SCHOOL READINESS
in Alameda County

RESULTS OF THE FALL 2011 ASSESSMENT

District Report
SAN LEANDRO
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

ASR

May 15, 2012

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Acknowledgements

Applied Survey Research (ASR) would like to acknowledge the following San Leandro Unified School District and First 5 Alameda County staff who provided their support for this project:

- Robin Michel, Communications Outreach.

- Debbie Wong, Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services

- 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, Janis Burger, and Jessica Straubel.

Of course, this assessment would not be possible without the support of the participating kindergarten teachers who generously gave their time and energy to help us better understand the skills of the children entering their classrooms. These teachers dedicated ample time to a training, student observations, project management, and questionnaire completion. We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the many individuals listed in Figure 1.

Figure 1. **Participating San Leandro Unified School District Schools and Teachers**

Schools	Teachers
Thomas Jefferson	Qenise Williams-West
	Irene La
	Elaine Pepares
	Ana Guzman
Roosevelt	Linda Wittig
Monroe	Diane Marasigan
	Stacy Smitter
James Madison	Eda Lee
	Samara Druckenbrod

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 San Leandro Unified (SLUSD) 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 SLUSD children ready for school?	**Yes.** **Overall readiness score: 3.40**	For each individual readiness skill, children were scored on a scale from *Not yet* (1) to *Proficient* (4). Average scores for each of 4 *Basic Building Blocks* of readiness range from 1 to 4. SLUSD students' scores were somewhat higher than those of students county-wide, despite having lower preschool attendance rates than the county sample as a whole. Their readiness levels were highest in *Self-Care & Motor Skills*, and they were lowest in *Self-Regulation* and *Kindergarten Academics*.
2. Are SLUSD students meeting their teachers' expectations for readiness at kindergarten entry?	**Mostly.** **69% at/above expected levels of proficiency**	On their teacher survey, SLUSD teachers indicated the level of proficiency they thought students should have to be "school ready" at kindergarten entry. More than two-thirds of SLUSD students (69%) were meeting or exceeding teachers' expected proficiency levels for overall readiness. On *Self-Care & Motor Skills*, 84 percent of students were at or above teachers' expected proficiency levels. The biggest gap between teacher expectations and students' skills was in *Self-Regulation,* where 56 percent of students met or exceeded their teachers' expectations.
3. What skills do SLUSD teachers think are: Most important for kindergarten entry? Easiest to impact? Most time-consuming?	**Most important:** Controlling impulses; recognizing letters **Easiest to impact:** Engaging with books **Spend the most time:** 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. Several *Self-Regulation* skills were chosen by teachers as the most important to have at school entry. Skills related to *Kindergarten Academics* were most likely to be selected as being the easiest to impact, and skills related to both *Self-Regulation* and *Kindergarten Academics* were identified as requiring the most time during the kindergarten school year.

Study Overview

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.[1] 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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[1] 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**
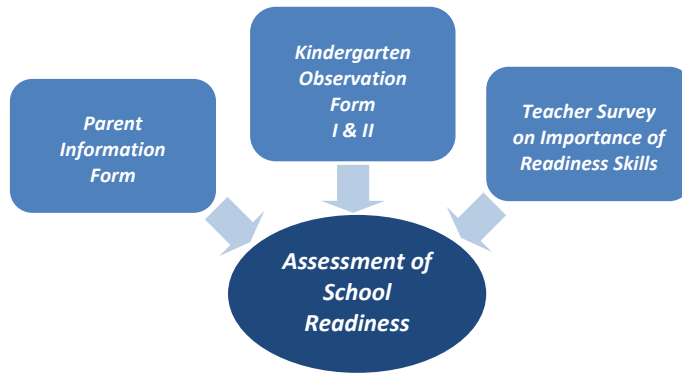
This short report summarizes key Fall 2011 findings for participating teachers, students, and families in the San Leandro Unified School District. A summary of the completion metrics for the district follows. Seventy-three percent of parents agreed to have their child take part in the study, and of those, 90 percent also returned a parent survey. In all, San Leandro Unified students represented 177 of the 1,597 participants (11%) in the county-wide sample.

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

Data	San Leandro Unified sample	Alameda County sample (9 districts)
Number of schools participating in 2011 school readiness assessment	4	41
Number of participating classrooms	9	88
Number of children in these classrooms	243	2,072
Number of KOFs returned	177	1,597
Parent consent rate	73%	77%
Number of PIFs that were matched to a KOF	160	1,336
Parent PIF response rate (# PIFs received/ # consents)	90%	83%

The sections that follow include a brief summary of who the San Leandro 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

Forty-nine percent of participants in the San Leandro Unified School District Fall 2011 readiness assessment were girls and 51 percent were boys. The average age of students was 5.26 years old (about 5 years and 3 months). Hispanic/Latino students were the largest racial/ethnic group in the sample, comprising 42 percent of students, followed by Asian students (17% of the sample). Six percent of students were identified as having special needs; another 3 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	51%
Girls	49%
Age at kindergarten entry	
Between 4 1/2 and less than 5	27%
At least 5 and less than 5 1/2	45%
At least 5 1/2 and less than 6	28%
6 and older	<1%
Race/ethnicity	
Hispanic/Latino	42%
Asian	17%
Caucasian	12%
African American	12%
Multi-racial	8%
Filipino	5%
Pacific Islander	1%
Alaskan Native/American Indian	3%
Other	<1%
Special needs status	
Has special needs	6%
Teacher or parent suspects an as-yet-undiagnosed special need	3%
Does not have special needs	91%

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

Note: Sample size =176,177,172, 175, respectively. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Teachers from four schools in the San Leandro Unified School District took part in the study. Of the sampled students in these four schools, Thomas Jefferson had a much higher population of Hispanic/ Latino students (60%) than did the other three schools. Roosevelt's student population was predominantly Caucasian, and Madison had more Asian students than any of the other schools.[2]

Figure 5.   Students' Race/Ethnicity by School

Race/Ethnicity	School			
	James Madison	Monroe	Roosevelt	Thomas Jefferson
Hispanic/Latino	25%	33%	6%	60%
African American	0%	5%	12%	17%
Alaskan Native or American India	0%	0%	0%	7%
Caucasian	4%	16%	59%	4%
Filipino	8%	11%	0%	2%
Multi-racial	21%	0%	18%	5%
Asian	42%	32%	6%	7%
Pacific Islander	0%	3%	0%	1%

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

Note: Sample size =28, 38, 17, 93, respectively. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Fifty-three percent of San Leandro Unified students in the sample were English Learners. As Figure 6 shows, 60 percent of students spoke English as their preferred language, and Spanish was the preferred language of 27 percent of the students.

Figure 6.   Student Language Variables

Children's Language	Percent
English Learners	53%
Not English Learner	47%
Preferred language	
English	60%
Spanish	27%
Chinese/Mandarin/Cantonese	8%
Vietnamese	4%
Filipino or Tagalog	2%

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

Note: Sample size = 176, 177. Percentages may not sum to 100 because more than one preferred language could have been chosen.

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

When broken down by school, among the sampled students Jefferson and Monroe had the highest percentage of English Learners. Most students at Madison and Roosevelt were not English Learners.

Figure 7.   English Learner Status by School

| | School | | | |
	James Madison	Monroe	Roosevelt	Thomas Jefferson
English Learner	33%	59%	12%	63%
Not English Learner	67%	41%	88%	37%

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

Note: Sample size =28, 39, 17, 93, 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 62 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). Just under half of students (47%) 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	62%
Relative or neighbor	18%
Babysitter or nanny	9%
Licensed care in someone's home (teacher or parent report)	9%
Licensed preschool or childcare center (e.g., Head Start, State Preschool, private – teacher or parent report)	47%

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

Note: Percentages are based on the following sample sizes:151, 151, 151, 151, 169. Percentages sum to more than 100 because more than one source of care could be selected.

School Readiness of San Leandro Unified Students

This section describes the readiness skills that students in San Leandro 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[3]:

> (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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[3]   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

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

Skill	Not Yet + Beginning	In Progress	Proficient
Uses small manipulatives	15%	33%	52%
General coordination on the..	6%	36%	58%
Performs self-help/self-care	5%	15%	80%
Comforts self	9%	35%	56%
Pays attention	18%	32%	50%
Controls impulses	19%	29%	52%
Follows directions	14%	27%	59%
Negotiates with peers	17%	37%	46%
Plays cooperatively	16%	30%	54%
Participates in circle time	16%	32%	52%
Handles frustration well	15%	32%	54%
Relates appropriately to adults	9%	28%	63%
Appropriately expresses needs	9%	26%	65%
Expresses empathy	11%	31%	58%
Has expressive abilities	14%	35%	51%
Expresses curiosity for learning	11%	28%	61%
Engages in symbolic play	7%	27%	66%
Engages with books	7%	33%	60%
Writes own first name	14%	20%	66%
Can recognize rhyming words	55%	20%	25%
Can count 10 objects	13%	12%	75%
Recognizes letters of alphabet	37%	29%	34%
Recognizes basic colors	6%	7%	87%
Recognizes primary shapes	5%	5%	90%

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

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

Note: Percentages are based on 165-177 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. San Leandro Unified students came into school strongest on skills related to recognizing basic shapes and colors (*Kindergarten Academics)* and performing basic self-help and self-care tasks (*Self-Care & Motor Skills*). The skills they were still developing included recognizing rhyming words and letters, as well as several *Self-Regulation* skills.

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

Top five strengths	Basic Building Block	Students' average score (out of four possible)
1. Recognizes primary shapes	Kindergarten Academics	3.82
2. Recognizes basic colors	Kindergarten Academics	3.79
3. Performs basic self-help/self-care tasks	Self-Care & Motor Skills	3.75
4. Counts 10 objects correctly	Kindergarten Academics	3.60
5. Engages in symbolic play	Social Expression	3.57

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 174-177 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	2.33
2. Recognizes letters of the alphabet	Kindergarten Academics	2.92
3. Negotiates with peers to resolve social conflicts	Self-Regulation	3.25
4. Controls impulses and self-regulates	Self-Regulation	3.27
5. Stays focused and pays attention	Self-Regulation	3.28

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 165-177 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, San Leandro 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, San Leandro 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
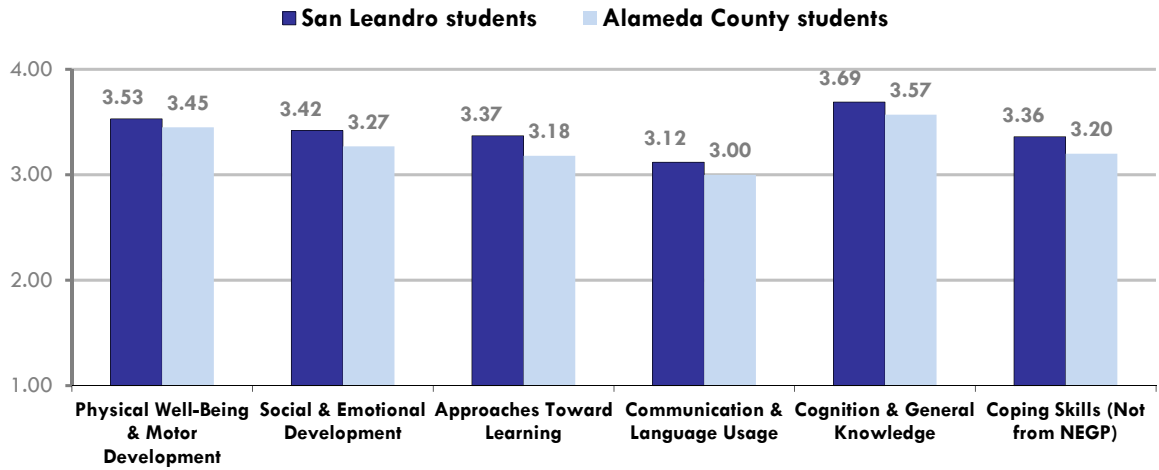
Source: _Kindergarten Observation Form I_ (2011).

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 177 San Leandro 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:[4]

- _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 San Leandro Unified students were highest in _Self-Care & Motor Skills_, and they were lowest in _Self-Regulation_ and _Kindergarten Academics_.

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4   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
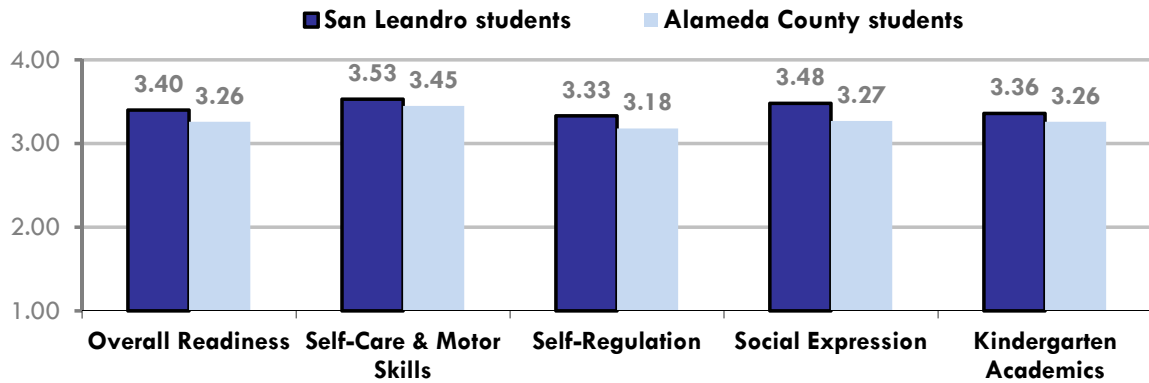

Note: Means can range from 1 to 4. Scale points are as follows: 1=not yet, 2=beginning, 3=in progress, 4=proficient. Scores are based on 177 San Leandro Unified students and 1,541-1,595 county-wide students.

Although knowing these readiness levels is instructive for understanding relative strengths and needs of students – as well as how San Leandro 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 San Leandro 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 San Leandro Unified teachers believed they should have to be ready for school.

Overall, 69 percent of the students assessed in the San Leandro 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 *Self-Care & Motor Skill*s; 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
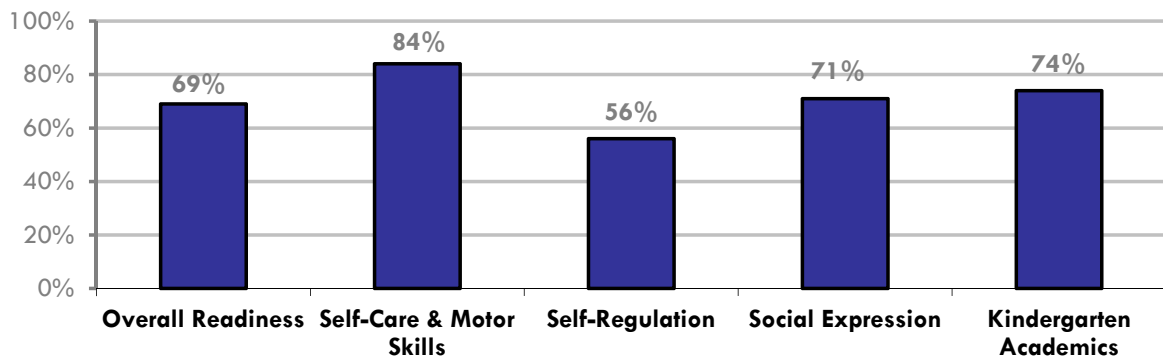
Source: *Kindergarten Observation Form I* (2011).

Note: Percentages are based on 177 San Leandro students. Percentages are based on students meeting the average expectations of all San Leandro teachers, rather than each student's own teacher.

Children also exhibited different <u>patterns</u> 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.[5] The dark shading in Figure 15 shows where children in each of the four portraits are at or near proficiency on the associated skills.
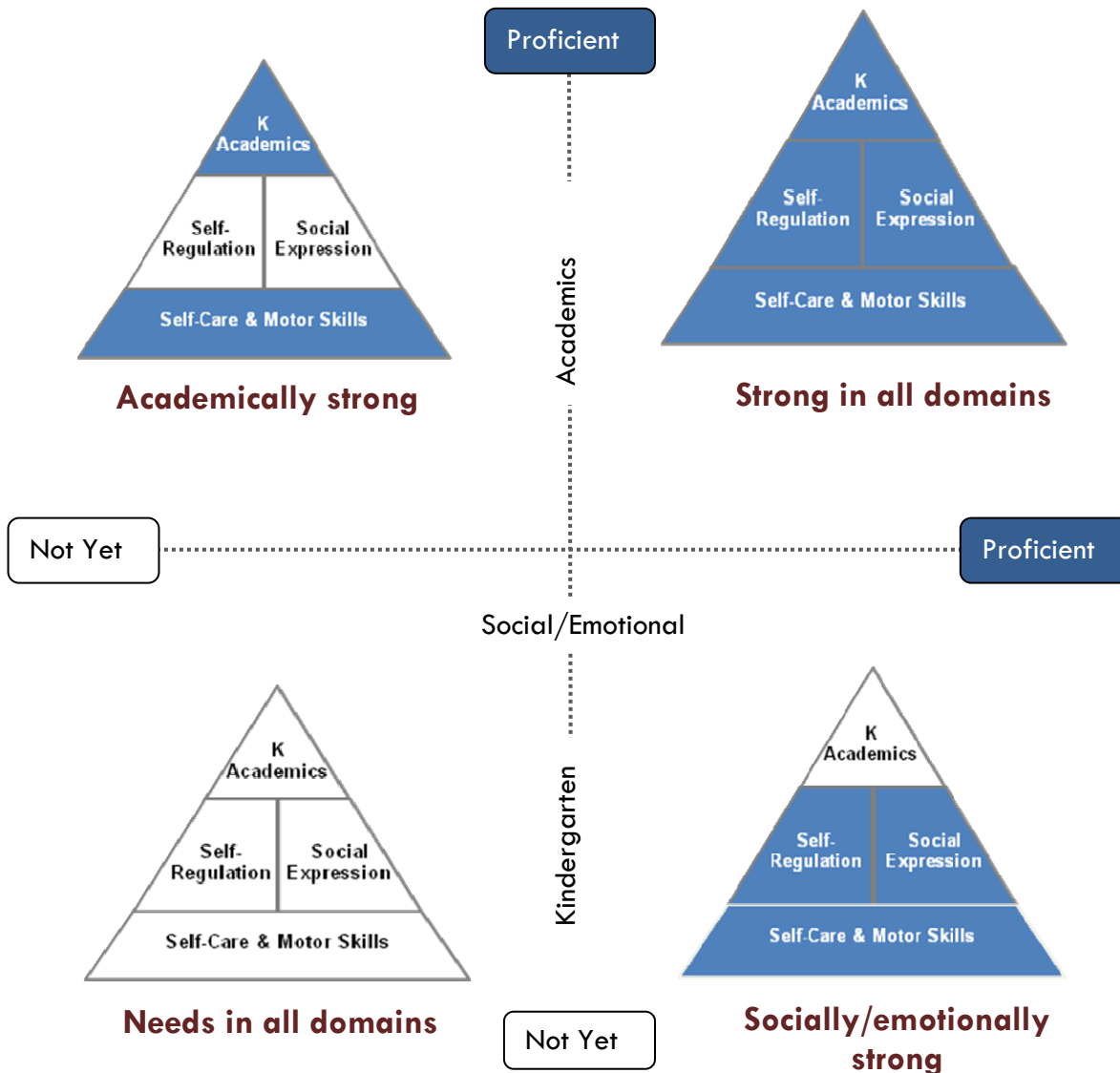
Figure 15.   Four Readiness Portraits

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

- *Strong in all domains:* About two thirds (66%) of the assessed San Leandro Unified students entered kindergarten classrooms at or near proficiency across all four *Basic Building Blocks*

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[5]   Children were sorted into one of the four *Readiness Portraits* via a data-driven technique called cluster analysis.

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

- *Needs in all domains:* Six 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, 24 percent of San Leandro 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:* Four percent of San Leandro 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**
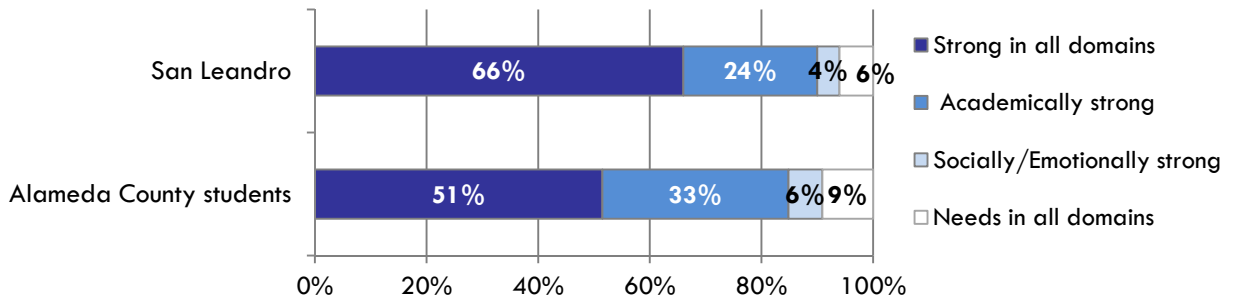
Source: *Kindergarten Observation Form I* (2011).

Note: This chart is based on 177 San Leandro Unified students and 1572 county-wide students.

An Overview of San Leandro 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 San Leandro Unified kindergarten teachers thought their students should have when they enter school. As Figure 14 in the previous section showed, more than two thirds (69%) of San Leandro Unified students had readiness scores than were above the overall average levels that teachers reported they should have. The San Leandro Unified teachers expected the highest proficiency on *Self-Regulation* and the least proficiency on *Kindergarten Academics*.

Figure 17.   **Teachers' <u>Desired</u> Levels of Proficiency on the *Basic Building Blocks* of Readiness**
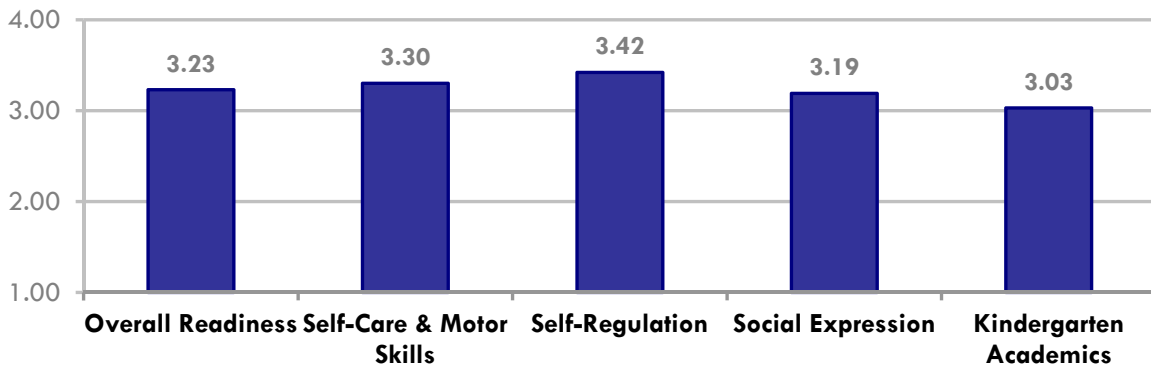
Source: *Teacher Survey of the Importance of Readiness Skills* (2011).

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 9 San Leandro Unified teachers.

When San Leandro Unified teachers were asked to choose only five skills that they believed were most important for entry into kindergarten, the ability to control impulses and self-regulate emerged as the most crucial for children to possess. Other skills that teachers felt were important included recognizing letters, handling frustration, writing one's own name, performing basic self-help/self-care, and staying focused.

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
Controls impulses and self-regulates	Self-Regulation	7
Recognizes letters of the alphabet	Kindergarten Academics	5
Handles frustration well	Self-Regulation	4
Writes own first name	Kindergarten Academics	4
Performs basic self-help/self-care skills	Self-Care & Motor Skills	4
Stays focused/pays attention during activities	Self-Regulation	4

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

Note: Scores are based on 9 San Leandro Unified teachers.

San Leandro 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 and expressing curiosity and eagerness for learning were also noted as being relatively easy to impact.

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
Engages with books	Kindergarten Academics	6
Counts 10 objects correctly	Kindergarten Academics	4
Uses small manipulatives	Self-Care & Motor Skills	3
Expresses curiosity and eagerness for learning	Social Expression	3
Recognizes basic colors	Kindergarten Academics	3
Writes own first name	Kindergarten Academics	3

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

Note: Scores are based on 9 San Leandro Unified teachers.

When San Leandro Unified teachers prioritized the five skills on which they spent the most class time, seven of the nine agreed they spent a great deal of their time on helping their students stay focused, and six chose recognizing letters as being one of the five most time-consuming skills.

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
Recognizes letters of the alphabet	Kindergarten Academics	6
Controls impulses and self-regulates	Self-Regulation	5
Uses small manipulatives	Self-Care & Motor Skills	5
Negotiates with peers to resolve social conflicts	Self-Regulation	4
Engages with books	Kindergarten Academics	4

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

Note: Scores are based on 9 San Leandro 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 <u>also</u> 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 San Leandro 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, summer pre-k program 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
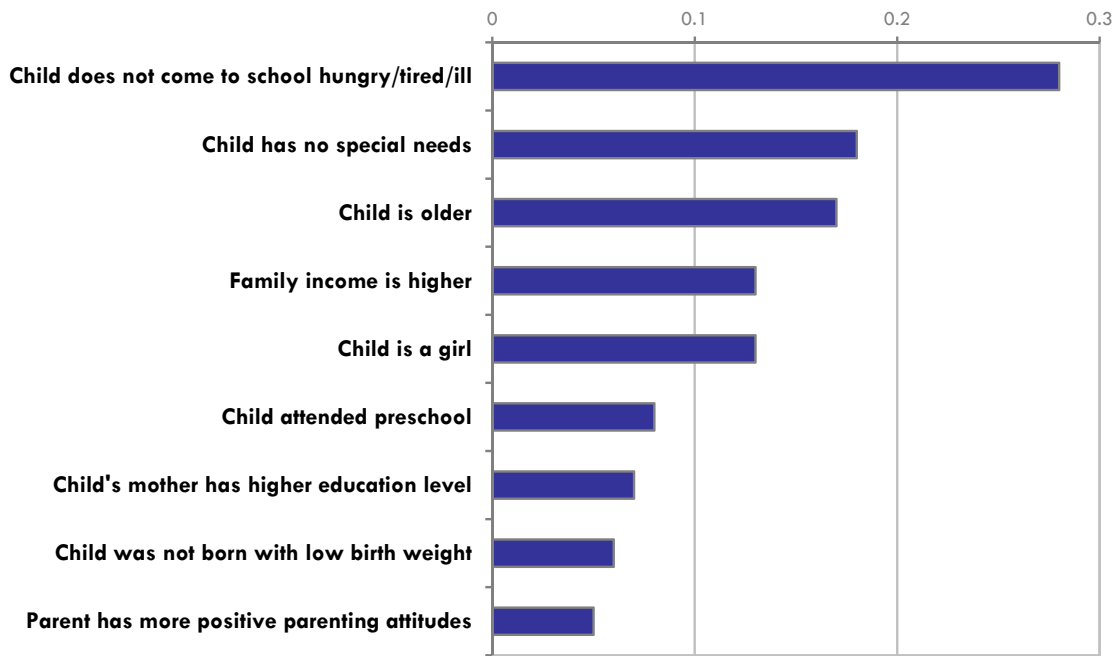
Source: Kindergarten Observation Form I (2011) and Parent Information Form (2011).

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

Readiness and Early Education Experiences Prior to Kindergarten

The majority of students in San Leandro 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 *Self-Regulation* and *Kindergarten Academics*. These students generally have higher readiness levels than their peers in other regions, which is somewhat surprising, given that rates of preschool attendance – a consistently strong predictor of readiness levels among entering kindergarteners – were somewhat <u>lower</u> in San Leandro than they were for the county-wide sample.

One small contributor to higher readiness levels in this sample may be the First 5 Alameda County Summer Pre-K (SPK) program, which offered one SPK class in San Leandro in Summer 2011. This program targets students who have not had a longer-term preschool experience, and data examining those students who were enrolled in SPK show that the program tends to draw students who traditionally have greater readiness needs, including English Learners. The SPK program has been found to be associated with increases in readiness levels among those students who participate in it. It is also associated with enhanced levels of parents' readiness-related knowledge and engagement in kindergarten transition activities with children.

Information from San Leandro Unified School District partners indicated that there was a very high demand (which far exceeded the supply) for the SPK program in this district, which is not surprising given the low preschool attendance rates here. Future efforts should be made to expand the availability of this program in San Leandro Unified to attempt to "close the gap" for the relatively large proportion of students in this area who have not had a longer-term preschool experience.

Assessment as an Opportunity for Professional Development

In light of the fact that the SPK program in San Leandro Unified was fairly small in size, the presence of the SPK program in this region cannot entirely for the high readiness levels of the incoming kindergarten students. District partners are encouraged to share the findings of this study with kindergarten teachers to get their feedback on and beliefs about the results as well. There may be other explanations about the practices of San Leandro families and the experiences of its students prior to kindergarten entry that may help shed light on these somewhat unexpectedly high readiness levels. In addition, in some cases, teachers who are new to the assessment process may still be learning how to conduct student assessments; this is something that could be explored in meetings with teachers as well. If this may be an issue, it presents an opportunity to engage in professional development with teachers by giving them additional guidance on how to use student assessments as part of a continuous improvement process – using this data to inform the needs and actions that will better help their entering kindergarten students succeed.

Making Use of Readiness Data

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.

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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