

# Snapshot of the 2017 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment

## Background

This report describes the state of kindergarten readiness and related findings for kindergarten students across Alameda County who started school in Fall 2017. This is the third such assessment, following 2013 and 2015 studies of similar size and scope. The study was funded by First 5 Alameda County.

The report is based on data collected about children and families at 51 schools, spanning 13 school districts. The sample in the current year reached a sufficient size and scope to be representative of the full county. The sample also included large subsamples of students from Hayward and Fremont Unified School Districts, which allowed us to draw inferences regarding the characteristics and readiness levels of children in these districts.

Teachers participating in the study rated their students' proficiency levels on 20 kindergarten readiness skills on a scale from 1 (*Not Yet* demonstrating the skill) to 4 (*Fully Proficient* on the skill). These readiness skills sorted into three *Building Blocks* – *Self-Regulation*, *Social Expression*, and *Kindergarten Academics*. A fourth area includes two items related to fine and gross motor skills, which serve as a foundation for these *Building Blocks*. The graphic below illustrates the theoretical progression of readiness skills, with foundational motor skills preceding the more advanced self-regulation and socio-emotional skills. The top of the graphic contains early academic skills, like counting and number, shape, and letter recognition.

Figure 1. **The Building Blocks of Readiness and Motor Skills Items**



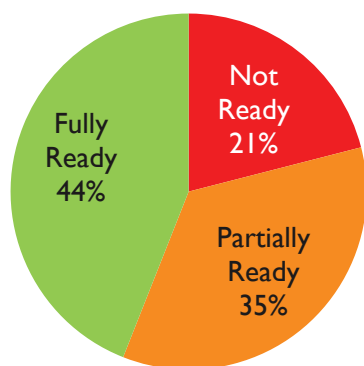
In addition to the teacher ratings on student proficiency, the study involved a survey of parents/caregivers about their child's demographics, family background, and child care experiences.

## Key Findings

### *How ready for kindergarten were children assessed in Alameda County?*

Students were considered *Fully Ready* for kindergarten in all areas if they scored at or above 3.25 out of 4 on the three *Building Blocks* – that is, if they were *Proficient* or nearing proficiency in *Self-Regulation*, *Social Expression*, and *Kindergarten Academics*. Students were considered *Partially Ready* if they were *Proficient* or nearly proficient in one or two *Building Blocks*, and considered *Not Ready* if they were still progressing in all three areas. Using these criteria, **44%** of the sample was *Fully Ready* for kindergarten.

Figure 2. **Percent Ready Across Building Blocks**

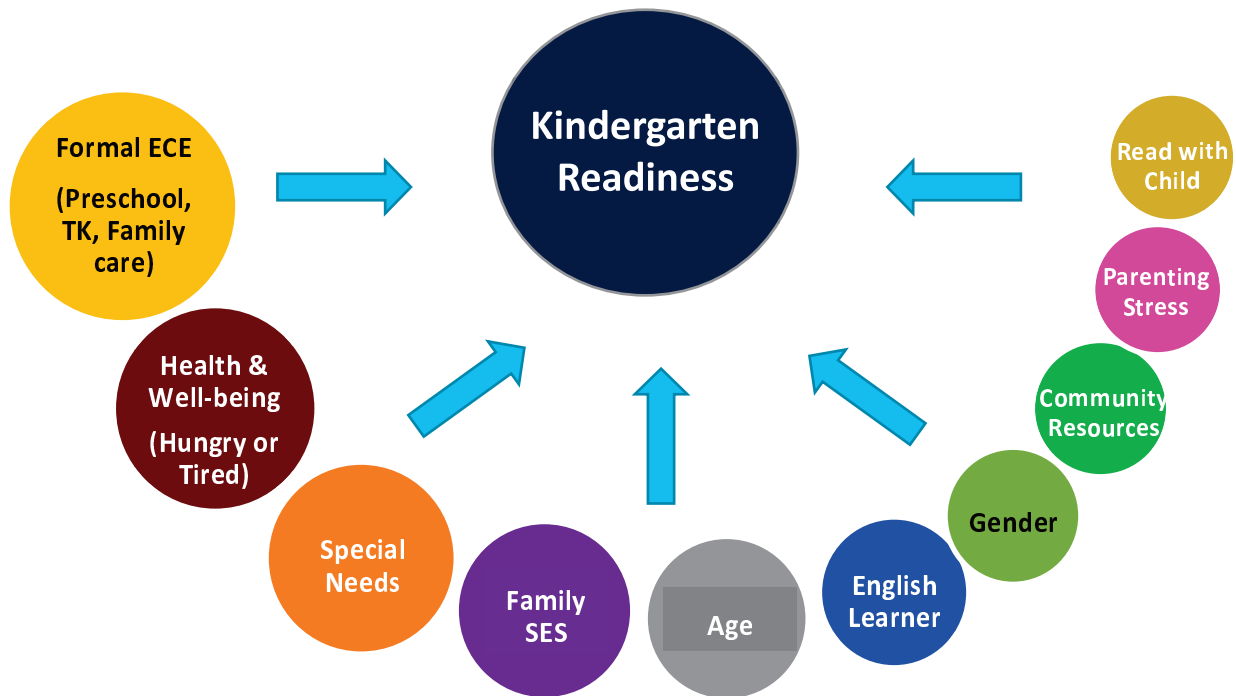


Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2017)  
Note: N=1,367-1,444.

### *What family factors and child characteristics are associated with higher levels of kindergarten readiness?*

The factors that were strongly and independently associated with readiness are illustrated in the following graphic. Although many of these predictors are related to one another, each factor in the diagram contributes to readiness even after taking into account the contributions of other factors. For example, the effect of early care and education (ECE) on readiness is significant, regardless of the child's age, race/ethnicity, or gender. Likewise, the impact of child well-being on readiness is significant for children in both high and low socioeconomic status (SES) families. The size of the circle corresponds to the strength of the relationship between the factor and readiness, after holding constant all other child and family characteristics. The strongest predictors of higher readiness were participation in formal ECE, such as Transitional Kindergarten (TK) or licensed preschool or family care, followed by coming to school well-rested and well-fed. Children who did not have special needs, were not from low SES families, were older, were not English Learners, and were female also had higher readiness levels. In addition, children whose families reported higher use of community resources, lower levels of parenting stress, and more frequent reading with their children also had higher levels of kindergarten readiness.

Figure 3. Key Predictors of Overall Kindergarten Readiness



### *What types of experiences and family backgrounds were characteristic of the incoming kindergarten students?*

- 85%** of children attended licensed preschool or family child care or TK in the prior year; these experiences predicted higher readiness.
- 19%** of children came to school hungry or tired on at least some days, and these children experienced lower levels of readiness than their healthy peers.
- 9%** of students had a diagnosed special need. Having a special need was associated with lower readiness.
- 27%** of children came from families with incomes under \$35,000 per year and 30% of mothers had no more than a high school education. Lower family SES was related to lower readiness.
- 5.5** years old: children's average age when they entered school. Older children also had higher readiness levels.
- 38%** of students were English Learners. English Learners had lower readiness than those who were proficient in English.
- 53%** of children were male, and boys had lower readiness than girls.