



RESULTS OF THE 2015 FALL ASSESSMENT

SCHOOL READINESS

in Alameda County

DISTRICT REPORT, FREMONT UNIFIED

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School Readiness Assessment



Table of Contents

Table of Figures	3
Acknowledgments	4
Study Summary	5
Student Characteristics	7
School Readiness of Fremont Students & Families	10

Table of Figures

Figure 1.	Participating Fremont Unified School District Schools and Teachers.....	4
Figure 2.	How SRA Sample Demographics Compare to District At Large	7
Figure 3.	Sampled Students’ Sex, Age, and Special Needs Status.....	8
Figure 4.	Sampled Students’ Early Care Experiences.....	8
Figure 5.	Mother’s Education and Family Income of Sampled Families	9
Figure 6.	Students’ Proficiency across Three Building Blocks of Readiness.....	10
Figure 7.	Percentage of Students Fully Ready, Partially Ready and Not Ready for School.....	11
Figure 8.	Percentage of Students Ready for School, by <i>Building Block</i>	12
Figure 9.	Fremont Unified Students’ Proficiency Levels Across 20 School Readiness Skills	13
Figure 10.	Family Support and Engagement Indicators	15
Figure 11.	Readiness by Family Income and Mother’s Education	16
Figure 12.	Readiness by Sex, Age, and EL Status	17
Figure 13.	Readiness by Hunger/Tiredness and Special Needs	17
Figure 14.	Readiness by Preschool Experience and Family Reading.....	18

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- Alicia Norling, Kindergarten Teacher, Harvey Green Elementary
- First 5 staff members who helped with designing and implementing the 2015 Alameda County school readiness assessment project, including Carla Keener, Chris Hwang, and Lisa Erickson.

Of course, this assessment would not be possible without the support of the 15 participating kindergarten teachers who generously gave their time and energy to help us better understand the skills of the children entering their classrooms (Figure 1). These teachers dedicated ample time to a training, student observations, and project management.

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

School	Teachers
Forest Park Elementary	Malinda Elliott
	Stephanie Chan
	Sherra Garabedian
	Aubrie Reeves
Harvey Green Elementary	Alicia Norling
James Leitch Elementary	Shirley Gunawan
	Mandi Boni
John G. Mattos Elementary	Melissa Means
	Monique Manjarrez
	Danika Heggebo
Mission San Jose Elementary	Kelly Berbereia
Mission Valley Elementary	Sheri Carlson
Niles Elementary	Emily Langford
	Maria Lin
Patterson Elementary	Evelina Chao

Study Summary

Background

This report describes the state of school readiness and related findings for kindergarten students in eight out of 29 elementary schools in Fremont Unified School District at the start of the 2015-16 school year. The study was funded by First 5 Alameda County and the Alameda County Interagency Children's Policy Council. It represents the sixth school readiness study conducted since 2008 and, like the study conducted in 2013, it drew participants from across the county.

The data presented in this report represent 287 students from 15 classrooms across the eight schools in Fremont Unified. This sample size was smaller than the one drawn in 2013, when 340 students in 17 classrooms (11 schools) in the district participated. Seven of the 11 schools included in 2013 were also included in 2015.

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

Key Findings

Research Question	Findings	How to Interpret Findings
<p>1. How do HUSD readiness levels compare to levels countywide?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 52% of Fremont students in the sample were <i>fully ready</i> for kindergarten. Across all students countywide, 44% were fully ready. – Likewise, the average score of the Fremont students was significantly higher (3.53 out of 4) than the students in the full Alameda County sample (3.31). – Fremont students had significantly higher scores than the county at large in Kindergarten Academics skills: 88% of Fremont students were fully ready in this area, as compared to 64% countywide. – Fremont students' scores in Self-Regulation and Social Expression were more similar to the countywide averages than Kindergarten Academics skills. 	<p>Children who are <i>fully ready</i> for school demonstrate proficiency or near proficiency in skills across all three primary domains of readiness: Self-Regulation (ability to regulate emotion and attention), Social Expression (ability to relate appropriately to peers and adults), and Kindergarten Academics (academic skills, such as counting, knowing letters, and rhyming).</p> <p>Some of the differences in readiness scores between Fremont students and the overall county are related to the demographic make-up of the Fremont sample. In particular, Fremont students were <i>less</i> likely than their peers countywide to be English Learners and to come from low income families, both of which are significantly associated with lower school readiness scores. They were also more likely to attend preschool or TK, which is associated with higher scores.</p>
<p>2. What kinds of experiences did Fremont students and parents have that contribute to readiness?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 92% of students attended preschool or Transitional Kindergarten (TK) – 90% of parents visited the school with their child before the first day. – 71% of children read with parents at least five times per week. – At least 64% of parents received some kind of information about helping their child prepare for school. – 62% of parents tell stories and sing songs with their children at least five times per week. 	<p>The literature on school readiness considers not only the preparation of the child, but also that of the family for the child's entry into school. Parents and other caregivers play a critical role in helping the child successfully transition to school by offering quality early learning experiences. Some of the activities listed here, such as sending the child to preschool and reading with the children, have a direct, positive relationship with school readiness.</p> <p>Compared to families in the county overall, families in Fremont were more likely to engage in school readiness activities with their children.</p>
<p>3. What characteristics and experiences were most strongly associated with being ready for school?</p>	<p>Each of the following were positively associated with readiness within Fremont USD:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Child's age – Preschool attendance – English proficiency (not an English Learner) – Being a girl – Special needs – Not hungry or tired 	<p>The factors listed here are found to influence school readiness in Alameda County and nationwide. In addition to the factors associated with readiness in Fremont specifically, countywide analyses showed readiness to be positively associated with family income, mother's education, being regularly read to by a caregiver, and not coming to school hungry or tired.</p> <p>Although some of the predictors are unmalleable traits (e.g., sex), they tell us who is in greatest need of support prior to kindergarten entry (e.g., boys, younger children, and English Learners), and what kinds of interventions (e.g., preschool) are necessary to address gaps in readiness.</p>

Student Characteristics

Sample Description

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

The Fremont school readiness assessment sample included 287 kindergarteners across 17 schools. Based on the 2014-15 enrollment counts reported by the California Department of Education (official enrollment counts for 2015-16 are not yet available), the sample represented 10 percent of all kindergarten students in the district. When compared to 2014-15 district enrollment data, the 2015 school readiness sample included smaller proportions of English Learners and of Latino/Hispanic than the district at large. The Fremont assessment sample also had a smaller proportion of English Learners and of Latino/Hispanic and Black/African American children than the overall countywide school readiness study sample.

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

Student Characteristics		2014-15 FUSD K Enrollment (n=2,986)	Fremont SRA Sample (n=287)	Alameda County SRA Sample (n=1530)
English Learners		38%	31%	40%
Race/ Ethnicity	Latino/Hispanic (of any race)	16%	10%	43%
	Black/African American	1%	<1%	8%
	Asian/Pac. Islander	61%	69%	23%
	White	11%	12%	12%
	Filipino	5%	2%	4%
	Multiple Race/Ethnicity	5%	12%	17%

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

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

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

Student Characteristics	Fremont	Alameda County
Boys	52%	50%
Girls	48%	50%
Age at kindergarten entry (Avg = 5.5 years)		
Under 5 years	0%	1%
Between 5.0 and 5.5 years	41%	46%
Older than 5.5 years	59%	53%
Has diagnosed special need(s)	6%	8%
Does not have special needs	94%	92%

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2015). Note: Sample size=287 (Fremont); 1530 (Alameda County). Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Almost all children in the district had spent time in licensed early care settings in the year prior to starting kindergarten. Nine of out ten students had some sort of formal early learning experience such as a licensed preschool or child care center (75%) or Transitional Kindergarten (24%). Three percent of students attended a licensed family child care home rather than a center-based preschool. Seven percent did not attend any type of licensed preschool, child care, or Transitional Kindergarten. A greater proportion of children in Fremont attended TK, licensed preschool, or child care compared to the full countywide sample.

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

Type of Child Care Arrangements Before Kindergarten	Fremont	Alameda County
Licensed preschool or childcare center (e.g., Head Start, State Preschool, private – teacher or parent report)	75%	66%
Transitional Kindergarten (TK)	24%	22%
Attended either Preschool or TK	92%	81%
Licensed care in someone’s home (teacher or parent report)	3%	5%
No TK, preschool, or licensed child care outside of home	7%	16%

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2015), Parent Information Form (2015). Note: Sample sizes (from top to bottom): 282 (Fremont); 1405-1483 (Alameda County). Percentages sum to more than 100 because more than one source of care could be selected.

Of the 261 children (91% of the Fremont sample) whose parents answered questions about their income and maternal educational attainment on the Parent Information Form, most appeared to live in

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

relatively high-SES households. Three quarters of the children came from families with incomes of at least \$100,000, and nine out of 10 children’s mothers had college degrees (Figure 5). As shown in the table below, families in Fremont had considerably higher educational attainment and incomes than families in the full countywide sample.

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

Mother’s Educational Attainment	Fremont	Alameda County
Less than high school	2%	15%
High school diploma	3%	16%
Some college	6%	21%
Associate’s degree	5%	9%
Bachelor’s degree	39%	22%
Advanced degree	45%	17%
Family Income	Fremont	Alameda County
Under \$15,000	<1%	15%
\$15,000-\$34,999	4%	23%
\$35,000-\$49,999	1%	12%
\$50,000-\$74,999	8%	12%
\$75,000-\$99,999	13%	8%
\$100,000 or more	75%	30%

Source: Parent Information Form (2015).
 Note: N=261 (Fremont); 1309 (Alameda County). Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

School Readiness of Fremont Students & Families

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

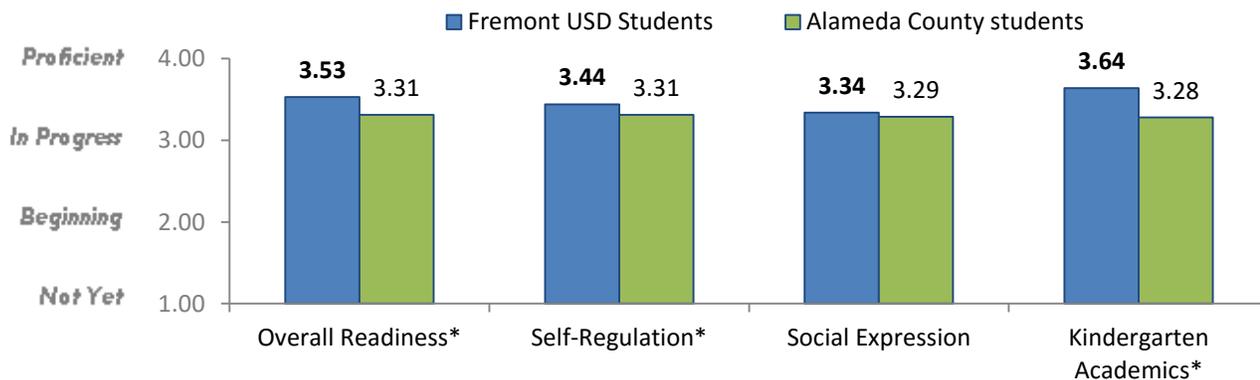
Basic Building Blocks of Readiness

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

- *Self-Regulation* (basic emotion regulation and self-control skills needed in the classroom)
- *Social Expression* (skills related to interacting with adults and other children)
- *Kindergarten Academics* (skills such as writing, counting, and identifying shapes and colors)

Figure 6 (below) presents the average overall readiness score and average scores for the *Self-Regulation*, *Social Expression* and *Kindergarten Academics* Building Blocks in the district. Students’ scores on the two *Motor Skills* items are presented in a following section. Overall, Fremont students’ readiness levels were higher than those of the rest of the county (3.53 in Fremont, 3.31 countywide weighted average). The overall score difference is due primarily to higher *Kindergarten Academics* in Fremont compared to the rest of the county, as well as higher *Self-Regulation* scores in Fremont. The differences within *Social Expression* were not statistically significant.

Figure 6. **Students’ Proficiency across Three Building Blocks of Readiness**



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2015).

Note: N=287 in Fremont & 1,460 in Alameda Co. (county means weighted by district and English Learner rates). *p<.05

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

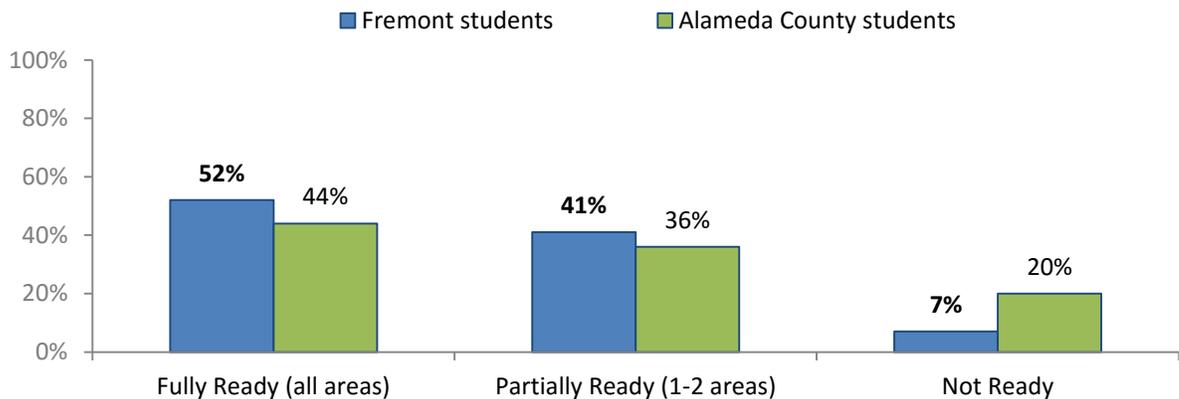
Percent of Students Ready for School

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

- **FULLY READY:** Students who are socially and academically well prepared for school. Their average scores within three Building Blocks—*Kindergarten Academics*, *Self-Regulation*, and *Social Expression*—were between 3.25 and 4.00 (on a scale of 1-4).
- **PARTIALLY READY:** Students who had an average Building Block score of 3.25 or higher in one or two blocks, but not all three. Students in this group tend to have a wide variety of skill combinations. For example, a student may be proficient in academics and self-regulation but lacks social expression skills.
- **NOT READY:** Students who are not well prepared for school in any of the three areas. Their average scores within each of the *Kindergarten Academics*, *Self-Regulation*, and *Social Expression* domains were below 3.25.

Figure 7 (below) displays the percentage of students from Fremont and Alameda County that were classified into each of the three categories. The percentage of Fremont students “Fully Ready” in all domains was eight percentage points higher than in the county overall (52% vs. 44%), and the “Not Ready” percentage was 13 points lower in Fremont (7% vs 20%). These differences were statistically significant.

Figure 7. **Percentage of Students Fully Ready, Partially Ready and Not Ready for School**



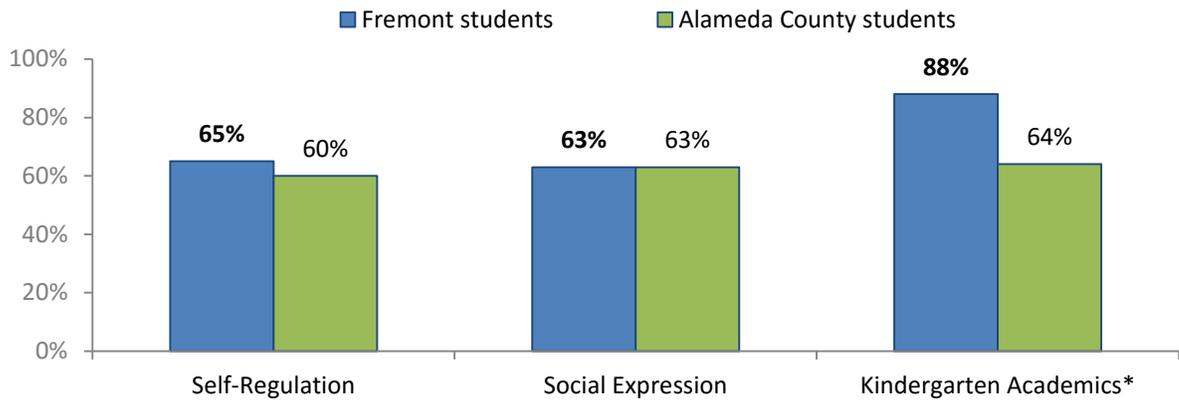
Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2015).

Note: Scores are based on 272 Fremont Unified students and 1,460 countywide students weighted by district and EL status. The differences are statistically significant ($p < .05$) based on a chi-square test.

Percent Ready by Building Block

To illustrate the relative strengths of children in the Fremont sample, Figure 8 displays the percentage of students whose average scores were at least 3.25 within each Building Block, in comparison with the countywide percentages. Children in Fremont were ready in *Social Expression* and *Self-Regulation* at a rate similar to the countywide sample, but a much higher proportion of Fremont students were ready in *Kindergarten Academics* compared to students across the county.

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



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2015).

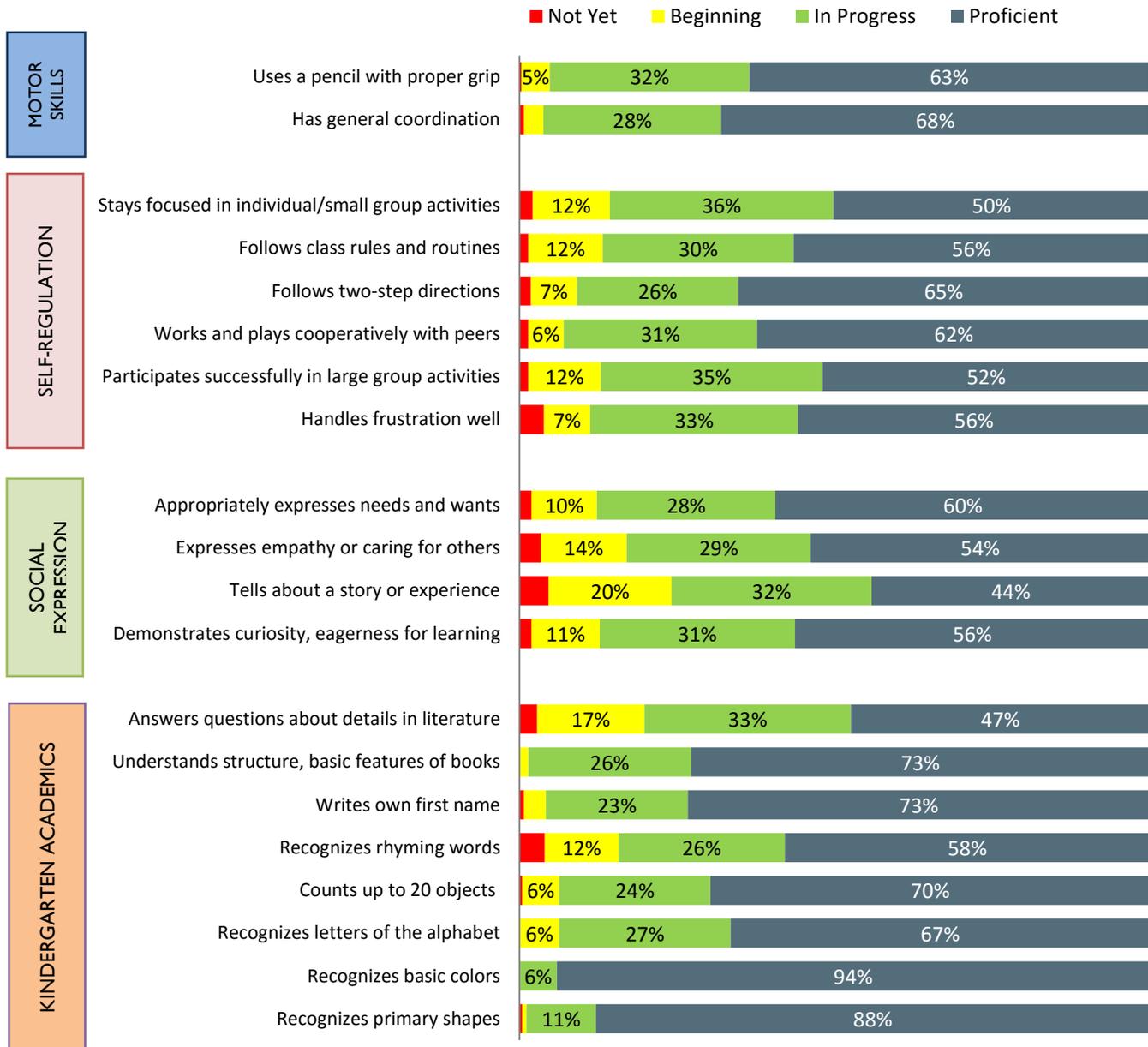
Note: Scores are based on 272-287 Fremont Unified students and 1,460 countywide students weighted by district and EL status.

*Statistically significant difference, $p < .05$

Student Performance on Each Readiness Skill

The proportion of students in the district receiving each rating for the 20 readiness skills is shown below. Nearly all students were proficient in recognizing basic colors (94% proficient), while students appeared to have the least proficiency in telling about a story or experience (44% proficient) and answering questions about details in literature (47% proficient).

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



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2015). Sample size=233-287. Note: Scores range from 1 (Not yet) to 4 (Proficient). Proportions of less than 5% are not labeled.

Family Support and Engagement Indicators

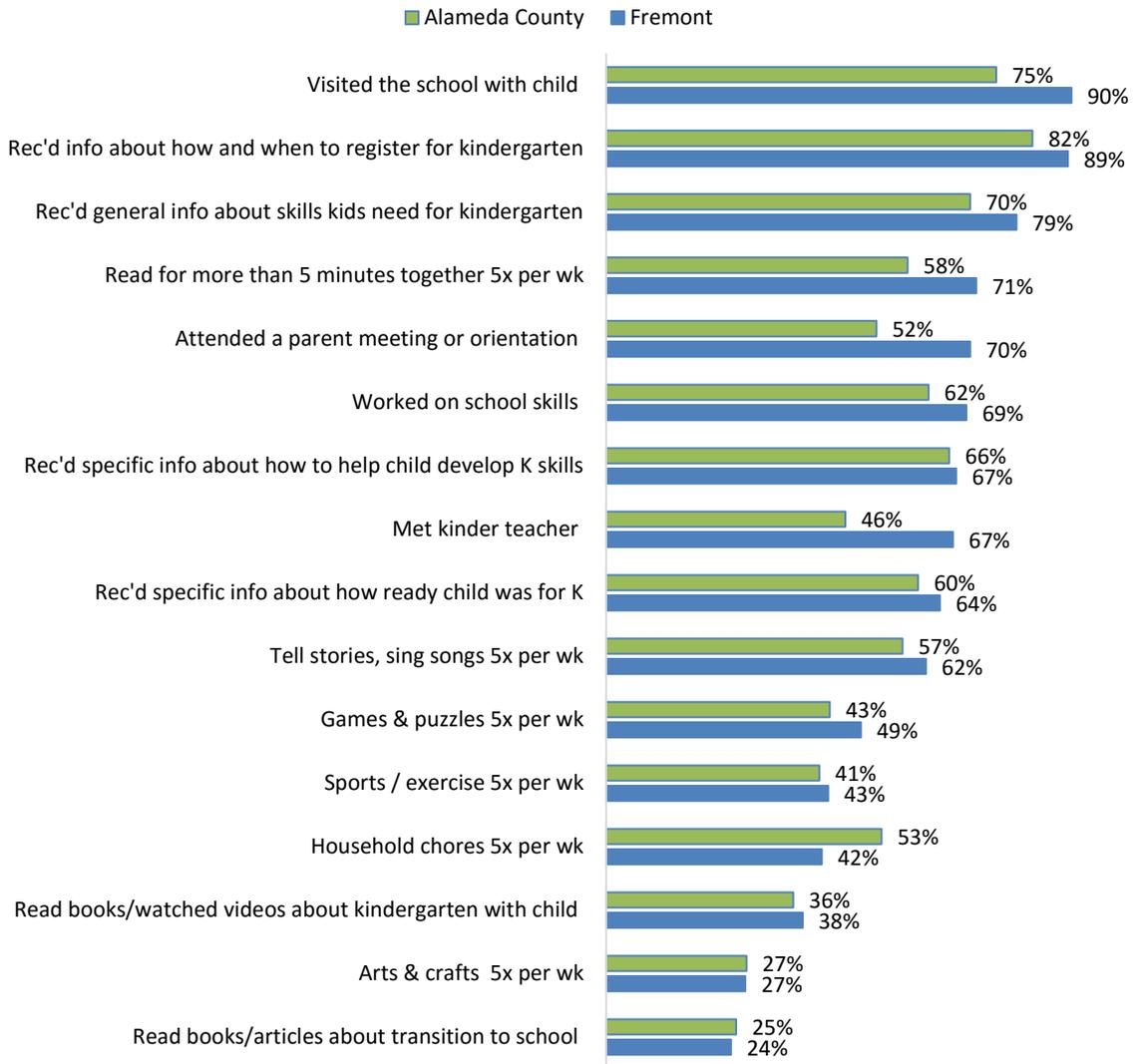
An abundance of research indicates that the family is the primary force in preparing children for school and life. The quality and degree of their interactions, and specific actions taken to nurture and prepare children for school, play a crucial role in any child's development. Some have been found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

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

The chart below lists the percentage of parents that reported receiving readiness information and engaging in specific activities to support their children's readiness for school (Figure 10). Sixty-four percent of Fremont parents reported receiving some information about preparing for kindergarten, the most common of which was information about how and when to register for school (89%).

In terms of actions parents took to help their child prepare for the beginning of school, the most common activity was visiting the school with their child before the school year began (90%). Over two-thirds of parents reported meeting their kindergarten teacher (67%), working on school skills with their child (69%), attending a parent meeting or orientation (70%), or reading with their child at least five times per week (71%). Parents in Fremont were generally more likely than parents in the overall county sample to engage in school readiness activities with their children.

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



Source: Parent Information Form (2015). N=267 (Fremont); 1214-1369 (Alameda County).

Readiness Levels by Child and Family Background and Experiences

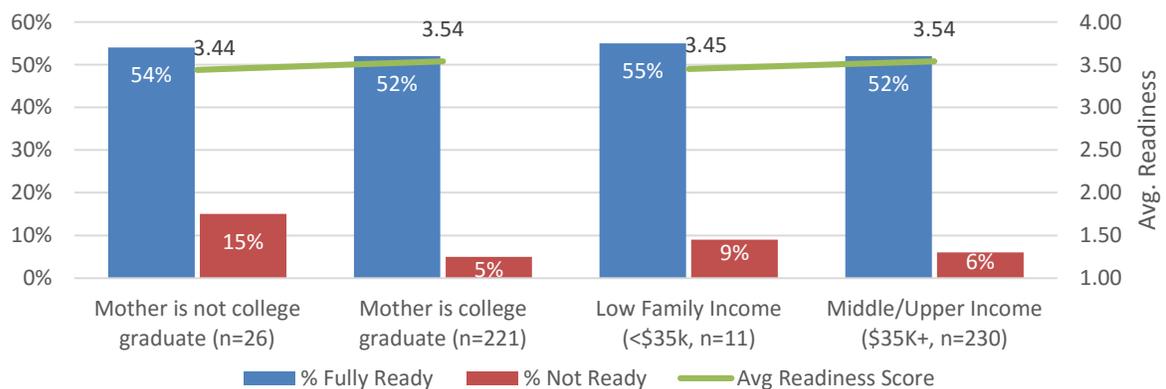
In 2015, several child and family traits and experiences strongly predicted higher readiness scores or being Fully Ready in Alameda County overall³:

- Coming from a higher SES family (mother has more than a high school education and/or family earns at least \$35,000 per year)
- Being a girl
- Being older
- Being proficient in English
- Not coming to school hungry or tired
- Not having a special need
- Attending licensed preschool or TK in the prior year
- Being read to at least 5 times per week

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

In Fremont, the comparison among children with different SES levels was not illustrative of the associations between income and school readiness because most families had relatively high incomes (three-quarters earned \$100,000 or more) and nearly all mothers had college degrees. As a result, there were no statistically significant differences between these factors and readiness (Fig. 11).

Figure 11. **Readiness by Family Income and Mother’s Education**



Source: KOF (2015), PIF (2015).

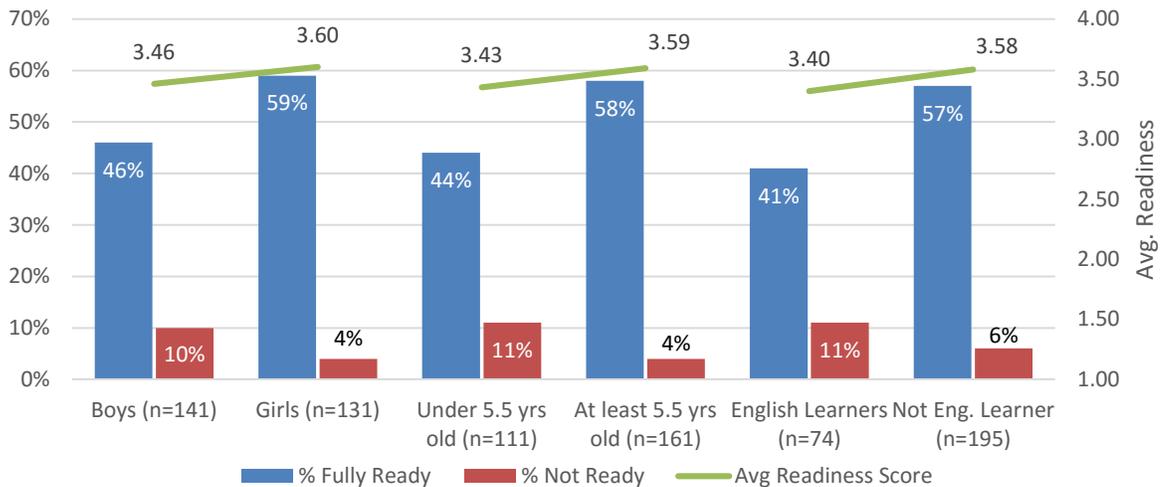
Note: Mean differences were not statistically significant based on mother’s education and family income.

³ These findings are based on multiple regression models controlling for age, gender, having a special need, being an English Learner, family income, mother’s education, race/ethnicity, preschool attendance, teacher’s rating of child’s hunger/tiredness, and parent’s reported frequency of reading to their child. See the countywide report for more details.

⁴ Percentages and means in figures 11-14 are “raw” figures (i.e., they do not control for other factors).

Figure 12 displays the relationship between school readiness outcomes and three other attributes commonly associated with readiness. As is the case with most studies of school readiness, girls were slightly more ready than boys, older children more ready than younger children, and English-proficient children were more ready than English Learners.

Figure 12. **Readiness by Sex, Age, and EL Status**

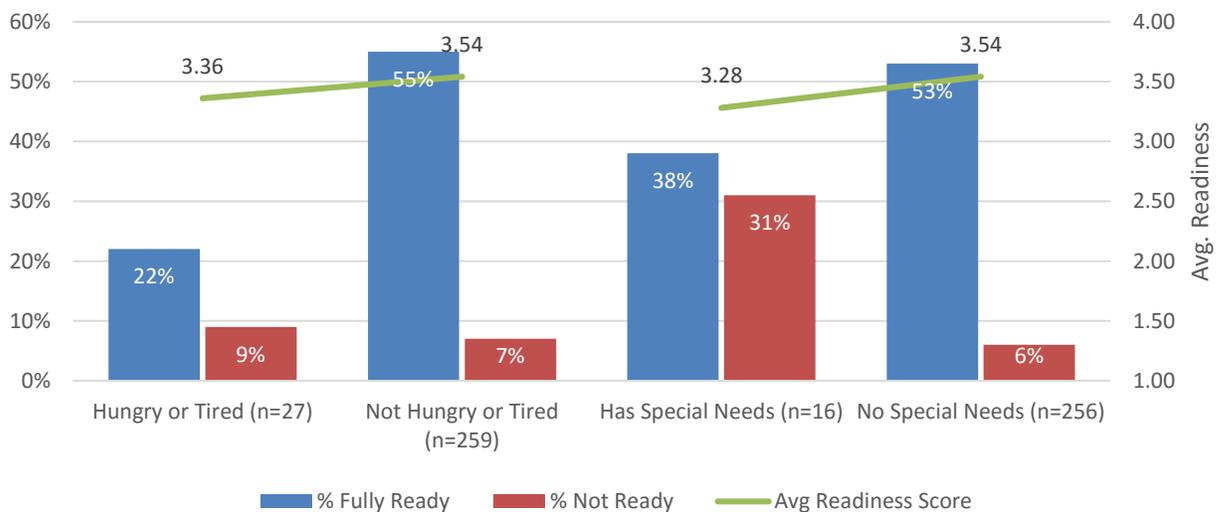


Source: KOF (2015), PIF (2015).

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

Fremont children who came to school hungry or tired at least occasionally, or who were identified as special needs, were less likely to be ready for school than those who were never hungry or tired, or did not have special needs.

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



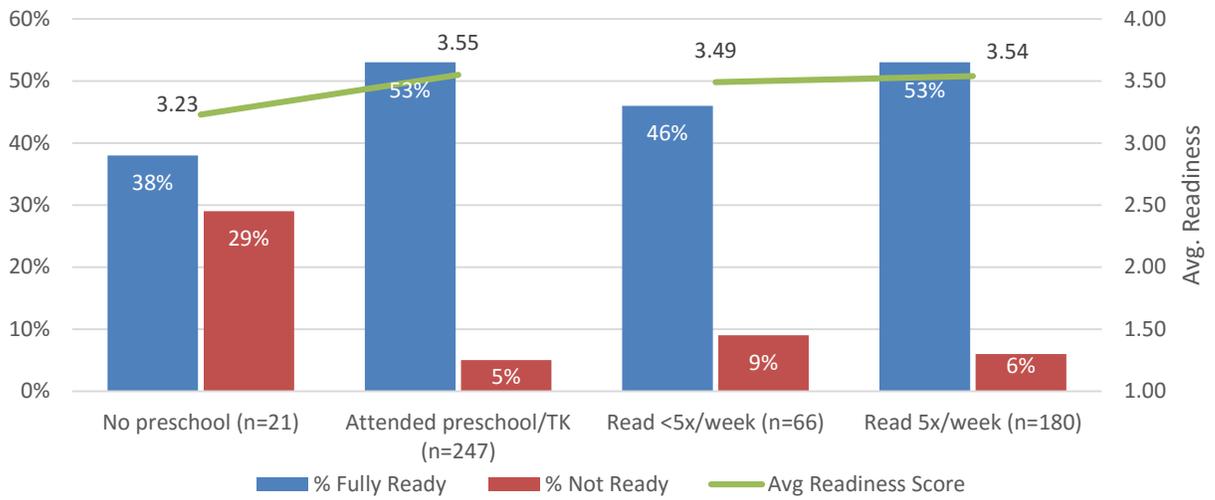
Source: KOF (2015), PIF (2015).

Note: Mean differences were statistically significant ($p < .05$) based on special needs status and hunger/tiredness.

As Figure 14 shows, children who attended preschool (or TK) were more ready for school than children who did not. However, in contrast to countywide and national patterns, there was no statistically

significant difference in readiness between Fremont children whose parents read with them at least five times per week and those whose parents did not.

Figure 14. **Readiness by Preschool Experience and Family Reading**



Source: KOF (2015), PIF (2015).

Note: Mean differences were statistically significant ($p < .05$) based on preschool experience only.