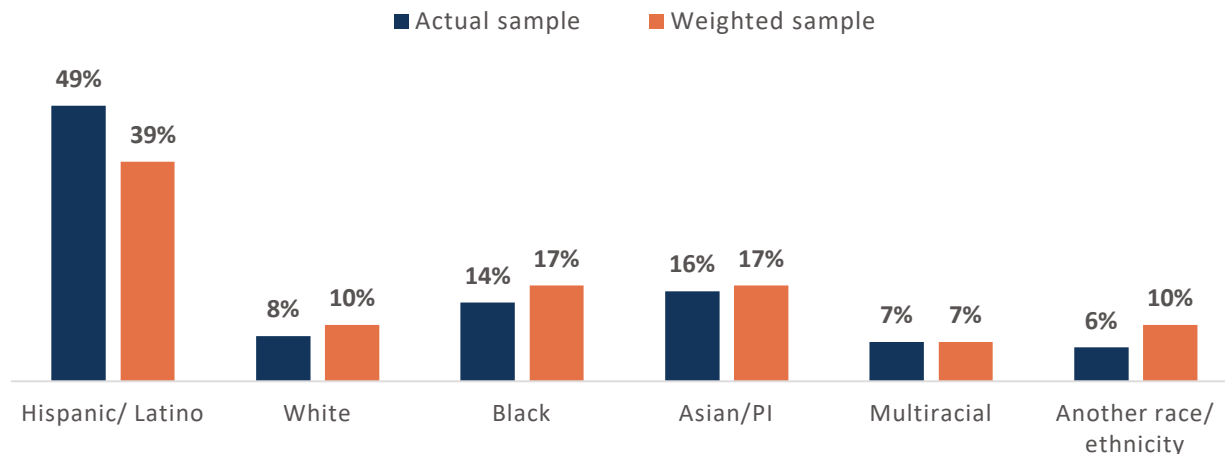
Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=1,150 (2019), 1,969 (2021-22, unweighted), 1,751 (2021-22, weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county. "Multiracial" refers to participants who identify as more than one race/ethnicity. "Another race/ethnicity" includes Alaskan Native/American Indian, Arab/Middle Eastern, and those who selected "other" and did not provide a description; these are grouped due to small sample size.

The racial/ethnic makeup of children in kindergarten or TK was similar to that of the overall sample.

## FIGURE 55. CHILDREN'S RACE/ETHNICITY, K/TK PARTICIPANTS

■ 2019 sample (K students only) ■ Actual sample ■ Weighted sample
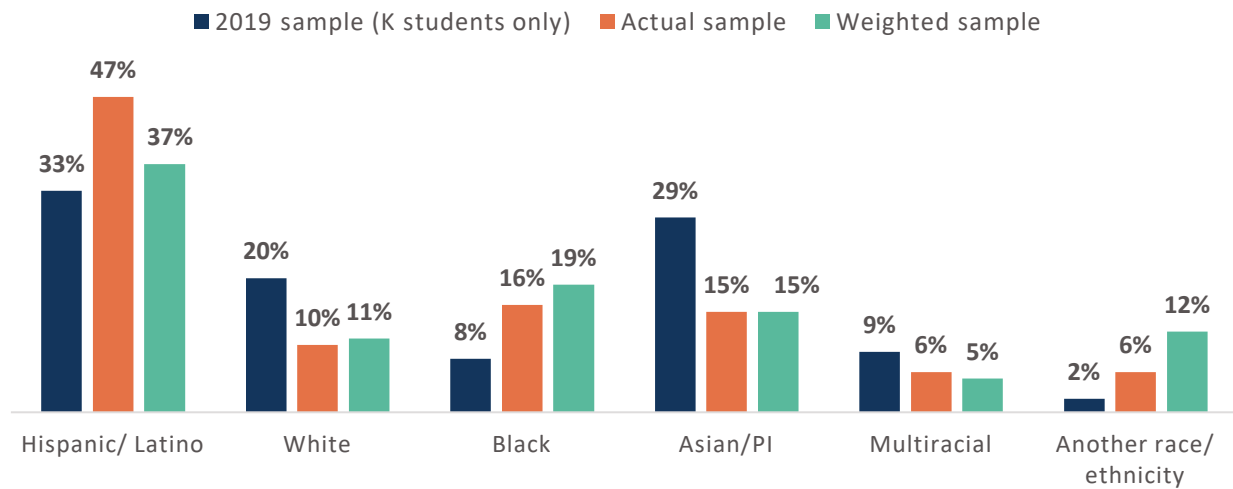
Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=1,150 (2019), 1,238 (2021-22, unweighted), 1,171 (2021-22, weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the race/ethnicity of young children in the county. "Multiracial" refers to participants who identify as more than one race/ethnicity. "Another race/ethnicity" includes Alaskan Native/American Indian, Arab/Middle Eastern, and those who selected "other" and did not provide a description.

Approximately half of families earned at least $50,000 per year, and families were supporting an average of four people in their household.

FIGURE 56. FAMILY INCOME

■ Actual sample ■ Weighted sample
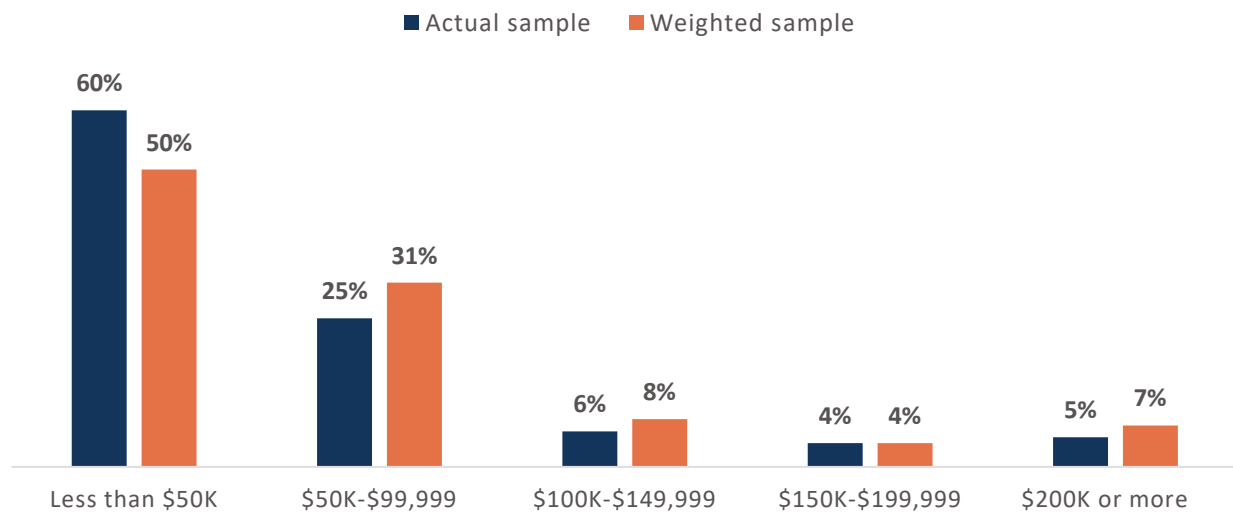
Source: Parent Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=1,859 (unweighted), 1,666 (weighted). Data were weighted to approximate the zip code distribution of the young child population in the county.

Kindergarten/TK Teacher Characteristics

There were 284 kindergarten/TK teachers in the sample, 82% of whom taught kindergarten, and 18% of whom taught TK. The table below shows kindergarten/TK teacher participation, by school district. The

sample we targeted for recruitment and outreach included 49% of participants teaching in priority districts, very close to our final sample, in which 46% of participants taught in these districts.

FIGURE 57. **KINDERGARTEN/TK TEACHER SAMPLE, BY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

District	% Total Unweighted	% Total Weighted
Priority District	**46%**	**37%**
Hayward	13%	9%
New Haven	9%	5%
Oakland	24%	23%
Other Districts	**56%**	**63%**

Source: Teacher Survey (2021-22)

Nearly all teachers in the study identified as female (96%). Thirty-nine percent of teachers were bilingual, most of whom spoke English and Spanish. The chart below shows the non-English languages spoken by TK teachers.

FIGURE 58. **LANGUAGES SPOKEN BY TRANSITIONAL KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS**
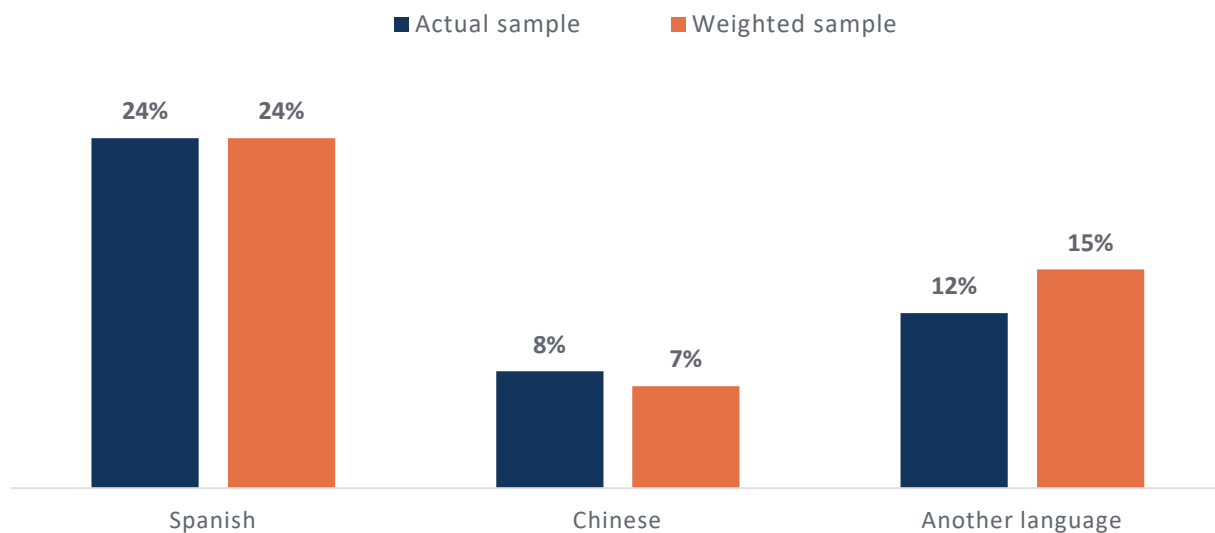
Source: Teacher Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=50 (unweighted), 50 (weighted). Percentages do not sum to 100% because teachers could mark more than one language. Data were weighted by district to approximate the county population of K/TK teachers. "Another language" includes Vietnamese, Korean, and those who selected "other" and did not provide a description.

Kindergarten teachers were as likely as TK teachers to speak Chinese, but somewhat less likely than TK teachers to speak Spanish or another language.

FIGURE 59. **LANGUAGES SPOKEN BY TEACHER**
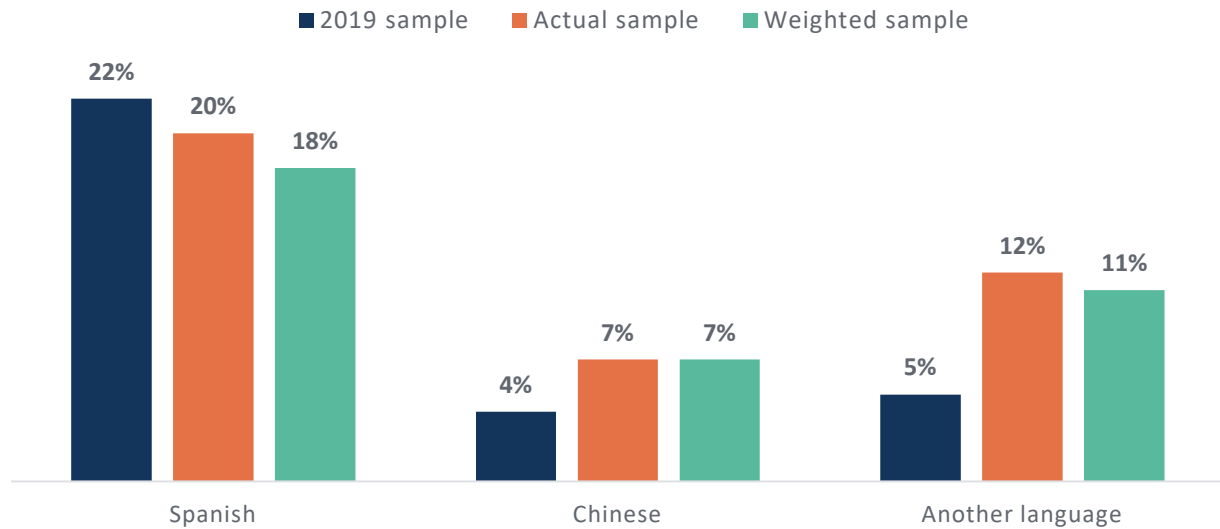
Source: Teacher Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=74 (2019), 234 (2021-22, unweighted), 233 (2021-22, weighted). Percentages do not sum to 100% because teachers could mark more than one language. Data were weighted by district to approximate the county population of K/TK teachers. "Another language" includes Hindi, Punjabi, or other South Asian language; Farsi, Dari, Arabic, or other Middle Eastern language; Vietnamese; Tagalog or other Filipino language; Korean; and those who selected "other" and did not provide a description.

The majority of TK teachers were White, while less than one in five were Asian/Pacific Islander or Hispanic/Latino. Fewer teachers were Black, multiracial, or another race/ethnicity.

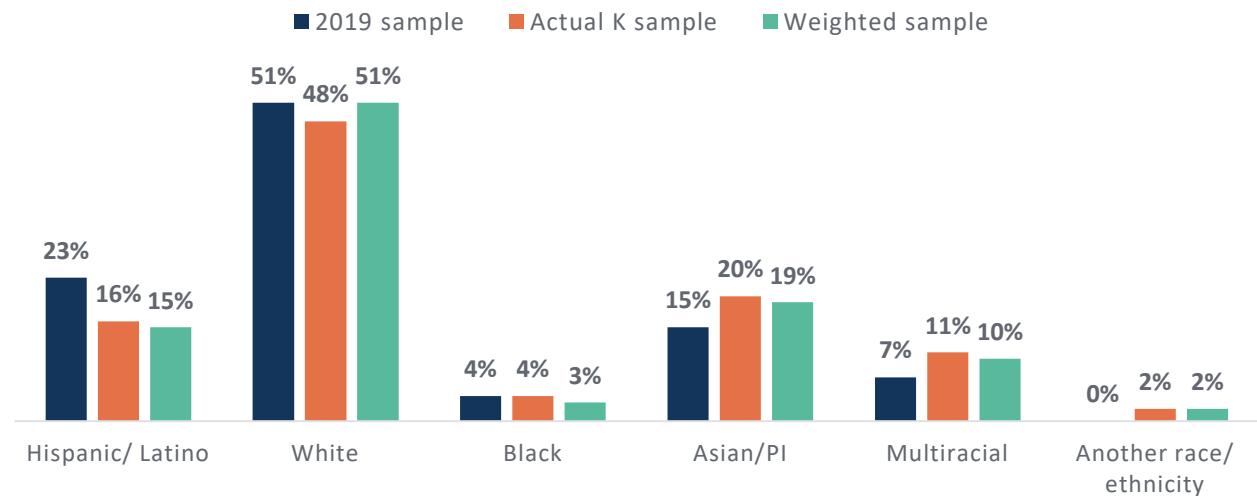FIGURE 60. **TRANSITIONAL KINDERGARTEN TEACHER RACE/ETHNICITY**
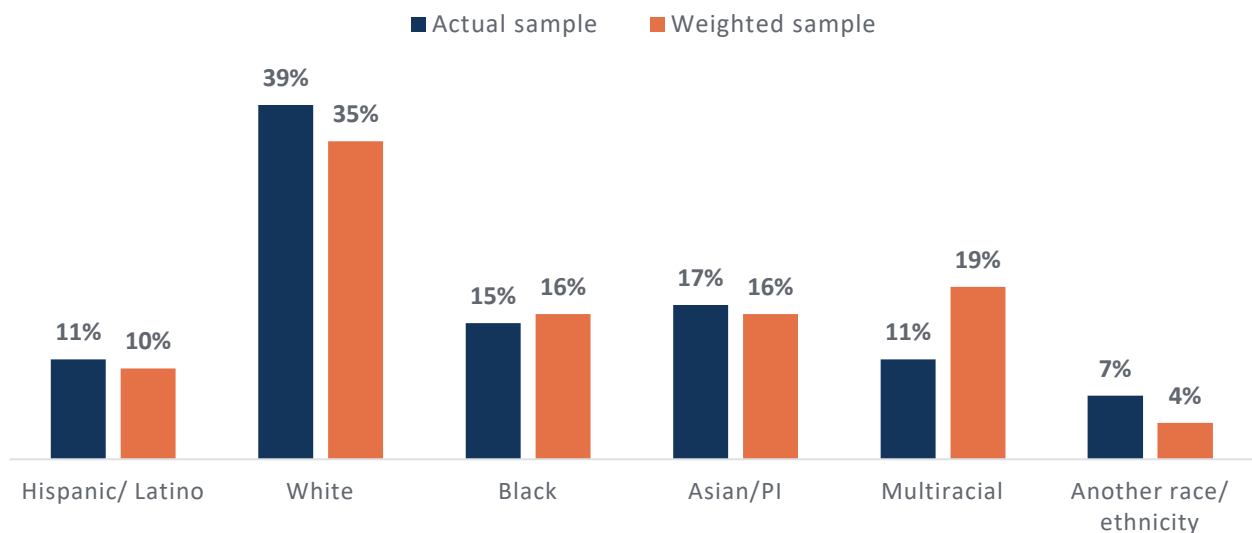
Source: Teacher Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=50 (unweighted), 50 (weighted). Data were weighted by district to approximate the county population of K/TK teachers. "Multiracial" refers to participants who identify as more than one race/ethnicity. "Another race/ethnicity" includes Alaskan Native/American Indian and those who selected "other" and entered a single race other than those listed.

Relative to TK teachers, kindergarten teachers were more likely to be Hispanic/Latino or White and less likely to be Black, multiracial, or another race/ethnicity.

FIGURE 61. **KINDERGARTEN TEACHER RACE/ETHNICITY**

Source: Teacher Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=74 (2019), 234 (2021-22, unweighted), 233 (2021-22, weighted). Data were weighted by district to approximate the county population of K/TK teachers. "Multiracial" refers to participants who identify as more than one race/ethnicity. "Another race/ethnicity" includes Alaskan Native/American Indian, Arab/Middle Eastern, and those who selected "other" and entered a single race other than those listed.

At least 7 in 10 kindergarten/TK teachers had a bachelor's degree or higher in child development or education, and at least 6 in 10 had at least 10 years of teaching experience. **TK teachers were more likely than kindergarten teachers to have a degree in child development or education, while kindergarten teachers were more likely to have at least 10 years of experience.**

FIGURE 62. **KINDERGARTEN/TK TEACHER EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE**
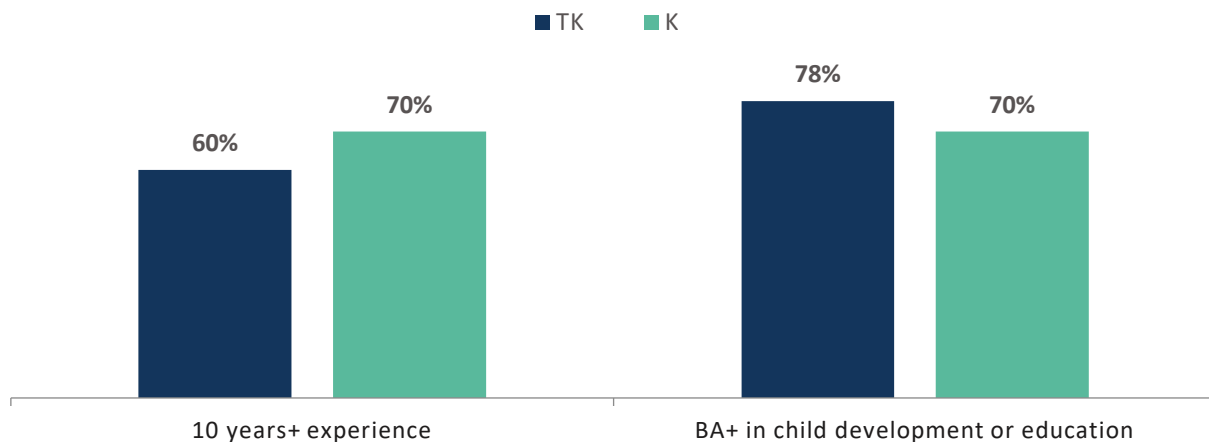
Source: Teacher Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=45-49 (TK teacher, weighted); 213-231 (K teacher, weighted). Data were weighted by district to approximate the county population of K/TK teachers.

ECE Professional Characteristics

There were 695 ECE professionals in the study, 61% of whom worked in a center, and 39% of whom worked in a family child care home. The table below illustrates the participation of ECE professionals in the study by the zip code of their site. Relative to the sample we targeted for recruitment and outreach, the final sample had fewer participants who worked in priority zip codes (22% in the final sample, compared to 39% in the target sample).

FIGURE 63. **ECE PROFESSIONAL SAMPLE, BY ZIP CODE**

Zip Code	% Total Unweighted	% Total Weighted
Priority Zip Codes	**22%**	**17%**
94541/ Cherryland	4%	3%
94544	5%	3%
94601	4%	2%
94603	2%	2%
94605	3%	3%
94606	2%	1%
94607	1%	1%
94578/ Ashland	2%	2%
Other Zip Codes	**78%**	**83%**

Source: ECE Survey (2021-22)

Nearly all ECE professionals in the study identified as female (98%). They spoke primarily English and Spanish, and 58% were bilingual.

FIGURE 64. **LANGUAGES SPOKEN BY ECE PROFESSIONALS**
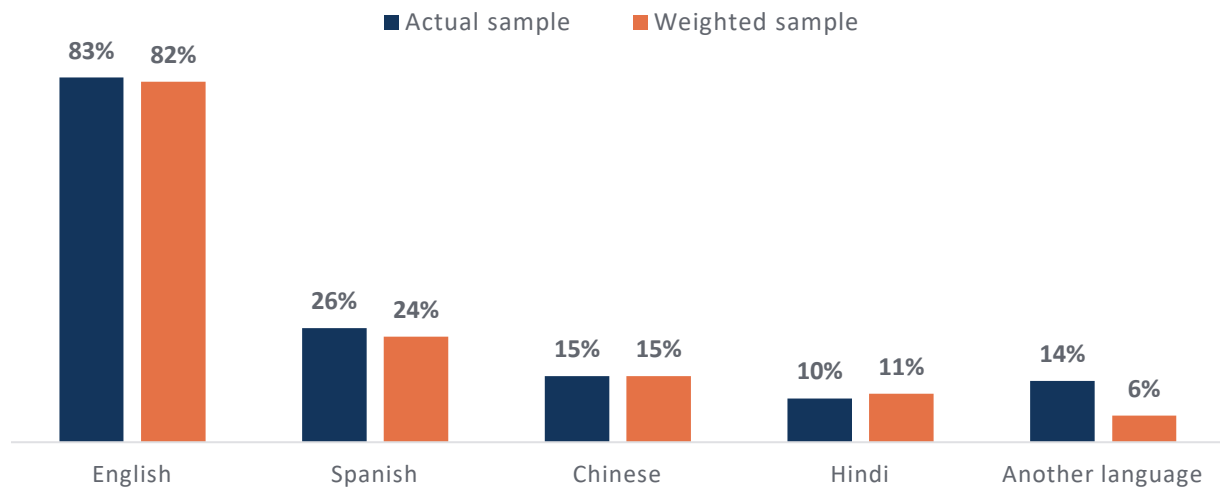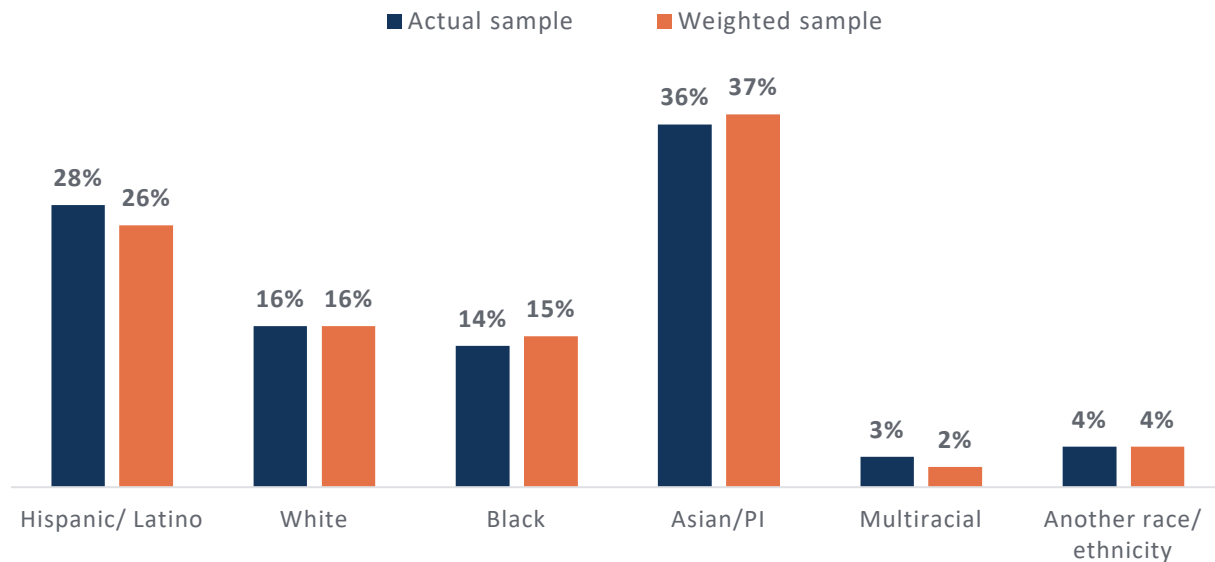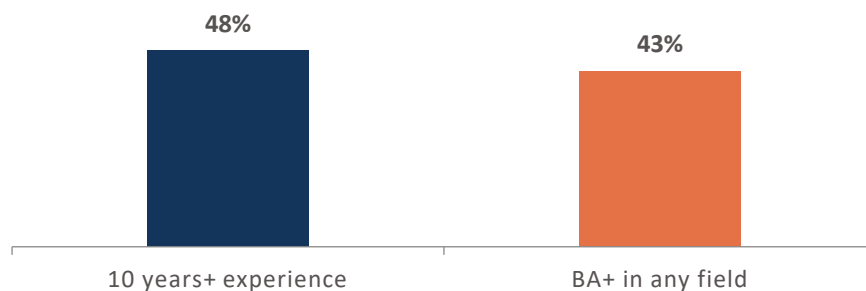

Source: ECE Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=695 (unweighted), 379 (weighted). Data were weighted by zip code to approximate the county population of ECE professionals. Percentages do not sum to 100% because teachers could mark more than one language. "Another language" includes Farsi, Dari, Arabic, or other Middle Eastern language; Vietnamese; Tagalog or other Filipino language; Korean; Mam; Russian; and Hmong.

Most ECE professionals participating in the study were Hispanic/Latino or Asian/Pacific Islander.

FIGURE 65. **ECE PROFESSIONAL RACE/ETHNICITY**

Source: ECE Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=695 (unweighted), 346 (weighted). Data were weighted by zip code to approximate the county population of ECE professionals.
"Multiracial" refers to participants who identify as more than one race/ethnicity. "Another race/ethnicity" includes Alaskan Native/American Indian, Arab/Middle Eastern, and those who selected "other" and entered a single race other than those listed.

ECE professionals were asked about their experience and education, though they were not asked about their specific field of study. **Just under half had been in the ECE field for at least 10 years and 43% had at least a bachelor's degree** (in any field). There were no differences in ECE professionals' experience by site type, but professionals working in center-based settings were significantly more likely to have a bachelor's degree than professionals working in family child care settings.

FIGURE 66. **ECE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE**

Source: ECE Survey (2021-22)
Note: N=362 (weighted). Data were weighted by zip code to approximate the county population of ECE professionals.

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