RESULTS OF THE 2015 FALL ASSESSMENT

SCHOOL READINESS

in Alameda County

DISTRICT REPORT, OAKLAND UNIFIED

School Readiness Assessment Model™
The ASR

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Acknowledgments

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Of course, this assessment would not be possible without the support of the 26 participating kindergarten teachers who generously gave their time and energy to help us better understand the skills of the children entering their classrooms (Figure 1). These teachers dedicated ample time to a training, student observations, and project management.

Figure 1.   **Participating Oakland Unified School District Schools and Teachers**

School	Teachers
Allendale Elementary	Susan Naclerio
Brookfield Elementary	Luz Zurita
Carl B. Munck Elementary	Faustena (Tina) Byrd-Linarez
Community United Elementary	Dana Parsons
Esperanza Elementary	Desiree Fernandez
Esperanza Elementary	Dolores Beleche
Fruitvale Elementary	Valerie Otsuka
Garfield Elementary	Pamela Mullen
Greenleaf Elementary	Katherine Gibson
Hoover Elementary	Jacqueline Duong
Howard Elementary	Colleen Shepherd
Laurel Elementary	Grace Tse
Learning without Limits	Sonya Mehta
Markham Elementary	Brenda Theodore
Markham Elementary	Luby Becerra
New Highland Academy	Aurelie Hardin
New Highland Academy	Jenna Plante
New Highland Academy	Sanae Ortiz
Parker Elementary	Meron Misgun
Parker Elementary	Michelle Wong
Think College Now	Emma Coufal
Think College Now	Monica Purdy
Thornhill Elementary	Bonnie Forbes
Thornhill Elementary	Debbie Weissman
Thornhill Elementary	Richard Thompson
Thornhill Elementary	Diedre Reed

Study Summary

Background

This report describes the state of school readiness and related findings for kindergarten students in 17 out of 68 schools in Oakland Unified School District at the start of the 2015-16 school year. The study was funded by First 5 Alameda County and the Alameda County Interagency Children's Policy Council. It represents the sixth school readiness study conducted since 2008 and, like the study conducted in 2013, it drew participants from across the county.

The data presented in this report represent 379 students from 26 classrooms across the 17 schools in Oakland Unified. This sample size was similar to that drawn in 2013, when 363 students in 21 classrooms in the district participated. Eleven of the 17 schools included in 2013 were also included in 2015.

As in prior years, the students' readiness levels were recorded by teachers using the Kindergarten Observation Form (KOF), an assessment of 20 readiness skills. In addition, the students' parents were asked to complete a survey called the Parent Information Form (PIF), which requested information about their child's demographics, family background and child care experiences. The information presented in this report describes only those students and families assessed; the findings are not representative of the all schools and students in the district.

Key Findings

Research Question	Findings	How to Interpret Findings
1. How do OUSD readiness levels compare to levels county-wide?	**43%** of Oakland students in the sample were *fully ready* for kindergarten. Across all students countywide, 44% were fully ready. - The average score of the Oakland students was slightly lower (3.22 out of 4) than the students in the full Alameda County sample (3.31). - Oakland students' scores in **Self-Regulation** and **Social Expression** were similar to those of students from across the county. - Most of the difference between Oakland students and the county at large can attributed to a disparity in **Kindergarten Academic** skills: 55% of Oakland students were fully ready in this area, as compared to 64% countywide.	Children who are *fully ready* for school demonstrate proficiency or near proficiency in skills across all three primary domains of readiness: Self-Regulation (ability to regulate emotion and attention), Social Expression (ability to relate appropriately to peers and adults), and Kindergarten Academics (academic skills, such as counting, knowing letters, and rhyming). Some of the differences in readiness scores between Oakland students and the overall county are related to the demographic make-up of the Oakland sample. In particular, Oakland students were more likely than their peers county-wide to be English Learners and to come from low income families, both of which are significantly associated with lower school readiness scores.
2. What kinds of experiences did Oakland students and parents have that contribute to readiness?	75% of students attended preschool or Transitional Kindergarten (TK) 53% of children read with parents at least five times per week. - At least 58% of parents received some kind of information about helping their child prepare for school. 64% of parents visited the school with their child. 56% of parents tell stories and sing songs with their children at least five times per week.	The literature on school readiness considers not only the preparation of the child, but also that of the family for the child's entry into school. Parents and other caregivers play a critical role in helping the child successfully transition to school by offering quality early learning experiences. Some of the activities listed here, such as sending the child to preschool and reading with the children, have a direct, positive relationship with school readiness. Compared to families in the county overall, families in Oakland were slightly less likely to engage in school readiness activities with their children.
3. What characteristics and experiences were most strongly associated with being ready for school?	Each of the following were positively associated with readiness in Oakland USD: - Family income - Mother's education - Child's age - Preschool attendance - English proficiency (not an English Learner) - Being a girl - Not coming to school tired or hungry	The factors listed here are found to influence school readiness in Alameda County and nationwide. In addition to the factors associated with readiness in Oakland specifically, county-wide analyses showed readiness to be associated with not having special needs and being regularly read to by a caregiver. Although some of the predictors are unmalleable traits (e.g., sex), they tell us who is in greatest need of support prior to kindergarten entry (e.g., boys, younger children, and English Learners), and what kinds of interventions (e.g., preschool) are necessary to address gaps in readiness.

Student Characteristics

Sample Description

The assessment data presented in this report were drawn from a non-representative sample of Oakland USD kindergarteners. As a result, we cannot draw inferences from the findings that apply to the district as a whole. Nevertheless, the results do provide key insights about the kindergarten students enrolled across this particular 17-school subset of the district.

The Oakland school readiness assessment sample included 379 kindergarteners across 17 schools. Based on the 2014-15 enrollment counts reported by the California Department of Education (official enrollment counts for 2015-16 are not yet available), the sample represented eight percent of all kindergarten students in the district. When compared to 2014-15 enrollment data, the 2015 school readiness sample included a slightly larger proportion of English Learners and slightly smaller proportions of Latino/Hispanic and African American students than the district at large. The district also had a higher proportion of English Learners and of Latino/Hispanic children than the overall county-wide school readiness study sample.

Figure 2.   **How SRA Sample Demographics Compare to District At Large**

Student Characteristics		2014-15 OUSD Enrollment (n=4,658)	Oakland SRA Sample (n=379)	Alameda County SRA Sample (n=1530)
	English Learners	42%	**44%**	40%
Race / Ethnicity	Latino/Hispanic (of any race)	43%	**51%**	43%
	Black/African American	25%	**20%**	8%
	Asian/Pac. Islander	13%	**6%**	23%
	White	12%	**10%**	12%
	Filipino	1%	**1%**	4%
	Multiple Race/Ethnicity	5%	**14%**	17%

Source: CDE Dataquest (http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/); 2015 KOF and PIF. Note: Latino/Hispanic students may be represented within the other racial categories, thus the percentages sum to more than 100%.

The average age of the students in the sample was **5.5 years old**. Ten percent of students had been diagnosed with a special need by a professional.[1] The age, gender, and special needs status of children in Oakland were similar to those of children in the full county sample.

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[1] Parents were asked whether the child had a special need that had been diagnosed by a professional, while teachers were asked whether the child had an IEP or designated special need.

Figure 3.   **Sampled Students' Sex, Age, and Special Needs Status**

Student Characteristics	Oakland	Alameda County
Boys	48%	50%
Girls	52%	50%
Age at kindergarten entry (Avg = 5.5 years)		
Under 5 years	1%	1%
Between 5.0 and 5.5 years	48%	46%
Older than 5.5 years	51%	53%
Has diagnosed special need(s)	10%	8%
Does not have special needs	90%	92%

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2015). Note: N=379 (Oakland); 1530 (Alameda County). Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Children in the district had spent time in a range of early care settings in the year prior to starting kindergarten. Three quarters of students had some sort of formal early learning experience such as a licensed preschool or child care center (60%) or Transitional Kindergarten (23%). Seven percent of students attended a licensed family child care home rather than a center-based preschool. Twenty percent did not attend any type of licensed preschool, child care, or Transitional Kindergarten. These proportions were similar to the county-wide sample.

Figure 4.   **Sampled Students' Early Care Experiences**

Type of Child Care Arrangements Before Kindergarten	Oakland	Alameda County
Licensed preschool or childcare center (e.g., Head Start, State Preschool, private – teacher or parent report)	60%	66%
Transitional Kindergarten (TK)	23%	22%
Attended either Preschool or TK	*75%*	*81%*
Licensed care in someone's home (teacher or parent report)	7%	5%
No TK, preschool, or licensed child care outside of home	20%	16%

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2015), Parent Information Form (2015).
Note: Sample sizes (from top to bottom): 351-379 (Oakland); 1405-1483 (Alameda County). Percentages sum to more than 100 because more than one source of care could be selected.

Of the 364 children (83% of the full Oakland sample) whose parents indicated their income and maternal educational attainment on the Parent Information Form, a majority (60%) came from families making under $35,000, but more than half of children's mothers had attended at least some college (Figure 5). As shown in the table below, families in Oakland had lower maternal educational attainment and incomes compared to families in the full county-wide sample.

Figure 5.   **Mother's Education and Family Income of Sampled Families**

Mother's Educational Attainment	Oakland	Alameda County
Less than high school	24%	15%
High school diploma	22%	16%
Some college	21%	21%
Associate's degree	9%	9%
Bachelor's degree	13%	22%
Advanced degree	11%	17%
Family Income	**Oakland**	**Alameda County**
Under $15,000	31%	15%
$15,000-$34,999	29%	23%
$35,000-$49,999	12%	12%
$50,000-$74,999	8%	12%
$75,000-$99,999	3%	8%
$100,000 or more	17%	30%

Source: Parent Information Form (2015).
Note: N=326 (Oakland); 1309 (Alameda County). Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

School Readiness of Oakland Students & Families

This section describes the readiness skills that students in the district possessed as they entered kindergarten in Fall 2015, as well as certain indicators of family support and engagement reported by parents. Kindergarten teachers rated students on 20 skills using a four-point scale that ranged from *Not Yet* (child does not yet demonstrate the skill, knowledge, or behavior; cannot perform without assistance) to *Proficient* (child demonstrates skill, knowledge, behavior consistently and competently; performs independently).

Basic Building Blocks of Readiness

Eighteen of the 20 readiness skills can be grouped according to three different categories of readiness, known as the *Basic Building Blocks*. The remaining two skills relate to fine and gross motor skills, which are key foundational skills and are included in a student's average overall readiness score, yet are not averaged as a separate building block.[2]

- *Self-Regulation* (basic emotion regulation and self-control skills needed in the classroom)

- *Social Expression* (skills related to interacting with adults and other children)

- *Kindergarten Academics* (skills such as writing, counting, and identifying shapes and colors)

Figure 6 (below) presents the average overall readiness score and average scores for the *Self-Regulation, Social Expression* and *Kindergarten Academics* Building Blocks in the district. Students' scores on the two *Motor Skills* items are presented in a following section. Overall, Oakland students' readiness levels were slightly lower than those of the rest of the county (3.22 in Oakland, 3.31 countywide weighted average). The overall score difference is due primarily to lower *Kindergarten Academics* in Oakland compared to the rest of the county. The differences within *Social Expression* were not statistically significant.

Figure 6.   **Students' Proficiency across Three Building Blocks of Readiness**
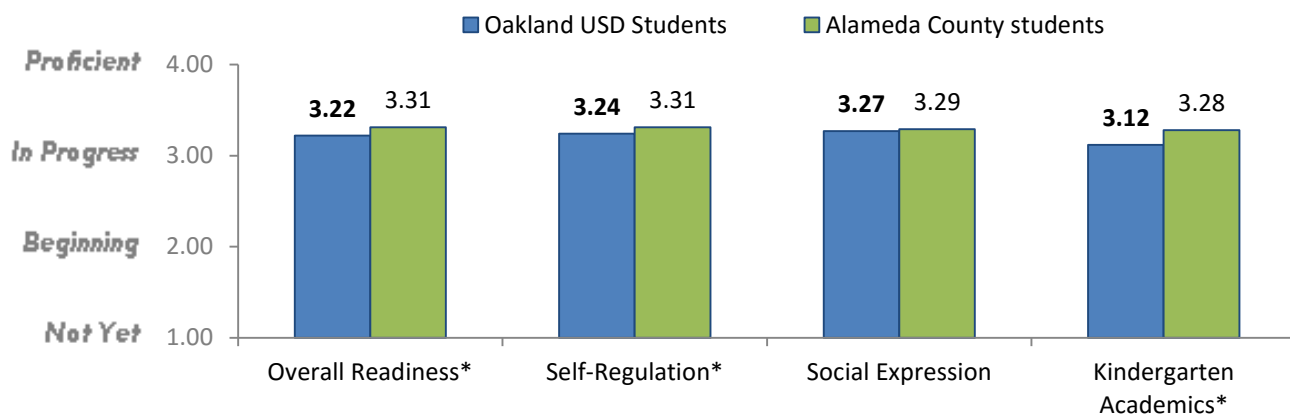
Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2015).
Note: Oakland N=379. Alameda County N=1,460, weighted by district and English Learner rates. *p<.05

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[2] Based on an internal review, ASR determined that a building block average score based on two items is too few to represent a valid motor skills construct. Though these skills are important, they are best represented within the overall readiness score, and not as a separate building block score. Furthermore, scores on these items have not been found to predict future academic achievement. Consequently, they were not considered in determining which children were "fully ready". Internal research indicated that the percent of students considered "fully ready" changes very little with or without motor skills.

Percent of Students Ready for School

Students were also sorted into three categories—Fully Ready, Partially Ready, or Not Ready—depending on their readiness scores in each Building Block.

➢ **FULLY READY**: Students who are socially and academically well prepared for school. Their average scores within three Building Blocks—*Kindergarten Academics, Self-Regulation,* and *Social Expression*—were between 3.25 and 4.00 (on a scale of 1-4).

➢ **PARTIALLY READY**: Students who had an average Building Block score of 3.25 or higher in one or two blocks, but not all three. Students in this group tend to have a wide variety of skill combinations. For example, a student may be proficient in academics and self-regulation but lacks social expression skills.

➢ **NOT READY**: Students who are not well prepared for school in any of the three areas. Their average scores within each of the *Kindergarten Academics, Self-Regulation,* and *Social Expression* domains were below 3.25.

Figure 7 (below) displays the percentage of students from Oakland and Alameda County that were classified into each of the three categories. The percentage of Oakland students "Fully Ready" in all domains was one percentage point lower than in the county overall (43% vs. 44%), but the percentage "Not Ready" was five percentage points higher in Oakland (25% vs 20%), a statistically significant difference.

Figure 7.   **Percentage of Students Fully Ready, Partially Ready and Not Ready for School**
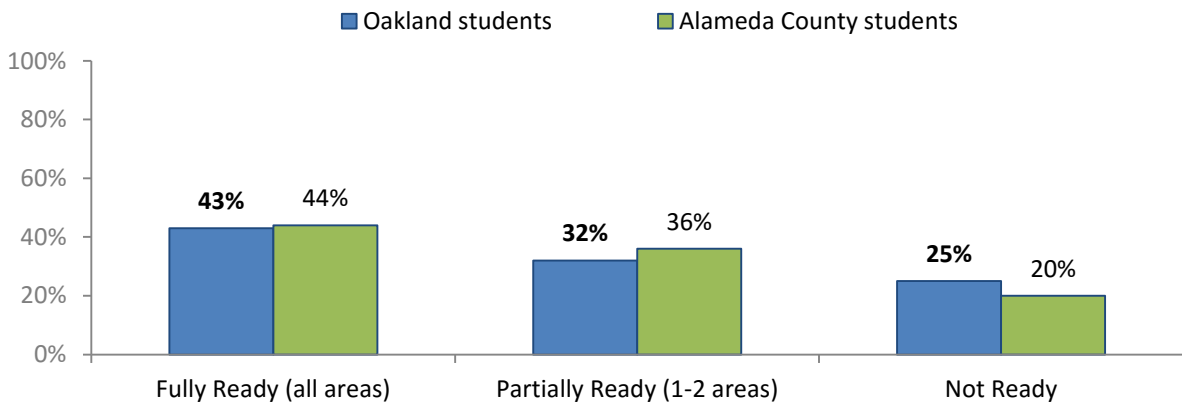
Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2015).
Note: Scores are based on 356 Oakland Unified students and 1,460 county-wide students weighted by district and EL status. The differences are statistically significant (p<.05) based on a chi-square test.

Percent Ready by Building Block

To illustrate the relative strengths of children in the Oakland sample, Figure 8 displays the percentage of students whose average scores were at least 3.25 within each Building Block, in comparison with the countywide percentages. Children in Oakland were ready in *Social Expression* and *Self-Regulation* at rates similar to the countywide sample, but a significantly smaller proportion of students in the district were ready on *Kindergarten Academics.*

Figure 8. **Percentage of Students Ready for School, by** *Building Block*
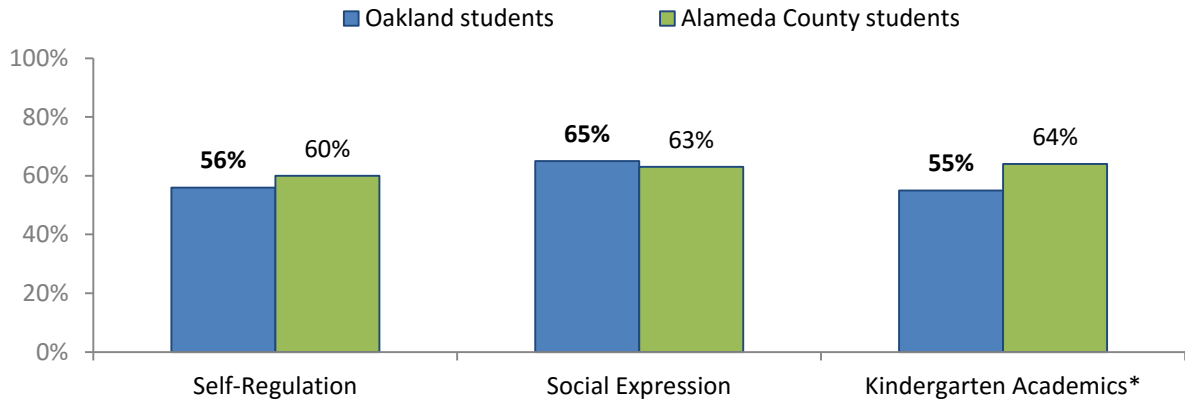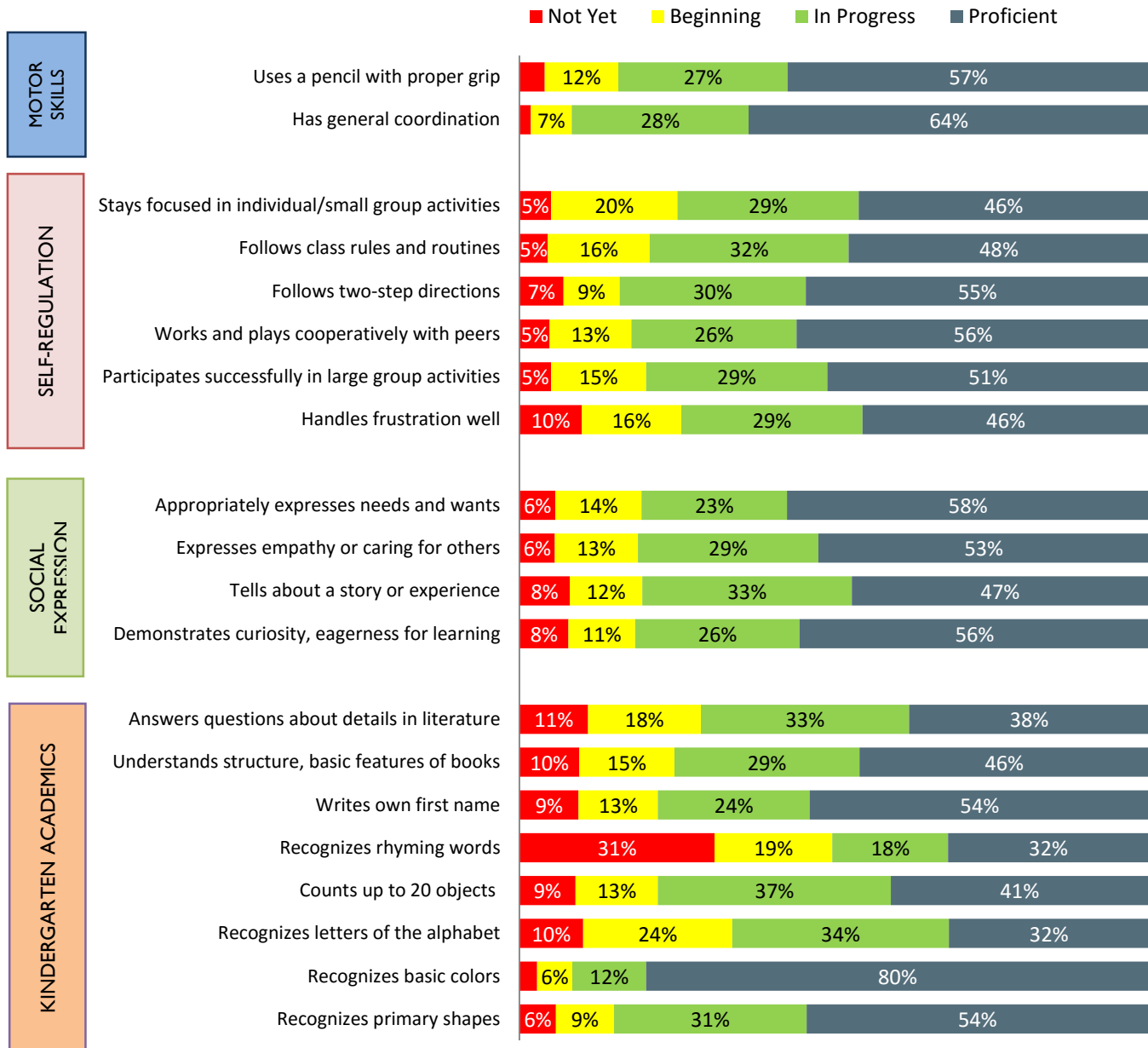

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2015).
Note: Scores are based on 379 Oakland Unified students and 1,460 county-wide students weighted by district and EL status.
*Statistically significant difference, p<.05

Student Performance on Each Readiness Skill

The proportion of students in the district receiving each rating for the 20 readiness skills is shown below. A high proportion of students were proficient in recognizing basic colors (80% proficient), while students appeared to have the least proficiency in recognizing rhyming words (32% proficient) and answering questions about details in literature (38% proficient).

Figure 9.   **Oakland Unified Students' Proficiency Levels Across 20 School Readiness Skills**

Legend: ■ Not Yet ■ Beginning ■ In Progress ■ Proficient

MOTOR SKILLS

Skill	Not Yet	Beginning	In Progress	Proficient
Uses a pencil with proper grip		12%	27%	57%
Has general coordination		7%	28%	64%

SELF-REGULATION

Skill	Not Yet	Beginning	In Progress	Proficient
Stays focused in individual/small group activities	5%	20%	29%	46%
Follows class rules and routines	5%	16%	32%	48%
Follows two-step directions	7%	9%	30%	55%
Works and plays cooperatively with peers	5%	13%	26%	56%
Participates successfully in large group activities	5%	15%	29%	51%
Handles frustration well	10%	16%	29%	46%

SOCIAL EXPRESSION

Skill	Not Yet	Beginning	In Progress	Proficient
Appropriately expresses needs and wants	6%	14%	23%	58%
Expresses empathy or caring for others	6%	13%	29%	53%
Tells about a story or experience	8%	12%	33%	47%
Demonstrates curiosity, eagerness for learning	8%	11%	26%	56%

KINDERGARTEN ACADEMICS

Skill	Not Yet	Beginning	In Progress	Proficient
Answers questions about details in literature	11%	18%	33%	38%
Understands structure, basic features of books	10%	15%	29%	46%
Writes own first name	9%	13%	24%	54%
Recognizes rhyming words	31%	19%	18%	32%
Counts up to 20 objects	9%	13%	37%	41%
Recognizes letters of the alphabet	10%	24%	34%	32%
Recognizes basic colors		6%	12%	80%
Recognizes primary shapes	6%	9%	31%	54%

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2015). N=379. Note: Scores range from 1 (Not yet) to 4 (Proficient). Proportions of less than 5% are not labeled.
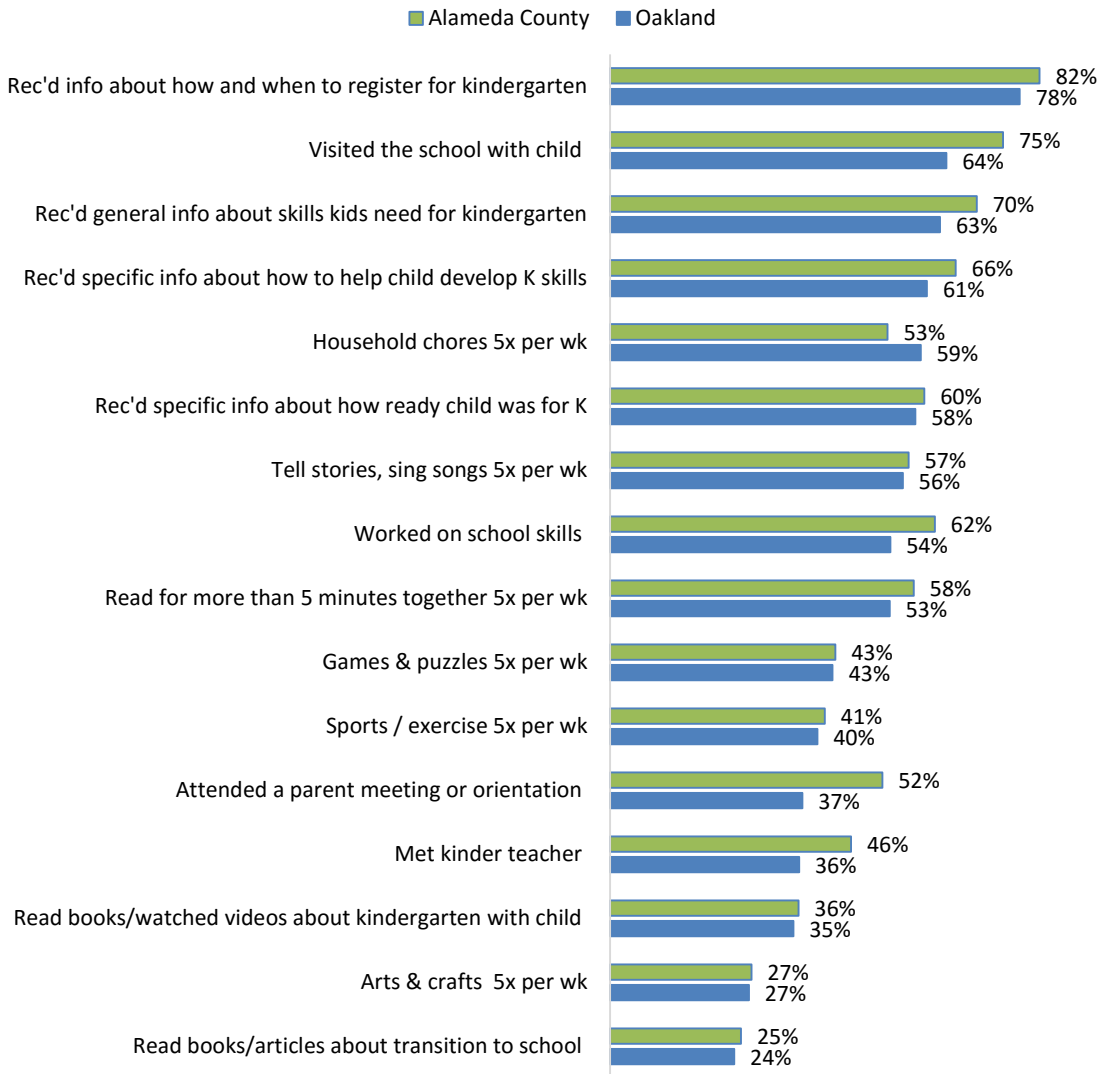
Family Support and Engagement Indicators

An abundance of research indicates that the family is the primary force in preparing children for school and life. The quality and degree of their interactions, and specific actions taken to nurture and prepare children for school, play a crucial role in any child's development. Some have been found to have a direct correlation with school readiness, as well, including reading and singing songs or telling stories with the child, and working on school skills.

To gain an understanding of the myriad ways that families may have been engaged in specific activities support their children's readiness for school, this school readiness assessment included a survey of parents conducted during the first month of school. The survey included items such as reading or telling stories with their children, visiting the school before the school year begins, and receiving general information about kindergarten.

The chart below lists the percentage of parents that reported receiving readiness information and engaging in specific activities to support their children's readiness for school (Figure 10). At least 58 percent of Oakland parents reported receiving information about preparing for kindergarten, the most common of which was information about how and when to register for school (78%).

In terms of actions parents took to help their child prepare for the beginning of school, the most common activity was visiting the school with their child before the school year began (64%). In contrast, just over half (54%) reported working on school skills with their child or reading with their child at least five times per week (53%). Just over one third attended a parent meeting or orientation, or met their child's kindergarten teacher. Several activities were somewhat less common among families in Oakland compared to families in Alameda County overall. These included attending a parent meeting or orientation, receiving various types of readiness information, visiting the school with the child, meeting the child's kindergarten teacher, working on school skills, and reading together.

Figure 10.   **Family Support and Engagement Indicators**

Legend: ■ Alameda County   ■ Oakland

Indicator	Alameda County	Oakland
Rec'd info about how and when to register for kindergarten	82%	78%
Visited the school with child	75%	64%
Rec'd general info about skills kids need for kindergarten	70%	63%
Rec'd specific info about how to help child develop K skills	66%	61%
Household chores 5x per wk	53%	59%
Rec'd specific info about how ready child was for K	60%	58%
Tell stories, sing songs 5x per wk	57%	56%
Worked on school skills	62%	54%
Read for more than 5 minutes together 5x per wk	58%	53%
Games & puzzles 5x per wk	43%	43%
Sports / exercise 5x per wk	41%	40%
Attended a parent meeting or orientation	52%	37%
Met kinder teacher	46%	36%
Read books/watched videos about kindergarten with child	36%	35%
Arts & crafts 5x per wk	27%	27%
Read books/articles about transition to school	25%	24%

Source: Parent Information Form (2015). N=346 (Oakland); 1214-1369 (Alameda County).

## Readiness Levels by Child and Family Background and Experiences

In 2015, several child and family traits and experiences strongly predicted higher readiness scores or being Fully Ready in <u>Alameda County overall</u>[3]:

- Coming from a higher SES family (mother has more than a high school education and/or family earns at least $35,000 per year)

- Being a girl

- Being older

- Being proficient in English

- Not coming to school hungry or tired

- Not having a special need

- Attending licensed preschool or TK in the prior year

- Being read to at least 5 times per week

All of these factors were also predictive of readiness in the <u>Oakland Unified sample specifically</u>. The charts below illustrate how differences in Oakland children's socioeconomic backgrounds and family experiences were associated with differences in readiness. The blue bars indicate the percentage of students within each category who were fully ready across all areas of readiness; the red bars indicate the percentage of students not ready in any of the three areas; and the green line represents the average readiness score on the 1-4 scale.[4]

As Figure 11 shows, children whose mothers had more education and whose families had relatively higher incomes were more ready for school than children whose families were less advantaged.

Figure 11.　　**Readiness by Family Income and Mother's Education**
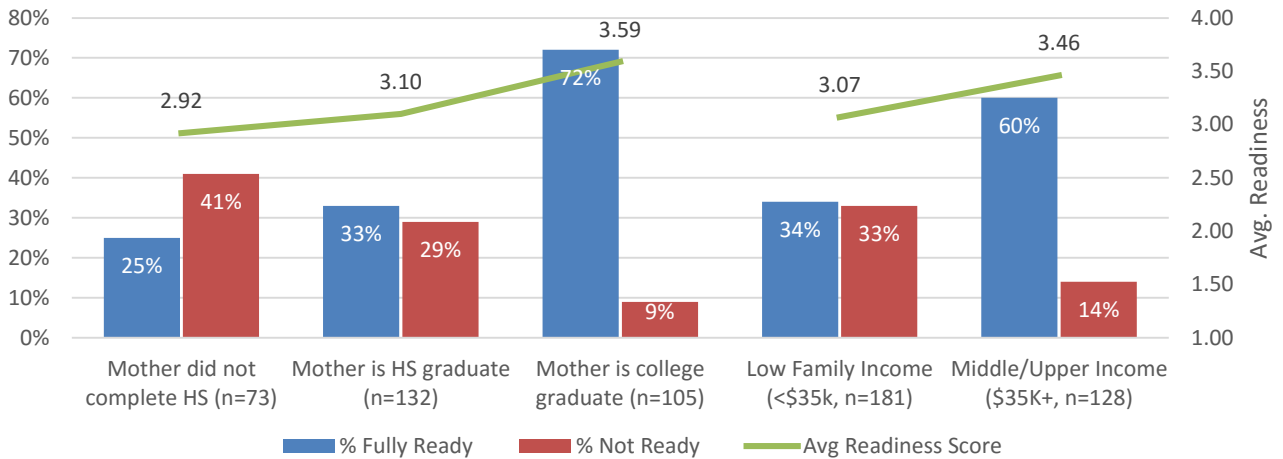
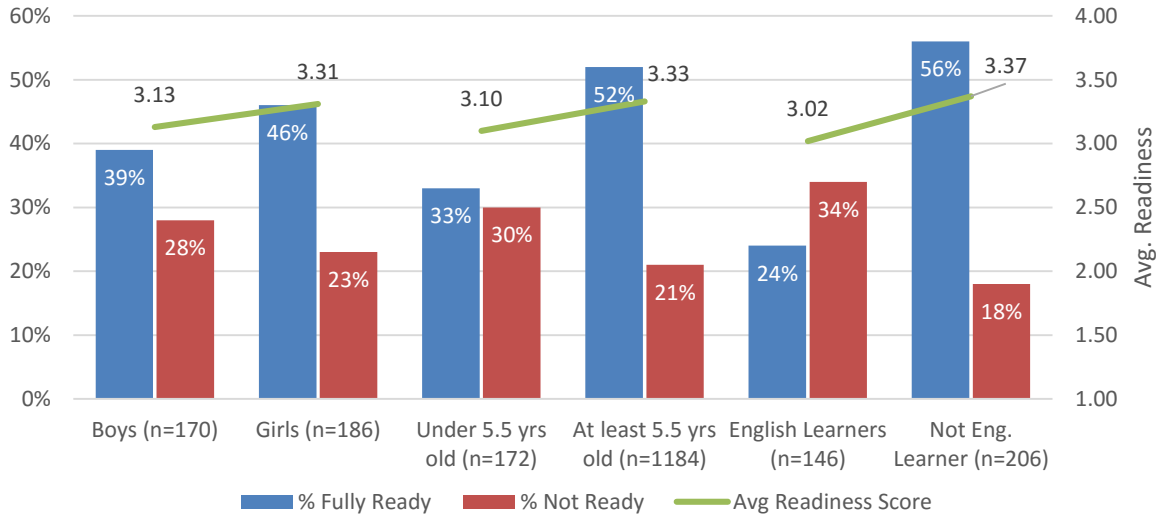Source: KOF (2015), PIF (2015).
Note: Mean differences were statistically significant (p<.05) based on mother's education and family income.

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[3] These findings are based on multiple regression models controlling for age, gender, having a special need, being an English Learner, family income, mother's education, race/ethnicity, preschool attendance, teacher's rating of child's hunger/tiredness, and parent's reported frequency of reading to their child. See the county-wide report for more details.
[4] Percentages and means in figures 11-14 are "raw" figures (i.e., they do not control for other factors).

Figure 12 displays three other attributes commonly associated with readiness. As is the case with most studies of school readiness, girls were slightly more ready than boys, older children more ready than younger children, and English-proficient children were more ready than English Learners.
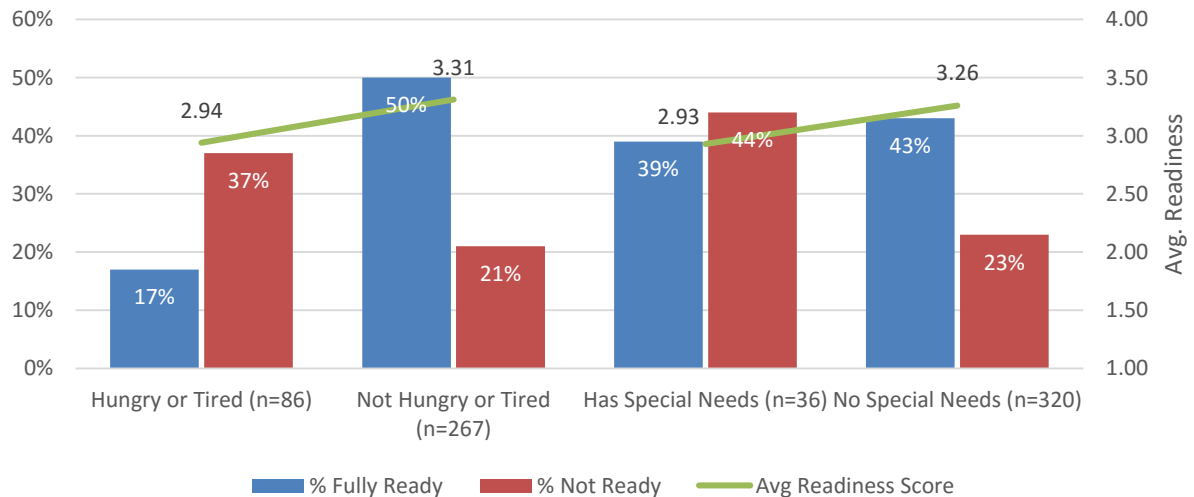
Figure 12.   **Readiness by Sex, Age, and EL Status**

Source: KOF (2015), PIF (2015).
Note: Mean differences were statistically significant (p<.05) based on sex, age, and EL status.

Children who came to school hungry or tired at least occasionally, and children with special needs, were less likely to be ready for school than those who were not tired, hungry, nor had special needs.

Figure 13.   **Readiness by Hunger/Tiredness and Special Needs**

Source: KOF (2015), PIF (2015).
Note: Mean differences were statistically significant (p<.05) based on hungry/tired and special needs status.

As Figure 14 shows, children who attended preschool (or TK) were more ready for school than other children. Similarly, children whose parents read with them at least five times per week were more ready than those whose parents did not.
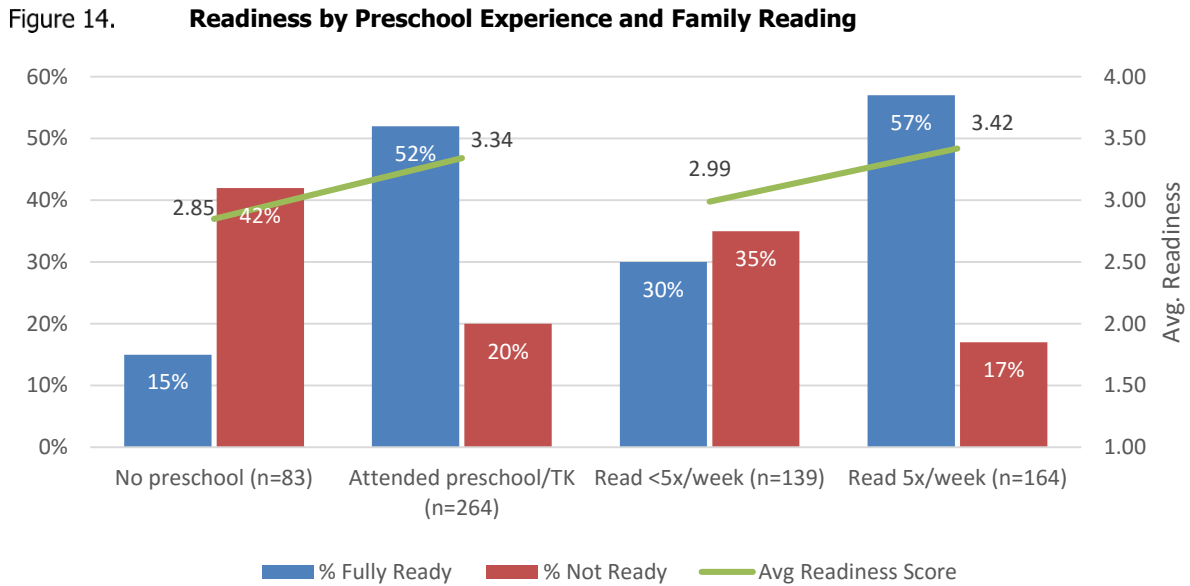
Figure 14.   **Readiness by Preschool Experience and Family Reading**

Source: KOF (2015), PIF (2015).
Note: Mean differences were statistically significant (p<.05) based on preschool experience and reading time.