



# SCHOOL READINESS in Alameda County

RESULTS OF THE FALL  
2011 ASSESSMENT

District Report  
FREMONT UNIFIED  
SCHOOL DISTRICT

RESEARCH STUDY FUNDED BY:

*Thomas J. Long*  
FOUNDATION



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- First 5 staff members who helped with designing and implementing the 2011 Alameda County school readiness assessment project, including Melissa Luc, Chris Hwang, Carla Keener, Erin Hill Freschi, and Janis Burger.

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

Schools	Teachers
Brier	Krista Claasen
Cabrillo	Christine Moore
	Zareena Javeed
	Sharma Mala
E.M. Grimmer	Nishone Weymouth
	Maria Romo
John Blacow	Theresa Tolbertson
	Mary Reyna

# Study Summary

## Background

In 2011, First 5 Alameda County commissioned an assessment of the school readiness levels of new kindergarten students for the fourth consecutive year. Participating districts in the 2011 assessment included Castro Valley, Fremont, Hayward, Livermore Joint, New Haven, Oakland, Pleasanton, San Lorenzo, and San Leandro Unified School Districts. Among the Fremont Unified (FUSD) participants, eight teachers from four different schools took part in the assessment.

The assessment included four measurement instruments completed by teachers and parents of entering kindergarten students. Teachers indicated each of their students' proficiency levels on 24 readiness skills and they reported how smoothly students had transitioned into kindergarten. Parents completed a survey that asked them to provide information about children's early care and family environments, as well as basic demographic and background information. Finally, teachers completed a survey about their beliefs about the skills children need for school. Please note that the information presented in this report describes the students and families assessed; findings might not be the same for students in the district who were not part of this study.

## Findings

Research Question	Conclusion	Data Highlights
1. Are FUSD children ready for school?	<b>Yes.</b>  <b>Overall readiness score: 3.28</b>	For each individual readiness skill, children were scored on a scale from <i>Not yet</i> (1) to <i>Proficient</i> (4). Average scores for each of 4 <i>Basic Building Blocks</i> of readiness range from 1 to 4.  FUSD students' scores were generally in line with those of students district-wide, with Fremont students slightly exceeding their county-wide peers in <i>Self-Regulation</i> skills. Their readiness levels were highest in <i>Self-Care &amp; Motor Skills</i> , and they were lowest in <i>Kindergarten Academics</i> .
2. Are FUSD students meeting their teachers' expectations for readiness at kindergarten entry?	<b>In some areas.</b>  <b>58% at/above expected levels of proficiency</b>	On their teacher survey, FUSD teachers indicated the level of proficiency they thought students should have to be "school ready" at kindergarten entry.  More than half of FUSD students (58%) were meeting or exceeding teachers' expected proficiency levels for overall readiness. On <i>Social Expression</i> , 68 percent of students were at or above teachers' expected proficiency levels. The biggest gap between teacher expectations and students' skills was in <i>Self-Regulation</i> , where 49 percent of students met or exceeded their teachers' expectations. Teachers' expectations were somewhat higher in this district than is typically seen.
3. What skills do FUSD teachers think are:  Most important for kindergarten entry?  Easiest to impact?  Most time-consuming?	<b>Most important:</b> Self-help/self-care; staying focused  <b>Easiest to impact:</b> Recognizing letters; using manipulatives  <b>Spend the most time:</b> Staying focused	Teachers selected 5 readiness skills that they felt were: (1) most important to have at kindergarten entry; (2) easiest to impact during the school year; and (3) where they spent the most time during the school year.  <i>Self-Care &amp; Motor Skills</i> and <i>Self-Regulation</i> skills were chosen by teachers as the most important to have at school entry. Skills related to <i>Kindergarten Academics</i> were most likely to be selected as being the easiest to impact, and skills related to <i>Self-Regulation</i> and <i>Kindergarten Academics</i> were identified as requiring the most time during the kindergarten school year.

## Study Overview

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Children's school readiness levels at kindergarten entry have been increasingly recognized as playing an important role in children's later success in school. In late 2000, Applied Survey Research (ASR) was commissioned to develop research materials and a protocol to conduct assessments of Bay Area students' levels of readiness for school. The project resulted in the creation of a new tool to measure school readiness, which balanced and met two (sometimes competing) needs: (1) the need for a high-quality, valid, and reliable instrument to measure readiness levels; and (2) the need for a tool that was simultaneously "teacher-friendly" and sensitive to the measurement challenges inherent in a typical kindergarten classroom setting.

The *Kindergarten Observation Form (KOF)* was first implemented in San Mateo County in 2001, and since that initial assessment, readiness assessments have also been conducted in Santa Clara County, Lake County (Illinois), San Francisco County, Marin County, Santa Cruz County, San Benito County, Del Norte County, and throughout the network of providers in the Los Angeles Unified Preschool (LAUP). To date, approximately 30,000 students have been measured using the *KOF*.

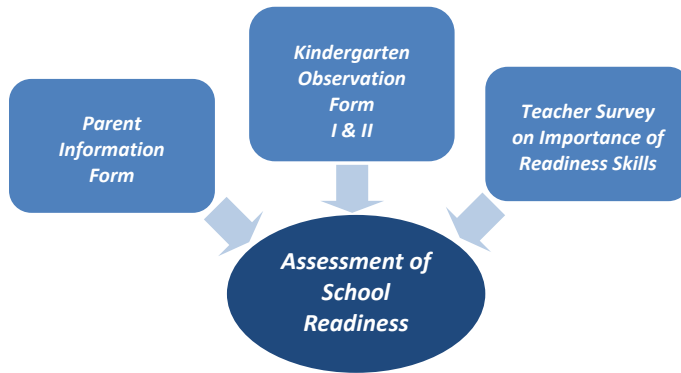
In Fall 2008, First 5 Alameda County (F5AC) commissioned ASR to conduct its first assessment of the school readiness levels of new kindergarten students in a small set of three school districts in Alameda County. Assessments were again conducted in 2009, 2010, and 2011, with additional schools and districts taking part in each subsequent study.<sup>1</sup> Participants in the 2011 assessment included students from nine districts: Castro Valley, Fremont, Hayward, Livermore Joint, New Haven, Oakland, Pleasanton, San Lorenzo, and San Leandro Unified School Districts. Participating kindergarten teachers were trained to conduct the readiness assessment, which included completion of the following forms:

- The *Kindergarten Observation Form (I and II)*, in which teachers assess children's readiness skills and the smoothness of their transition to kindergarten, respectively;
- A *Parent Information Form (PIF)*, which parents complete to provide information about children's early care and education experiences prior to kindergarten, family environments, and basic demographic and socioeconomic information; and
- The *Teacher Survey on Importance of Readiness Skills*, which measures teachers' beliefs about readiness and the skills required for successful transition to kindergarten.

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<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive description of the 2011 School Readiness Assessment method and results, please see the forthcoming report "School Readiness in Alameda County: Results of the Fall 2011 Assessment."

**Figure 2. Sources of Information to Assess the Readiness of Incoming Kindergarten Students**



This short report summarizes key Fall 2011 findings for participating teachers, students, and families in the Fremont Unified School District. A summary of the completion metrics for the district follows. Seventy-seven percent of parents agreed to have their child take part in the study, and of those, 82 percent also returned a parent survey. In all, Fremont Unified students represented 156 of the 1,597 participants (10%) in the county-wide sample.

**Figure 3. Completion Metrics – Alameda County School Readiness Assessment**

Data	Fremont Unified sample	Alameda County sample (9 districts)
Number of schools participating in 2011 school readiness assessment	4	41
Number of participating classrooms	8	88
Number of children in these classrooms	203	2,072
Number of KOFs returned	156	1,597
Parent consent rate	77%	77%
Number of PIFs that were matched to a KOF	128	1,336
Parent PIF response rate (# PIFs received/ # consents)	82%	83%

The sections that follow include a brief summary of who the Fremont Unified students participating in the assessment were, what their school readiness levels were found to be, and what the participating teachers believed about school readiness. This summary also includes information from the county-wide study describing the child and family factors that were found to have the strongest associations with high levels of readiness at kindergarten entry.

While reading through this summary, it is important to keep in mind that schools and teachers participated in the readiness study voluntarily, which means that the information presented in this report describes only the students and families assessed. **As a result, although the data may hint at the broader picture of readiness district-wide, the findings cannot be extrapolated to the district-level population as a whole.**

# Student Characteristics

Fifty-six percent of participants in the Fremont Unified School District Fall 2011 readiness assessment were girls and 44 percent were boys. The average age of students was 5.28 years old (just over 5 years and 3 months). Hispanic/Latino students were the largest racial/ethnic group in the sample, comprising 44 percent of students, followed by Asian students (24% of the sample). Three percent of students were identified as having special needs; another 4 percent of students were suspected to have a special need by their teacher or parent, but had not been formally diagnosed as having special needs.

**Figure 4. Students' Sex, Age, Race/Ethnicity, and Special Needs**

Student Characteristics	Percent of students
Sex	
Boys	44%
Girls	56%
Age at kindergarten entry	
Between 4 1/2 and less than 5	24%
At least 5 and less than 5 1/2	46%
At least 5 1/2 and less than 6	31%
6 and older	0%
Race/ethnicity	
Hispanic/Latino	44%
Asian	24%
Caucasian	14%
Multi-racial	10%
Filipino	4%
African American	3%
Pacific Islander	1%
Special needs status	
Has special needs	3%
Teacher or parent suspects an as-yet-undiagnosed special need	4%
Does not have special needs	93%

Source: *Kindergarten Observation Form I* (2011).

Note: Sample size = 156, 156, 153, 155, respectively. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.



Teachers from four schools in the Fremont Unified School District took part in the study. Of the sampled students in these four schools, E.M. Grimmer had a much higher population of Hispanic/Latino students (57%) than did the other three schools. Brier and Cabrillo had a larger Asian population among the sampled students that did E.M. Grimmer and John Blacow.<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 5. Students' Race/Ethnicity by School**

Race/Ethnicity	School			
	Brier	Cabrillo	E.M. Grimmer	John Blacow
Hispanic/Latino	40%	41%	57%	37%
African American	7%	3%	0%	3%
Caucasian	7%	10%	11%	26%
Filipino	7%	3%	0%	9%
Multi-racial	0%	9%	18%	6%
Asian	40%	34%	11%	17%
Pacific Islander	0%	0%	2%	3%

Source: *Kindergarten Observation Form I* (2011).

Note: Sample size = 15, 59, 44, 35, respectively. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Fifty-six percent of Fremont Unified students in the sample were English Learners. As Figure 6 shows, 54 percent of students spoke English as their preferred language, and Spanish was the preferred language of 32 percent of the students.

**Figure 6. Student Language Variables**

Children's Language	Percent
English Learners	56%
Not English Learner	44%
Preferred language	
English	54%
Spanish	32%
Chinese/Mandarin/Cantonese	5%
Punjabi or Hindi	3%
Filipino or Tagalog	1%
Farsi or Dari	<1%
Vietnamese	<1%
Other	4%

Source: *Kindergarten Observation Form I* (2011).

Note: Sample size = 155, 156. Percentages may not sum to 100 because more than one preferred language could have been chosen.

<sup>2</sup> Please keep in mind that these school-level data points (as well as all data in this report) reflect the sampled students only, and may not reflect the schools' student populations as a whole

When broken down by school, among the sampled students E.M. Grimmer had the highest percentage of English Learners (67%), followed by Brier (64%).

**Figure 7. English Learner Status by School**

	School			
	Brier	Cabrillo	E.M. Grimmer	John Blacow
English Learner	64%	54%	67%	43%
Not English Learner	36%	46%	33%	57%

Source: *Kindergarten Observation Form I* (2011).

Note: Sample size =14, 61, 45, 35, respectively. 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. For 66 percent of students, a parent served as the child’s usual source of child care (either alone or in combination with other child care sources). A large percentage of students (71%) had attended a licensed child care center or preschool, including Head Start, state-funded, private, or other licensed program.

**Figure 8. Students’ Early Care Experiences**

Type of Child Care Arrangements	Percent of students
Parent provided usual child care	66%
Relative or neighbor	18%
Babysitter or nanny	7%
Licensed care in someone’s home (teacher or parent report)	2%
Licensed preschool or childcare center (e.g., Head Start, State Preschool, private – teacher or parent report)	71%

Source: *Kindergarten Observation Form I* and *Parent Information Form* (2011).

Note: Percentages are based on the following sample size: 123. Percentages sum to more than 100 because more than one source of care could be selected.

## School Readiness of Fremont Unified Students

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This section describes the readiness skills that students in Fremont Unified School District possessed as they entered kindergarten in Fall 2011. Students' skills are presented for each of the 24 readiness skills and according to two approaches that classify the skills into broader readiness dimensions, as follows<sup>3</sup>:

(1) skill groupings that align with the *National Education Goals Panel (NEGP)*, which has defined five dimensions of development and skills that are critical to a child's readiness for school: *Physical Well-Being & Motor Development*, *Social & Emotional Development*, *Approaches Toward Learning*, *Communication and Language Usage*, and *Cognition & General Knowledge*. In different communities throughout the country, these *NEGP* dimensions of readiness have become the foundation for the development of school readiness measurement tools attempting to quantify children's school readiness.

(2) skill groupings that correspond to four skill dimensions called the *Basic Building Blocks* of readiness, which have been defined by patterns of associations between skills that have been consistently observed across administrations of the *Kindergarten Observation Form*.

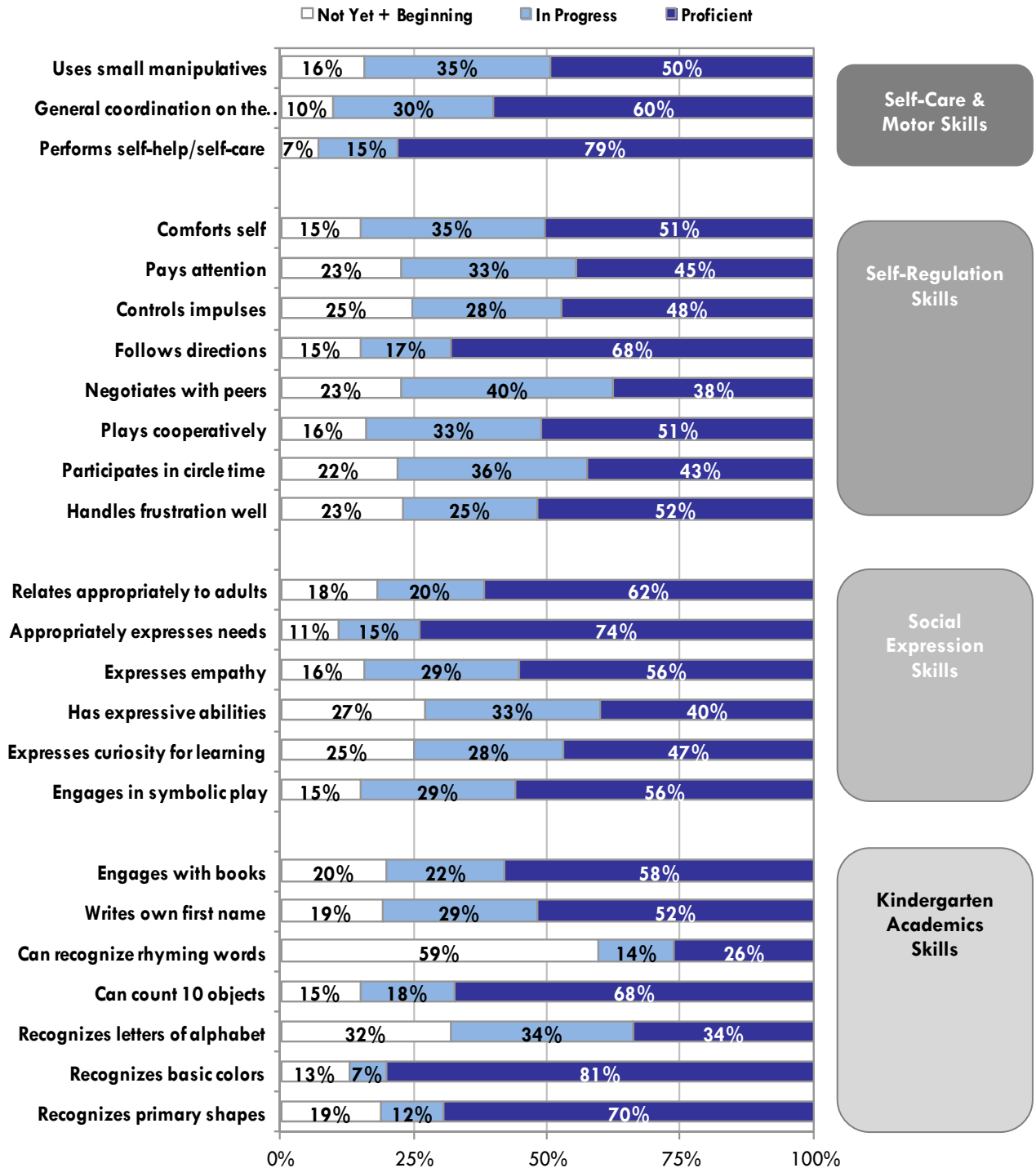
In addition, students' skills are presented in the context of what readiness levels teachers believe are necessary for successful transition into kindergarten. Finally, recognizing that there are identifiable readiness patterns of strengths and needs among entering kindergarten students, four "readiness portraits" are described.

Students' scores on the 24 readiness skills are shown in Figure 9 that follows.

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<sup>3</sup> A "crosswalk" of how the 24 skills map onto each of the two readiness classifications is included as Appendix 1.

Figure 9. Students' Proficiency Levels Across 24 School Readiness Skills



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form I (2011).

Note: Percentages are based on 128-156 students. Don't know/ Not observed responses are not included. Percentages less than 5% are not labeled. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Students’ top five readiness strengths and challenges are presented below. Fremont Unified students came into school strongest on skills related to performing basic self-help and self-care tasks (*Self-Care & Motor Skills*), recognizing basic colors and counting 10 objects (*Kindergarten Academics*), and appropriately expressing needs (*Social Expression*). The skills they were still developing included recognizing rhyming words and letters, as well as *Social Expression* and *Self-Regulation* skills.

**Figure 10. Students’ Top Five Readiness Strengths**

Top five strengths	Basic Building Block	Students’ average score (out of four possible)
1. Performs basic self-help/self-care tasks	Self-Care & Motor Skills	3.72
2. Recognizes basic colors	Kindergarten Academics	3.64
3. Appropriately expresses needs and wants	Social Expression	3.62
4. Follows one- to two-step directions	Self Regulation	3.52
5. Counts 10 objects correctly	Kindergarten Academics	3.49

Source: *Kindergarten Observation Form I* (2011).

Note: Means can range from 1 to 4. Scale points are as follows: 1=not yet, 2=beginning, 3=in progress, 4=proficient. Scores are based on 128-155 students.

**Figure 11. Students’ Top Five Readiness Challenges**

Top five challenges	Basic Building Blocks	Students’ average score (out of four possible)
1. Recognizes rhyming words	Kindergarten Academics	2.29
2. Recognizes letters of the alphabet	Kindergarten Academics	2.91
3. Has expressive abilities	Social Expression	3.01
4. Negotiates with peers to resolve social conflicts	Self-Regulation	3.08
5. Expresses curiosity and eagerness for learning	Social Expression	3.11

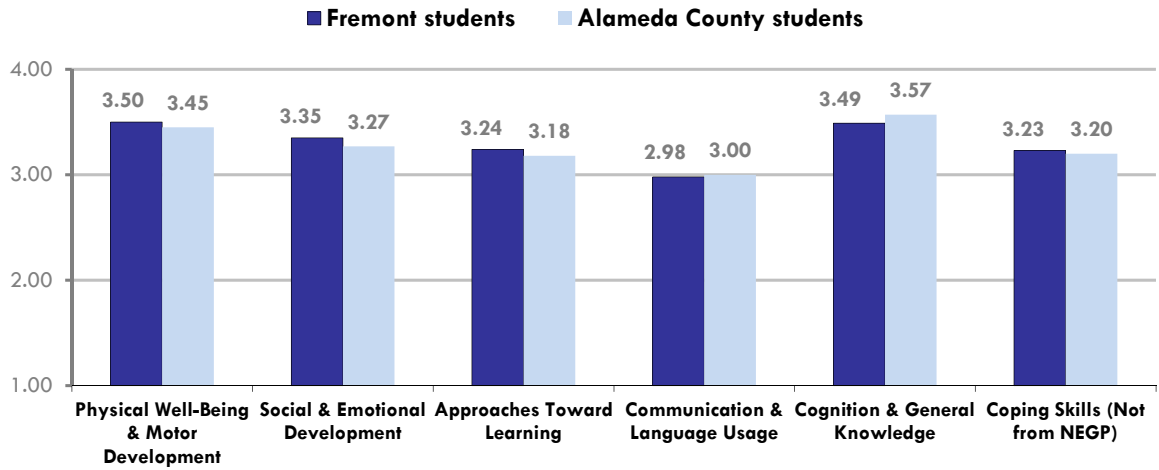
Source: *Kindergarten Observation Form I* (2011).

Note: Means can range from 1 to 4. Scale points are as follows: 1=not yet, 2=beginning, 3=in progress, 4=proficient. Scores are based on 148-154 students.

The 24 readiness skills can be further grouped according to different categories of readiness. Two of the ways that readiness dimensions have been described are presented here, including: (1) five developmental domains identified by *NEGP*; and (2) a data-driven sorting of readiness skills, called the *Basic Building Blocks* of readiness.

In Figure 12, Fremont Unified students’ readiness scores are displayed according to five *NEGP* categories, with an additional category (not part of the *NEGP*) comprising a “coping skills” dimension. As the figure shows, Fremont Unified students were strong in most domains of readiness, with particular strengths in *Cognition & General Knowledge*.

**Figure 12. Students' Proficiency across the Five *NEGP* Readiness Dimensions**



Source: *Kindergarten Observation Form I* (2011).

Note: Means can range from 1 to 4. Scale points are as follows: 1=not yet, 2=beginning, 3=in progress, 4=proficient. Scores are based on 155-156 Fremont Unified students and 1,586-1,595 county-wide students.

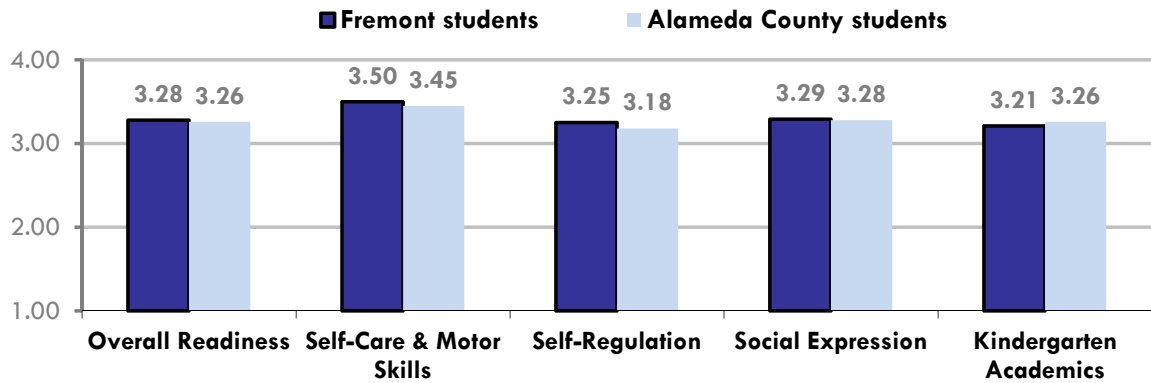
Statistical exploration of children's performance across 24 readiness skills revealed that skills reliably sorted into an alternate readiness skills framework, which has been labeled the four *Basic Building Blocks* of readiness:<sup>4</sup>

- *Self-Care & Motor Skills*
- *Social Expression*
- *Self-Regulation*
- *Kindergarten Academics*

Figure 13 that follows shows students' readiness according to the four *Basic Building Blocks* of readiness. Readiness levels among Fremont Unified students were highest in *Self-Care & Motor Skills*, and they were lowest in *Kindergarten Academics*.

<sup>4</sup> A procedure called factor analysis is used to determine what readiness dimensions are represented by the data.

**Figure 13. Students' Proficiency across Four *Basic Building Blocks* of Readiness**

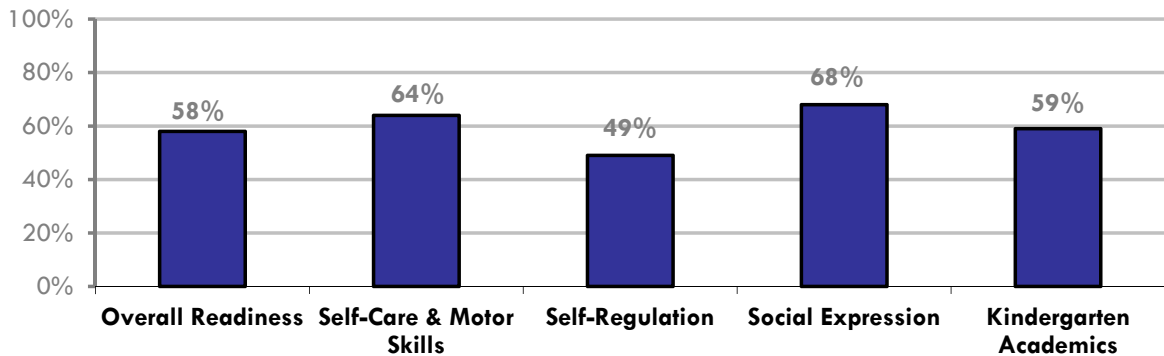


Note: Means can range from 1 to 4. Scale points are as follows: 1=not yet, 2=beginning, 3=in progress, 4=proficient. Scores are based on 156 Fremont Unified students and 1,541-1,595 county-wide students.

Although knowing these readiness levels is instructive for understanding relative strengths and needs of students – as well as how Fremont Unified students compare with other students in the county – they do not address the question of how ready is “ready enough” for school. To provide some context for understanding students’ readiness levels, as part of the teacher survey they completed, participating Fremont Unified teachers were asked to indicate the level of proficiency that they believed children should have on each of the 24 assessed skills in order to be school-ready. (More information on the results of those surveys can be found in the section that follows.) These ratings were compiled for the four *Basic Building Blocks* readiness dimensions, and the percentage of children who met or exceeded those levels of proficiency was computed. The figure that follows presents the percentage of students who met or exceeded the average levels of readiness that Fremont Unified teachers believed they should have to be ready for school.

Overall, 58 percent of the students assessed in the Fremont Unified classrooms were at or above the readiness levels their teachers thought they should have at kindergarten entry. The largest percentage of students were prepared (according to teachers’ expectations) on *Social Expression* skills; the largest gap in actual versus desired levels of readiness occurred in *Self-Regulation* skills.

**Figure 14. Percentage of Children Meeting or Exceeding the Readiness Levels Teachers Felt They Needed for a Successful Transition**



Source: *Kindergarten Observation Form I* (2011).

Note: Percentages are based on 155-156 Fremont students. Percentages are based on students meeting the average expectations of all Fremont teachers, rather than each student’s own teacher.

Children also exhibited different patterns of readiness strengths and challenges. For a more detailed look at different patterns of readiness, children were sorted into one of four *Readiness Portraits* based on their pattern of proficiency across the readiness skills.<sup>5</sup> The dark shading in Figure 15 shows where children in each of the four portraits are at or near proficiency on the associated skills.

Figure 15. Four Readiness Portraits

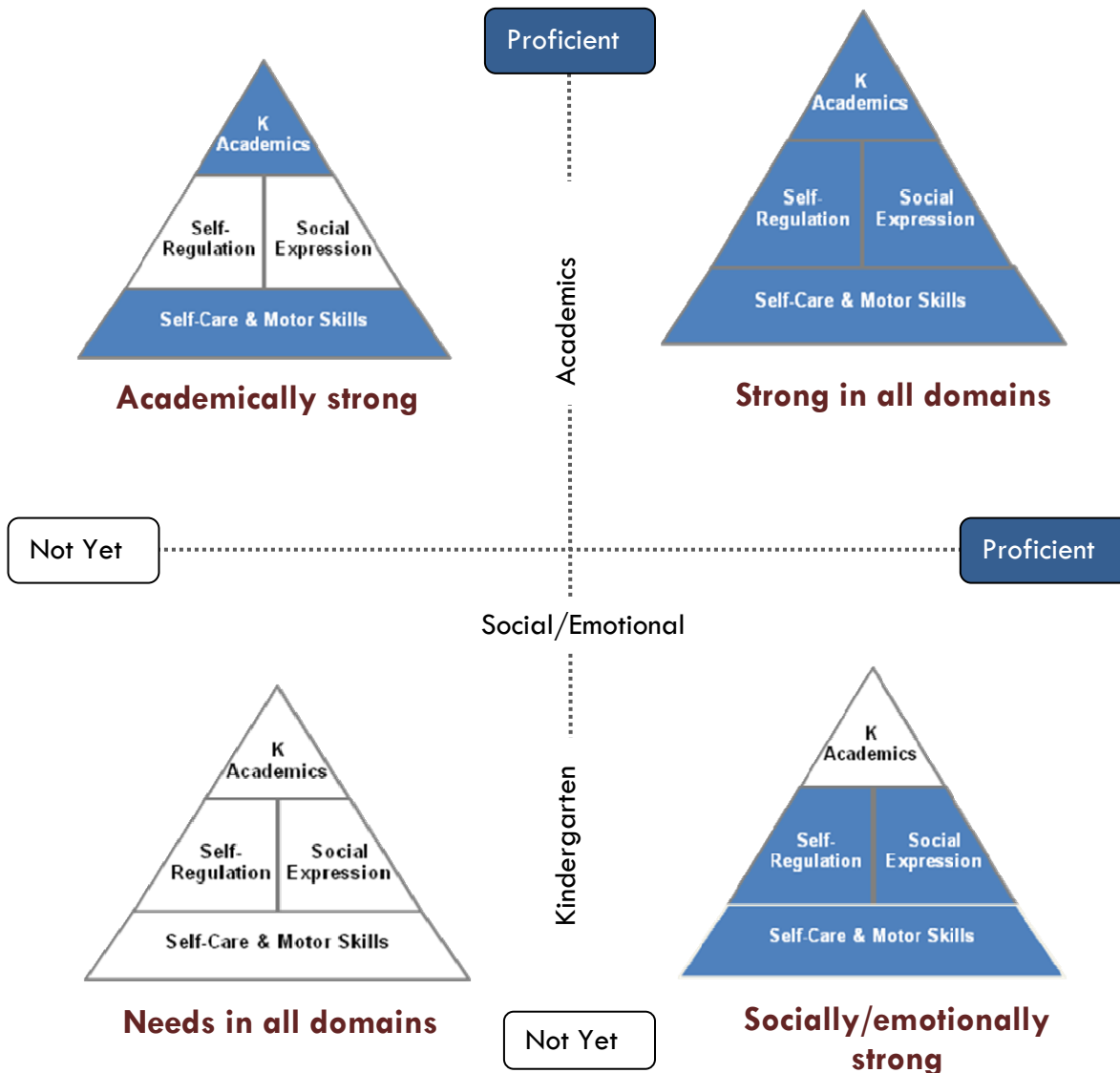


Figure 16 on the following page shows the percentage of Fremont Unified and county-wide students who sorted into each of the four *Readiness Portraits*.

- *Strong in all domains*: Over half (57%) of the assessed Fremont Unified students entered kindergarten classrooms at or near proficiency across all four *Basic Building Blocks* of

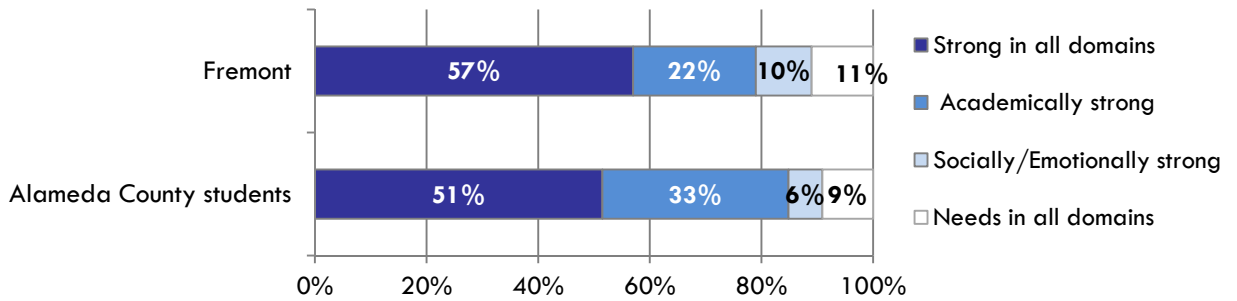
<sup>5</sup> Children were sorted into one of the four *Readiness Portraits* via a data-driven technique called cluster analysis.



readiness (corresponding to the pattern of readiness displayed in the upper right quadrant of Figure 15).

- *Needs in all domains:* Eleven percent of students had significant readiness needs across all four skill domains. These students had not yet learned – or were just beginning to learn – almost all of the 24 readiness skills (lower left quadrant of Figure 15).
- *Academically strong:* Consistent with the readiness pattern shown in the upper left of Figure 15, 22 percent of Fremont Unified students entering kindergarten had strong skills in their early academics (and *Self-Care & Motor Skills*) but demonstrated some challenges in the social-emotional areas of readiness especially skills within the *Self-Regulation* dimension.
- *Socially/emotionally strong:* Ten percent of Fremont Unified students were well-equipped on the social-emotional dimensions of readiness, but they had needs in the realm of *Kindergarten Academics* – learning their letters, numbers, shapes, and colors (lower right quadrant of Figure 15).

**Figure 16. Prevalence of Four Portraits of Students' Readiness**



Source: *Kindergarten Observation Form I* (2011).

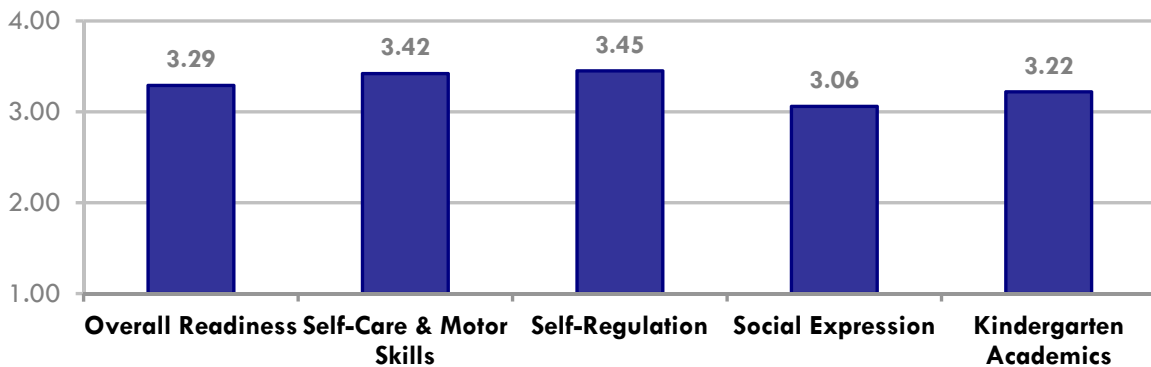
Note: This chart is based on 155 Fremont Unified students and 1572 county-wide students.

# An Overview of Fremont Unified School District Teacher Beliefs

The *Teacher Survey on Importance of Readiness Skills* included a number of questions asking teachers to provide their opinions about students’ readiness for school – including what proficiency levels they think are required for success in school (briefly described in the previous section), as well as the skills that they think are most important for school entry, the skills they believe are easiest to impact, and on which skills they spend the most time.

Figure 17 shows the average levels of proficiency that the participating Fremont Unified kindergarten teachers thought their students should have when they enter school. As Figure 14 in the previous section showed, a little over half of Fremont Unified students were above these levels on all of the four *Basic Building Blocks* dimensions. The Fremont Unified teachers expected the highest proficiency on *Self-Regulation* and the least proficiency on *Social Expression*.

**Figure 17. Teachers’ Desired Levels of Proficiency on the *Basic Building Blocks* of Readiness**



Source: *Teacher Survey of the Importance of Readiness Skills* (2011).

Note: Means can range from 1 to 4. Scale points are as follows: 1=not yet, 2=beginning, 3=in progress, 4=proficient. Means are based on 8 Fremont Unified teachers.

When Fremont Unified teachers were asked to choose only five skills that they believed were most important for entry into kindergarten, the ability to perform self-help/self-care and stay focused emerged as the most crucial for children to possess. Other skills that teachers felt were important included using small manipulatives, controlling impulses, working and playing cooperatively, and writing one’s own name.

**Figure 18. Skills Most Often Selected by Teachers as One of Five Most Important for Kindergarten Entry**

School Readiness Skills	Basic Building Block	Number of teachers selecting
Performs basic self-help/self-care skills	Self-Care & Motor Skills	5
Stays focused/pays attention during activities	Self-Regulation	5
Uses small manipulatives	Self-Care & Motor Skills	4
Controls impulses and self-regulates	Self-Regulation	4
Works and plays cooperatively	Self-Regulation	4
Writes own first name	Kindergarten Academics	4

Source: *Teacher Survey on Importance of Readiness Skills (2011)*.

Note: Scores are based on 8 Fremont Unified teachers.

Fremont Unified teachers also chose five skills that they believed to be the easiest for them to impact during the kindergarten year. Teachers most often selected skills from the *Kindergarten Academics* dimension of readiness, and use of small manipulatives was also noted as being relatively easy to impact, as were two skills in the *Social Expression* domain.

**Figure 19. Skills Most Often Selected by Teachers as One of Five Easiest to Impact**

School Readiness Skills	Basic Building Blocks	Number of teachers selecting
Recognizes letters of the alphabet	Kindergarten Academics	4
Uses small manipulatives	Self-Care & Motor Skills	4
Has expressive abilities	Social Expression	3
Engages in symbolic/imaginative play	Social Expression	3
Writes own first name	Kindergarten Academics	3
Counts 10 objects correctly	Kindergarten Academics	3
Recognizes basic colors	Kindergarten Academics	3
Recognizes basic shapes	Kindergarten Academics	3

Source: *Teacher Survey on Importance of Readiness Skills (2011)*.

Note: Scores are based on 8 Fremont Unified teachers.

Interestingly, when Fremont Unified teachers prioritized the five skills on which they spent the most class time, their choices were much more uniform than when they chose skills that were easy to impact. Seven of the eight teachers agreed they spent a great deal of their time on helping their students stay focused, and six chose participation in circle time – both *Self-Regulation* skills. Skills in the domain of *Kindergarten Academics* were also chosen by six of the eight teachers as being the most time-consuming.

**Figure 20. Skills Most Often Selected by Teachers as One of Five on Which They Spend the Most Time**

School Readiness Skills	Basic Building Blocks	Number of teachers selecting
Stays focused/pays attention during activities	Self-Regulation	7
Participates successfully in circle time	Self-Regulation	6
Recognizes rhyming words	Kindergarten Academics	6
Recognizes letters of the alphabet	Kindergarten Academics	6
Has expressive abilities	Social Expression	5

Source: *Teacher Survey on Importance of Readiness Skills (2011)*

Note: Scores are based on 8 Fremont Unified teachers.

## Factors Related to Alameda County Students' Readiness

Because some children enter school more ready to succeed than others, an important goal of any readiness study is to understand the factors that are related to stronger readiness skills at kindergarten entry. As part of the comprehensive readiness study, a **multivariate analysis** was conducted to examine the possible underlying reasons children are more or less prepared for school. This approach allows us to look at how a set of variables are related to readiness levels -- above and beyond their associations with other factors. For example, we can examine how preschool experience is related to readiness levels after ironing out children's differences on other factors that also tend to be related to preschool experience, such as income and parent education levels. This section briefly presents results from this multivariate analysis. (It is important to keep in mind that these results represent findings for all students throughout the nine districts who participated in the study and are not specific to Fremont Unified students.)

The following variables, which fall into one of five general categories listed below, were included in the analysis looking at predictors of readiness:

- **Child variables:** Child age at enrollment, gender, special needs status, and English Learner status
- **Family background variables:** Income and maternal education level
- **Child health variables:** Child well-being (frequency of being hungry, tired, or ill), child absences and tardies, low birth weight and having a regular medical provider
- **Family stressors, parenting attitudes, and parenting support:** Index of family risk (including being a teen mother, being a single parent, having lost a job in the last year, having moved frequently since the child was born, and having few parent supports); parenting attitudes; sum of local family resources used (7 possible); parental social support, and an index of life concerns
- **Direct school readiness-related variables:** Preschool attendance, frequency of home reading, sum of kindergarten preparation activities in which parents had engaged (10 possible), parents' receipt of general information about readiness, parents' receipt of specific information about their own child's readiness

In addition, a few variables were added into the equation to control for any additional influence they might have on readiness scores. These included the number of days between school start date and observation date, whether children were in a full or half day kindergarten classroom, teachers' experience level, teachers' expectations about the readiness levels children need to be successful, and school API level.

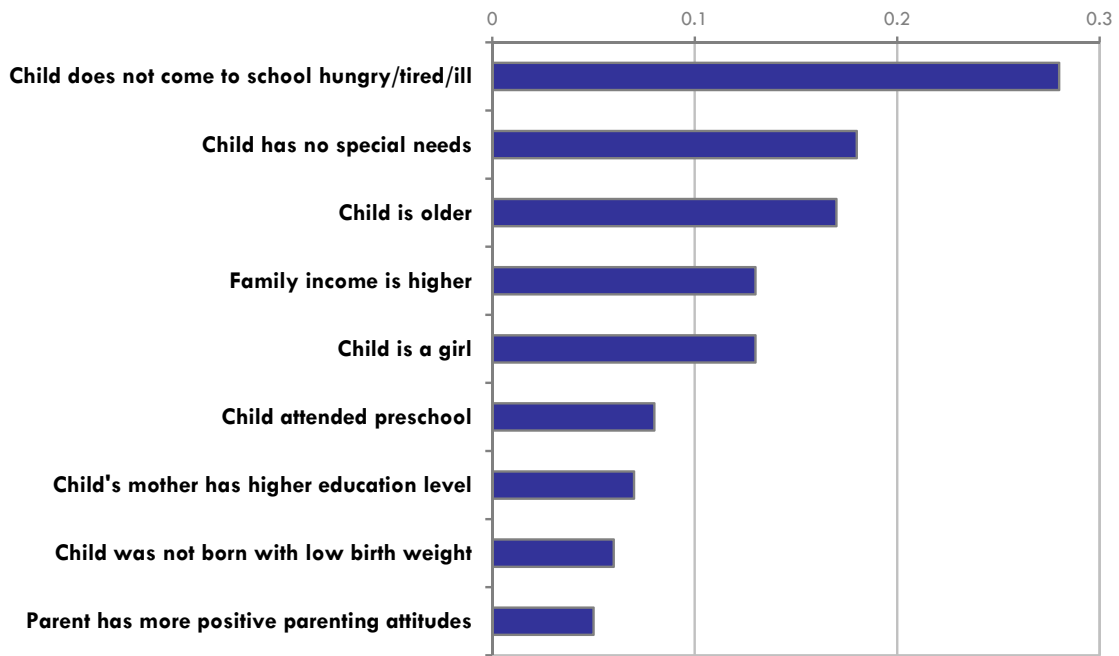
Figure 21 shows the results of this analysis; depicted are those factors that are significantly related to overall kindergarten school readiness after taking into account all of the other variables. The strongest predictor of readiness was students' well-being. Although there were relatively few children who had such issues, those who were perceived by their teachers to be frequently hungry, tired, or ill had readiness levels that were much lower than their peers without well-being concerns. In addition, students who did not have special needs were more ready for school than those who

did, and there was a small association between being born with a low birth weight and being less prepared than peers at kindergarten entry.

Several demographic and socioeconomic characteristics also emerged as strong predictors of readiness. Older students had higher levels of readiness than younger students, and girls tended to be more ready for school than boys. As incomes and maternal education levels increased, readiness levels of entering students generally did as well.

There were also two predictors of readiness that point to opportunities for potentially fruitful community-level interventions. Students who had attended preschool were more ready for school than students who had not, and students of parents who had more positive attitudes about parenting – as measured by reports of less frequent experiences of parenting-related negative feelings – had higher readiness levels than students whose parents had more negative parenting attitudes.

**Figure 21. Relative Strength of Factors Significantly Associated with Overall School Readiness**



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form I (2011) and Parent Information Form (2011).

Note: Values for each factor listed above represent standardized beta coefficients that were significant at  $p < .05$ . For a full listing of all variables entered into the model, see text. The overall regression model was significant,  $F = 21.83$ ,  $p < .001$ , explaining 32% of the variance in kindergarten readiness ( $R^2 = .34$ ; Adj.  $R^2 = .32$ ).

## Conclusions and Recommendations

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Preschool experience is a consistently strong predictor of readiness levels among entering kindergarteners. Among the sampled Fremont Unified students, preschool attendance rates are higher than in many other districts, which likely contributes to the generally strong readiness levels of students. The district and its community partners should continue to promote the availability of high-quality early education experiences for local children – and to look for new opportunities to reach out to those children who are not currently exposed to quality preschool programs prior to starting kindergarten. One example is the First 5 Summer Pre-K Program, which offers quality early childhood experience to children with no preschool or licensed childcare experience.

The majority of students in Fremont Unified School District are entering kindergarten ready for school, with the strongest readiness levels in *Self-Care & Motor Skills* and the lowest readiness levels in *Kindergarten Academics*. Readiness levels in *Self-Regulation* skills were somewhat higher among the Fremont students than in the county-wide sample as a whole.

More than half of students (58%) are meeting their teachers' expectations. Fremont teachers have somewhat higher than typical expectations for students' *Self-Regulation* skills. For this reason (and not because students scores were low), this skill domain had the greatest number of students who are not meeting teachers' expected proficiency levels. Among this group of students, the data suggest that there are more needs in the area of *Kindergarten Academics* than in *Self-Regulation*; interestingly, the opposite trend is more typically observed in most kindergarten student samples.

Findings from the county-wide study of readiness also suggest that districts should continue to monitor factors such as student and family well-being and ensuring early identification and support for students with special needs, as these are associated with readiness levels. Districts should also be aware of those factors they cannot impact, but that nonetheless help them understand and predict the readiness levels of their current and future kindergarteners, such as family income and education levels and children's age.

Finally, as in previous years of district readiness study summaries, we include information about how other schools and districts have used readiness data to promote their students' development and fulfillment of their educational potential. Individual districts, schools, teachers, and communities are encouraged to reflect on their own readiness findings and discuss ways that this data can help guide and inform action in their own schools and communities. Some recent examples of school readiness data informing school and community action include the following:

- In San Lorenzo Unified School District, data from previous school readiness assessments have provided important evidence to support increasing the district's funding of summer pre-k programs and access to year-long preschool programs. With these data, they could justify the attention, cost, and resources for supporting preschool experiences for their underserved families.
- Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District has used data from recent readiness studies to support their applications for federal and city grants, and they intend to use the data to encourage the district to continue supporting preschool for their students.

- In Santa Clara, San Mateo, and San Francisco counties, county-wide readiness assessments conducted every 2-3 years have helped to track population-level trends in entering kindergarten students over time, in order to monitor changes in important predictors of readiness (such as preschool attendance rates) as well as student readiness levels. For Santa Clara County in particular, this has allowed them to demonstrate that focused intervention and support for low-income families have been related to readiness improvements in this population.
- Both Santa Clara and San Mateo counties have used data they have collected on the readiness of kindergarten students to show that readiness levels – particularly in the *Kindergarten Academics* and *Self-Regulation Basic Building Blocks* – strongly predict performance on third grade standardized tests, thus further supporting the need for strong interventions that begin even before a child begins kindergarten.
- Several Bay Area school districts have used the *Kindergarten Observation Form* and a parallel preschool version of the form (the *Pre-Kindergarten Observation Form [P-KOF]*) to build connections between their pre-K and K-12 education systems and the providers in each. When preschool providers have used the *P-KOF* alongside kindergarten teachers using the *KOF*, this facilitates the development of a common language and set of expectations for discussing children’s readiness and how providers in both systems can support it.
- One local, recently-developed, short-term pre-K program has also used findings from their student P-KOF assessments to shape their curriculum to better support the needs of their students, and they have used it as a reflective practice tool for their providers.
- Importantly, several Northern California regions have used their readiness data to develop resources for parents who have a child who will soon enter (or has recently entered) kindergarten. These resources include high-quality, easy-to-read parent handbooks organized around the four *Basic Building Blocks*. The handbooks provide information about the types of readiness skills children need and how to promote children’s development of those skills at home. In addition, in response to findings that showed that families who used more local community resources had children with better readiness outcomes, one local First 5 has partnered with other organizations in their community to provide parents with passes to enrichment activities, such as the zoo, to support children’s learning.



## Appendix 1: Crosswalking Readiness Items from *NEGP* to *Basic Building Blocks*

Skill Items	NEGP Dimensions	Basic Building Blocks
Uses small manipulatives	Phys Well-Being/Motor Dev	Self-Care & Motor Skills
Has general coordination on the playground	Phys Well-Being/Motor Dev	Self-Care & Motor Skills
Performs self-help/self-care tasks	Phys Well-Being/Motor Dev	Self-Care & Motor Skills
Relates appropriately to adults other than parent / primary caregiver	Social & Emotional Dev	Social Expression
Appropriately expresses needs and wants verbally in primary language	Social & Emotional Dev	Social Expression
Works and plays cooperatively with peers	Social & Emotional Del	Self-Regulation
Controls impulses and self-regulates	Social & Emotional Dev	Self-Regulation
Expresses curiosity and eagerness for learning	Approaches to Learning	Social Expression
Stays focused / pays attention during activities	Approaches to Learning	Self-Regulation
Follows one- to two-step directions	Approaches to Learning	Self-Regulation
Participates successfully in circle time	Approaches to Learning	Self-Regulation
Has expressive abilities	Communication & Lang	Social Expression
Recognizes the letters of the alphabet	Communication & Lang	Kindergarten Academics
Writes own name	Communication & Lang	Kindergarten Academics
Can recognize rhyming words	Communication & Lang	Kindergarten Academics
Engages with books	Communication & Lang	Kindergarten Academics
Engages in symbolic/imaginative play	Cognition & Gen'l Knowledge	Social Expression
Can count 10 objects correctly	Cognition & Gen'l Knowledge	Kindergarten Academics
Recognizes primary colors	Cognition & Gen'l Knowledge	Kindergarten Academics
Recognizes primary shapes	Cognition & Gen'l Knowledge	Kindergarten Academics
Comforts self with adult guidance	N/A	Self-Regulation
Negotiates with peers to resolve social conflicts with adult guidance	N/A	Self-Regulation
Expresses empathy or caring for others	N/A	Social Expression
Handles frustration well	N/A	Self-Regulation