

SCHOOL READINESS in Alameda County

RESULTS OF THE FALL
2011 ASSESSMENT

District Report
SAN LORENZO
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

RESEARCH STUDY FUNDED BY:

Thomas J. Long
FOUNDATION



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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 Lorenzo Unified School District Schools and Teachers

Schools	Teachers
Corvallis	Kirsten Hynds
	Margaret Penaranda
Grant	Julie Henderson
	Kathy Hutchinson
	Angela Luk
Hillside	Cheryl Mosler
	Nicole Martin
	Molly Moyer
	Ann Villegas
Bay	Noelle Sanhueza
	Geraldine Whitmore
	Theresa Lewis
Dayton	Denise Landry
	Tracy Cooper
Lorenzo Manor	Kathy Rolefson
	Cyndi Liang
	Fleur McJilton

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 Lorenzo Unified (SLZUSD) participants, 17 teachers from six 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 SLZUSD children ready for school?	Yes. Overall readiness score: 3.32	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. SLZUSD students' scores were slightly 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 <i>Self-Care & Motor Skills</i> , and they were lowest in <i>Self-Regulation</i> .
2. Are SLZUSD students meeting their teachers' expectations for readiness at kindergarten entry?	In some areas. 60% at/above expected levels of proficiency	On their teacher survey, SLZUSD teachers indicated the level of proficiency they thought students should have to be "school ready" at kindergarten entry. More than half of SLZUSD students (60%) were meeting or exceeding teachers' expected proficiency levels for overall readiness. On <i>Kindergarten Academics</i> , 74% 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 48% of students met or exceeded their teachers' expectations.
3. What skills do SLZUSD teachers think are: Most important for kindergarten entry? Easiest to impact? Most time-consuming?	Most important: Self-help/self-care; Easiest to impact: Counting 10 objects; recognizing colors Spend the most time: Recognizing letters; paying attention	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. The ability to do self-help/self-care tasks – along with several <i>Self-Regulation</i> skills – was most often 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. Along with recognizing letters (a <i>Kindergarten Academics</i> skill), <i>Self-Regulation</i> skills were identified as requiring the most time during the 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.

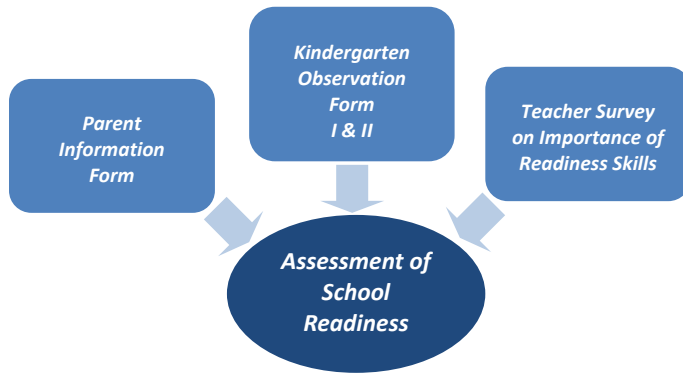
The *Kindergarten Observation Form (KOF)* was first implemented in San Mateo County in 2001, and since that initial assessment, readiness assessments have also been conducted in Santa Clara County, Lake County (Illinois), San Francisco County, Marin County, Santa Cruz County, San Benito County, Del Norte 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.

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 Lorenzo 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, 79 percent also returned a parent survey. In all, San Lorenzo Unified students represented 340 of the 1,597 participants (21%) in the county-wide sample.

Figure 3. Completion Metrics – Alameda County School Readiness Assessment

Data	San Lorenzo Unified sample	Alameda County sample (9 districts)
Number of schools participating in 2011 school readiness assessment	6	41
Number of participating classrooms	17	88
Number of children in these classrooms	442	2,072
Number of KOFs returned	340	1,597
Parent consent rate	77%	77%
Number of PIFs that were matched to a KOF	270	1,336
Parent PIF response rate (# PIFs received/ # consents)	79%	83%

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

The average age of students in the San Lorenzo Unified School District Fall 2011 readiness assessment sample was 5.24 years old (about 5 years and 3 months). San Lorenzo has a diverse group of students. Hispanic/Latino students were the largest racial/ethnic group in the sample, comprising 44 percent of students. The next largest racial/ethnic group was Asian students (14%), followed by Caucasian (12%), African American (11%), and multi-racial students (9%). Five percent of students were identified as having special needs; another five 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	50%
Girls	50%
Age at kindergarten entry	
Between 4 1/2 and less than 5	26%
At least 5 and less than 5 1/2	49%
At least 5 1/2 and less than 6	23%
6 and older	2%
Race/ethnicity	
Hispanic/Latino	44%
Asian	14%
Caucasian	12%
African American	11%
Multi-racial	9%
Filipino	6%
Pacific Islander	2%
America Native or American Indian	1%
Other	<1%
Special needs status	
Has special needs	5%
Teacher or parent suspects an as-yet-undiagnosed special need	5%
Does not have special needs	90%

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

Note: Sample size =340, 336, 331, 336. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Teachers from six schools in the San Lorenzo Unified School District took part in the study. The ethnic/racial mix of the sampled students was quite different from one school to another. Whereas Hillside and Lorenzo Manor had large percentages of Hispanic/Latino students, schools such as Bay and Dayton were more racially/ethnically balanced across several different racial/ethnic groups.²

Figure 5. Students' Race/Ethnicity by School

Race/Ethnicity	School					
	Bay	Corvallis	Dayton	Grant	Hillside	Lorenzo Manor
Hispanic/Latino	23%	46%	28%	46%	60%	57%
African American	5%	10%	4%	12%	24%	7%
Caucasian	20%	10%	9%	14%	3%	18%
Filipino	9%	3%	15%	7%	0%	3%
Multi-racial	9%	10%	17%	9%	6%	7%
Asian	30%	18%	23%	12%	4%	3%
Pacific Islander	2%	0%	4%	0%	2%	5%
Other	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Alaskan Native or American Indian	0%	3%	0%	2%	2%	2%

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

Note: Sample size =56, 39, 47,59,68,62 respectively. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Fifty-three percent of San Lorenzo Unified students in the sample were English Learners. As Figure 6 shows, English was the preferred language of 61 percent of the students, and 27 percent of students spoke Spanish as their preferred language.

Figure 6. Student Language Variables

Children's Language	Percent
English Learners	53%
Not English Learner	47%
Preferred language	
English	61%
Spanish	27%
Chinese	6%
Vietnamese	4%
Filipino or Tagalog	1%
Punjabi or Hindi	<1%
Other	1%

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

Note: Sample size = 339, 340, respectively. Percentages may not sum to 100 because more than one preferred language could have been chosen.

² 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 Dayton and Hillside had the highest percentage of English Learners (60% and 59% respectively). Corvallis and May had the lowest percentages of English Learners in this sample (44% and 48% respectively).

Figure 7. English Learner Status by School

	School					
	Bay	Corvallis	Dayton	Grant	Hillside	Lorenzo Manor
English Learner	48%	44%	60%	53%	59%	53%
Not English Learner	52%	56%	40%	47%	41%	47%

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

Note: Sample size = 60, 39, 47, 60, 71, 62, 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 68 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). About half of students (52%) 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	68%
Relative or neighbor	27%
Babysitter or nanny	8%
Licensed care in someone’s home (teacher or parent report)	5%
Licensed preschool or childcare center (e.g., Head Start, State Preschool, private – teacher or parent report)	52%

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

Note: Percentages are based on the following sample size: 256, 256, 255, 255, 315 respectively. Percentages sum to more than 100 because more than one source of care could be selected.

School Readiness of San Lorenzo Unified Students

This section describes the readiness skills that students in San Lorenzo 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 follows³:

(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.

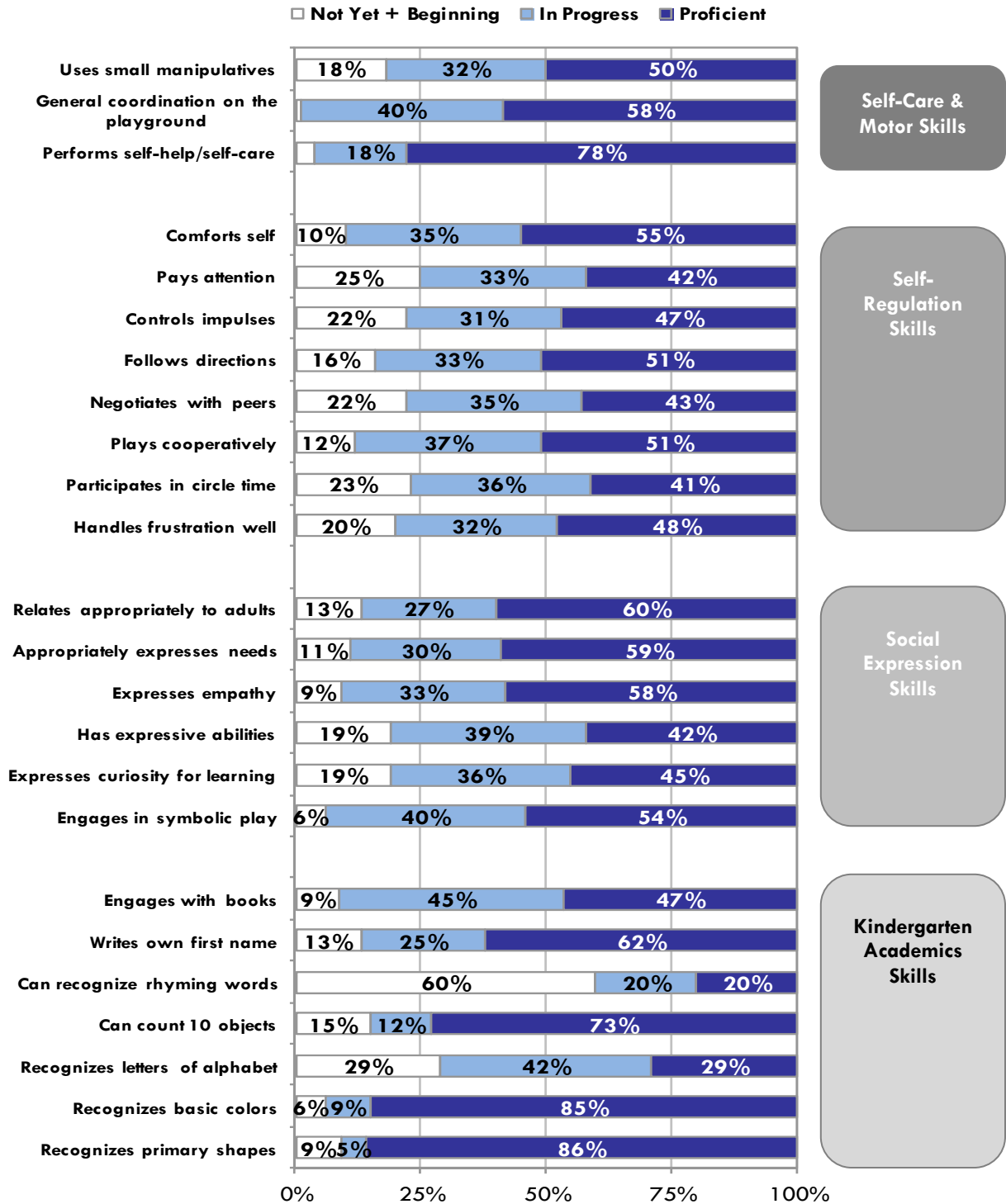
(2) skill groupings that correspond to four skill dimensions called the *Basic Building Blocks* of readiness, which have been defined by patterns of associations between skills that have been consistently observed across administrations of the *Kindergarten Observation Form*.

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.

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



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form I (2011).

Note: Percentages are based on 273-340 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 Lorenzo Unified students came into school strongest on *Self-Care & Motor Skills*, recognizing basic colors and shapes, and counting 10 objects (*Kindergarten Academics*). The skills they were still developing included recognizing rhyming words and letters and 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 basic colors	Kindergarten Academics	3.78
2. Recognizes primary shapes	Kindergarten Academics	3.75
3. Performs basic self-help/self-care tasks	Self-Care & Motor Skills	3.73
4. Has general coordination	Self-Care & Motor Skills	3.57
5. Counts 10 objects correctly	Kindergarten Academics	3.56

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 315-340 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	2.15
2. Recognizes letters of the alphabet	Kindergarten Academics	2.95
3. Stays focused during activities	Self-Regulation	3.11
4. Participates successfully in circle time	Self-Regulation	3.13
5. Negotiates with peers to resolve conflict	Self-Regulation	3.15

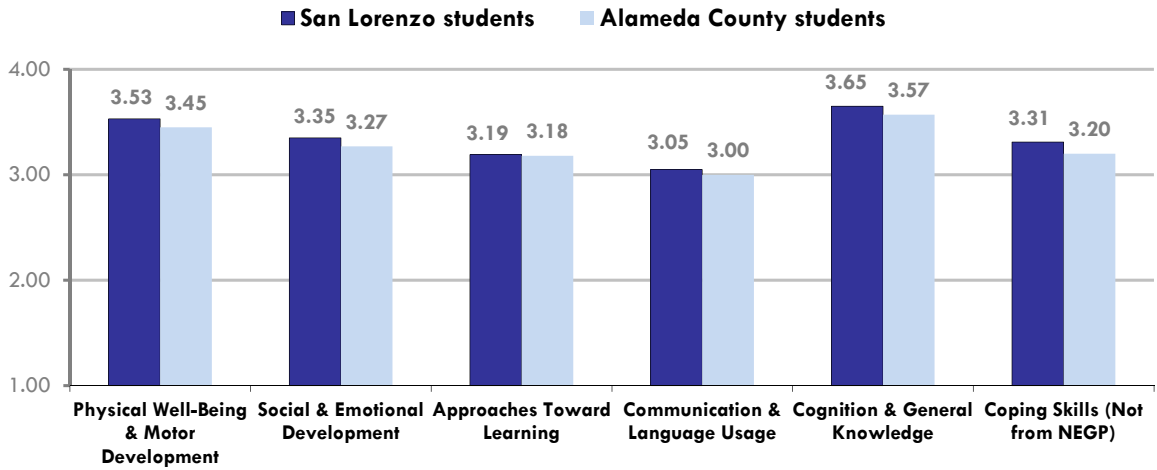
Source: *Kindergarten Observation Form I* (2011).

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 273-339 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 Lorenzo 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 Lorenzo Unified students were strong in most domains of readiness, with particular strengths in *Cognition & General Knowledge* and some needs in their *Communication and Language Usage*.

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 310-340 San Lorenzo Unified students and 1,586-1,595 county-wide students.

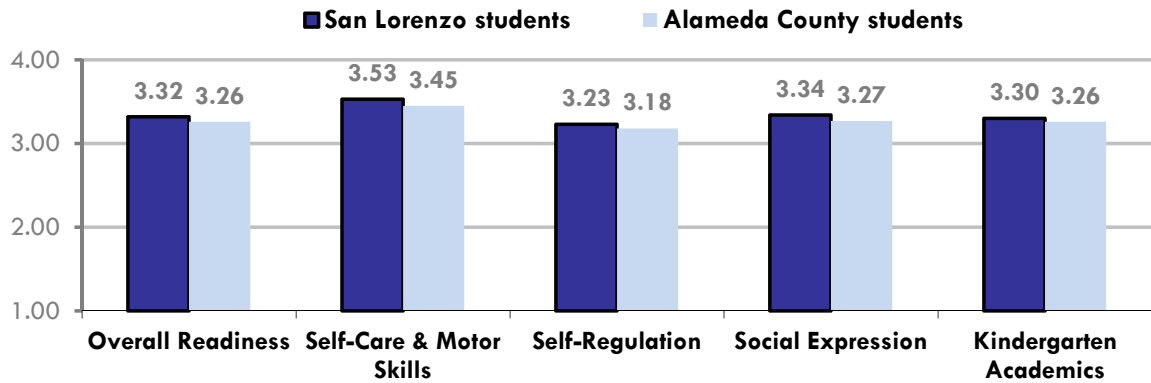
Statistical exploration of children's performance across 24 readiness skills revealed that skills reliably sorted into an alternate readiness skills framework, which has been labeled the four *Basic Building Blocks* of readiness:⁴

- *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 Lorenzo Unified students were highest in *Self-Care & Motor Skills*, and they were lowest in *Self-Regulation*.

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

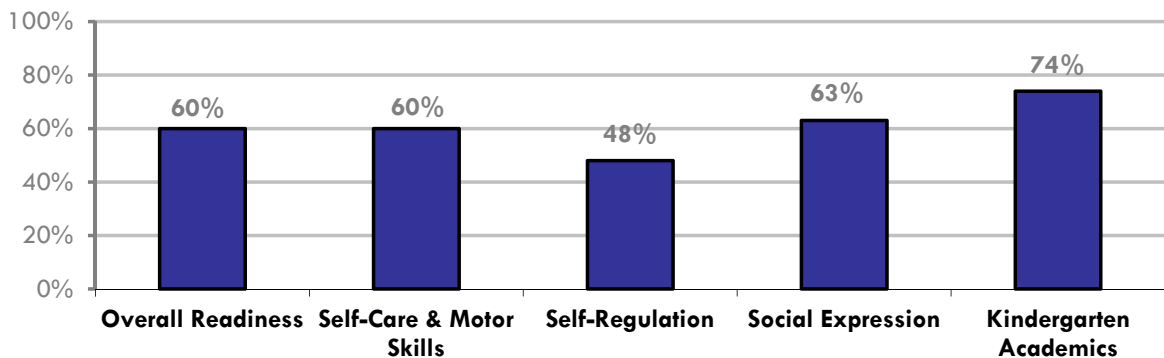


Note: Means can range from 1 to 4. Scale points are as follows: 1=not yet, 2=beginning, 3=in progress, 4=proficient. Scores are based on 334-340 San Lorenzo Unified students and 1,541-1,595 county-wide students.

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

Overall, 60 percent of the students assessed in the San Lorenzo 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 *Kindergarten Academics*, in which nearly three out of four students were at or above the levels teacher felt they should have at kindergarten entry; 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 334-340 San Lorenzo students. Percentages are based on students meeting the average expectations of all San Lorenzo 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.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

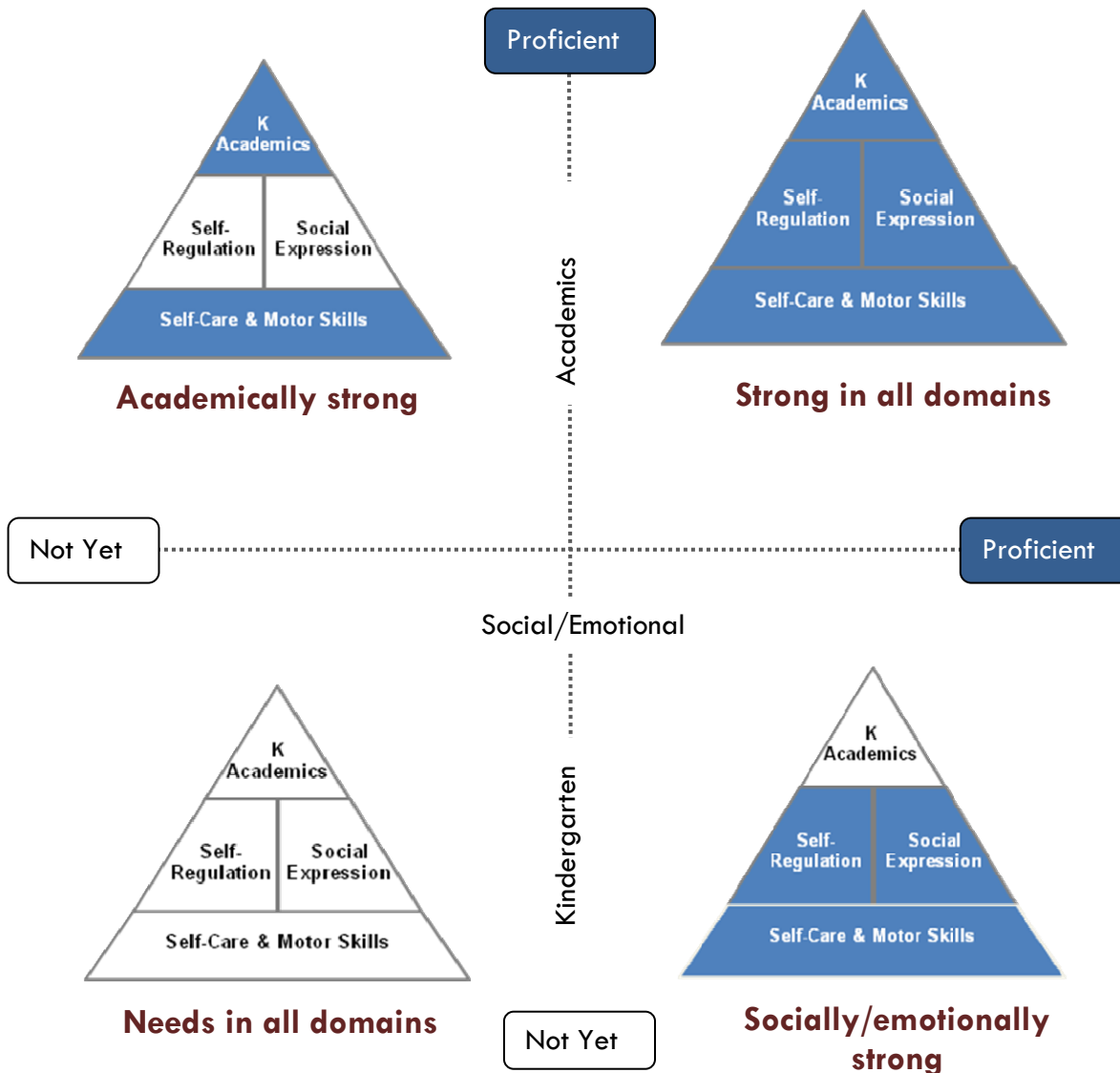


Figure 16 on the following page shows the percentage of San Lorenzo Unified and county-wide students who sorted into each of the four *Readiness Portraits*.

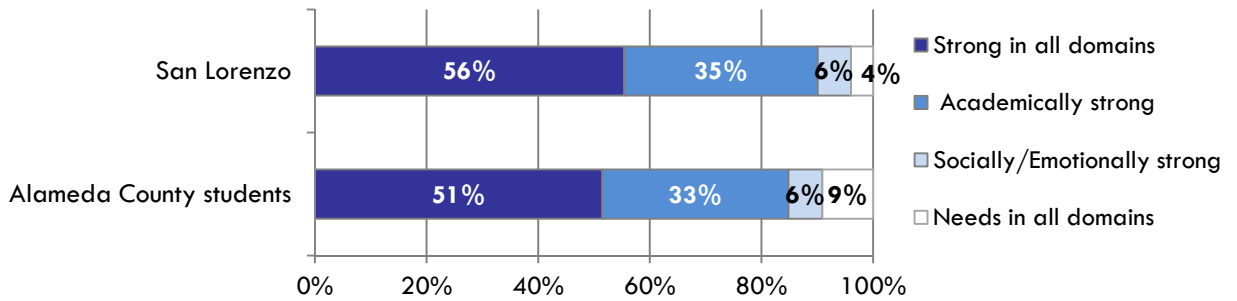
- *Strong in all domains:* More than half (56%) of the assessed San Lorenzo Unified students entered kindergarten classrooms at or near proficiency across all four *Basic Building Blocks*

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:* Only four 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, 35 percent of San Lorenzo 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:* Six percent of San Lorenzo 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).

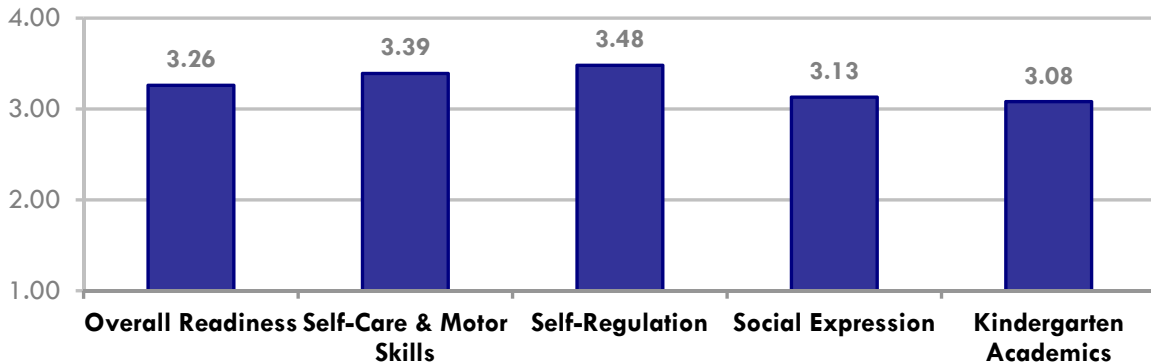
Note: This chart is based on 334 San Lorenzo Unified students and 1572 county-wide students.

An Overview of San Lorenzo 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 Lorenzo Unified kindergarten teachers thought their students should have when they enter school. The San Lorenzo Unified teachers expected the highest proficiency on *Self-Regulation*. They expected the lowest proficiency levels on skills in the *Kindergarten Academics* domain.

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 17 San Lorenzo Unified teachers.

When San Lorenzo 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 was named by 16 of 17 teachers, along with several different Self-Regulation skills.

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	16
Controls impulses and self-regulates	Self-Regulation	11
Stays focused/pays attention during activities	Self-Regulation	9
Works & plays cooperatively with others	Self-Regulation	8
Comforts self, using adult guidance when appropriate	Self-Regulation	6

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

Note: Scores are based on 17 San Lorenzo Unified teachers.

San Lorenzo 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, but use of small manipulatives – from the *Self-Care & Motor Skills* domain – was also selected.

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
Counts 10 objects correctly	Kindergarten Academics	11
Recognizes basic colors	Kindergarten Academics	11
Recognizes primary shapes	Kindergarten Academics	9
Uses small manipulatives	Self-Care & Motor Skills	9
Engages with books	Kindergarten Academics	8

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

Note: Scores are based on 17 San Lorenzo Unified teachers.

When San Lorenzo Unified teachers prioritized the five skills on which they spent the most class time, their choices were focused on letter recognition and several skills related to *Self-Regulation*.

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
Recognizes letters of the alphabet	Kindergarten Academics	13
Stays focused/pays attention during activities	Self-Regulation	10
Controls impulses and self-regulates	Self-Regulation	9
Negotiates with peers to resolve social conflicts	Self-Regulation	8
Participates successfully in circle time	Self-Regulation	8

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

Note: Scores are based on 17 San Lorenzo 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 San Lorenzo 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.

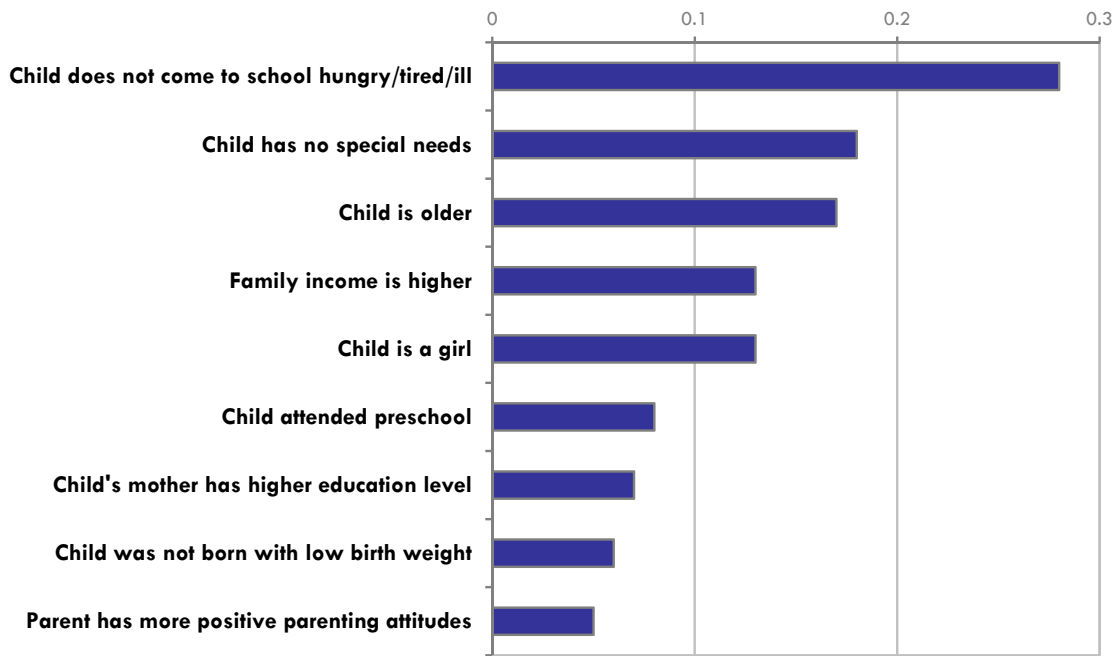
Figure 21 shows the results of this analysis; depicted are those factors that are significantly related to overall kindergarten school readiness after taking into account all of the other variables. The strongest predictor of readiness was students' well-being. Although there were relatively few children 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

The majority of students in San Lorenzo 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*. These students generally have somewhat higher readiness levels than their peers in other regions of the county. This is somewhat surprising, given that rates of preschool attendance – a consistently strong predictor of readiness levels among entering kindergarteners – were 10% lower in San Lorenzo than they were for the county-wide sample (52% versus 62%, respectively).

One contributor to higher readiness levels in this sample may be the First 5 Alameda County Summer Pre-K (SPK) program. 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. 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.

San Lorenzo Unified School District has a large SPK program, with nine classrooms operating at nine different school sites. In addition to the 52 percent of students in this sample who had attended preschool, another 20 percent of the students in the district sample had attended SPK. Such high numbers of SPK graduates might have contributed to the higher-than-expected readiness levels in this region. Future efforts should continue to ensure the availability of this program in San Lorenzo Unified to "close the gap" for the relatively large proportion of students in this area who have not had a longer-term preschool experience.

When San Lorenzo Unified students' readiness levels are compared to the levels of readiness their teachers feel they should have for successful entry into kindergarten, there continue to be somewhat large gaps between students' readiness and their teachers' expectations in the domain of *Self-Regulation*. Only about half of students (48%) had *Self-Regulation* skill levels that were at or above the levels teachers felt they needed. Given that there are such large gaps between students' typical skill levels and the skills levels teachers think they should have, there may be some value in bringing teachers together to learn more about how they bridge those gaps in their classrooms, as well as what additional resources and/or training they may need to do so more effectively.

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