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Introducing a Universal County-wide Tool to Assess Kindergarten Readiness

Policy Brief

Power of the New Tool

- Provides a holistic, population health measure of children's health, well-being, and school readiness
- Predicts ELA and Math Scores in 3rd and 5th grades
- Reflects how well 0-5 systems support children
- Points to the structural conditions for systems, communities, and families that can be improved through policy-making

First 5 Alameda County is proud to share that the Early Development Instrument (EDI) has been formally adopted as the standardized assessment tool that will allow us to collect data on kindergarten readiness across the County.

In anticipation of the local Measures—the Oakland Children's Initiative and the Children's Health & Child Care Initiative for Alameda County—First 5 engaged in a participatory process to select a tool that will help us better understand kindergarten readiness among the County's youngest learners. On behalf of young children, their families, and communities, and with the support of 13 county school districts, the participation of the California Teachers Association, and in partnership with the Alameda County Office of Education, we selected the EDI, administered by the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

The combination of new voter-approved tax revenues and the robust kindergarten readiness data we will gain from the use of the EDI will position Alameda County to better address longstanding inequities, and become a state and national leader in early childhood education. The EDI will be used to inform local education, health and human service budgets, and policy advocacy.

The adoption of this new tool marks an evolution of data collection and the availability of information about what our communities' children are experiencing in early childhood. With the implementation of the EDI, we will have a holistic and comprehensive dataset measuring the systemic conditions that shape school readiness.

At a time when cultural and linguistic bias and chronic underinvestment limit the ability of public institutions to fully support families with young children, the interpretation and prioritization of this data, in partnership with the community, will support a more intentional understanding of local assets and needs. This deeper understanding, along with more resources, collaboration across systems, and new programs and policies, can help establish a more equitable early childhood system that serves all of Alameda County.

School Readiness: A Critical Indicator

Since 1998, First 5 has made investments in communities and families in service to the 100,000 young children who call Alameda County home.

Previously collected data around kindergarten readiness in Alameda County has shown that disparities among young learners are largely based on socioeconomic factors such as family income and access to child care and community resources, which have intersectional connections to structural racism.

Local and national data have illustrated the importance of kindergarten readiness and it is clear children's positioning as they enter kindergarten has a lasting impact on their quality of life through adulthood. We have found the following, which is highly correlated with long-term educational achievement and life outcomes.



Guided by a “whole community, whole family, whole child” policy and programming approach to our work, First 5 has funded and scaled programs targeted at the root causes of local disparities like summer Pre-K programs, home visits to parents/caregivers, pediatric care and coordination, and placed-based initiatives like Neighborhoods Ready for School. In the fiscal year 2022-23, we served:



Next Steps: System Building

This new assessment tool is an important step towards a future where every child in Alameda County starts kindergarten ready to succeed.

Throughout the implementation, we will continue to convene district stakeholders, host trainings, provide capacity support, and establish data-sharing agreements. As part of this work, First 5 Alameda County will partner with the community to interpret the collected data to inform future investments, guide policy agendas, and improve systems of care.

Most importantly, the rollout and implementation of the EDI will include training in diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging practices to reduce bias and ensure accurate measurements.

Evolving the Early Childhood System of Care

Since 1998, First 5 Alameda County has:

- Raised \$43.6 million from philanthropic and other funding sources
- Earned \$24 million from federal fiscal leveraging
- Awarded \$295.5 million to community partners and agencies

First 5 Alameda County helps young children grow up healthy and ready to learn during the most important time in their development. Within the Early Childhood System, First 5 Alameda County's role is to:

FUND organizations and initiatives that are mission- and vision-aligned, and part of a community-based, family-informed early childhood system.

PARTNER with parents, caregivers, communities, early childhood providers, organizations, and public agencies in service to an accessible, effective, and responsive early childhood system.

ADMINISTER programs for young children and families that offer services, navigation, and care coordination; support and connections to resources; and training and capacity building for providers.

ADVOCATE to scale and sustain effective programs and for public policies grounded in equity and justice.



About First 5 Alameda County

First 5 Alameda County helps young children grow up healthy and ready to learn during the most important time in their development. We have more than two decades of experience funding innovative programs and advocating for policies that produce better futures for our children.



first5alameda.org

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