

2018



# School Readiness

SNAPSHOT OF FINDINGS  
FROM THE FALL 2018 ASSESSMENT IN

## Santa Clara County



CONDUCTED BY:



# Acknowledgements

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*This report is dedicated to Robert C. Kirkwood (1939-2017) for his steadfast contributions in building support for community assessments of kindergarten readiness in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties. Bob recognized that these assessments can guide investments that strengthen community support for families that will improve outcomes for children.*

Applied Survey Research (ASR) would like to acknowledge the following individuals for their support and assistance in the planning and implementation of the 2018 School Readiness Assessment in Santa Clara County: Dana Bunnett, Executive Director, Kids in Common; Mary Ann Dewan, Superintendent of Schools, Santa Clara County Office of Education; and Jolene Smith, Executive Director, FIRST 5 Santa Clara County. ASR would also like to express appreciation for the study sponsors:

- FIRST 5 Santa Clara County
- Santa Clara County Office of Education
- Kids in Common
- Silicon Valley Community Foundation
- Heising-Simons Foundation
- Morgan Family Foundation

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.

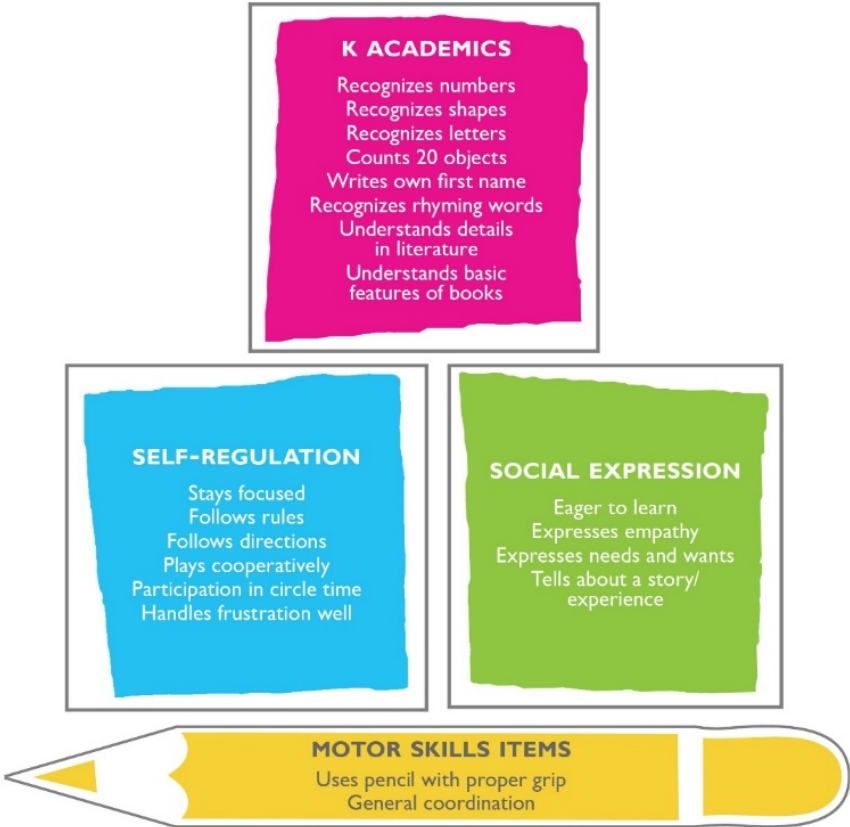
# Snapshot of the 2018 School Readiness Assessment

## Background

This brief report describes the state of school readiness and related findings for kindergarten students across Santa Clara County who started school in Fall 2018. This is the first countywide assessment conducted in the county since 2008.

The report is based on data collected about children and families at 42 schools in the county. Teachers at these schools rated their students' proficiency levels on 20 kindergarten readiness skills on a scale from 1 (*Not Yet demonstrating the skill*) to 4 (*Fully Proficient in the skill*). These readiness skills are sorted into three *Building Blocks*: *Self-Regulation*, *Social Expression*, and *Kindergarten Academics*. A fourth area includes two items related to fine and gross motor skills, which serve as a foundation for these *Building Blocks*. The pyramid below illustrates the theoretical progression of readiness skills, with foundational motor skills preceding the more advanced self-regulation and social-emotional skills. The top of the pyramid contains early academic skills, like counting and shape and letter recognition.

Figure 1. Basic Building Blocks of Readiness and Motor Skills Items



In addition to the teacher ratings, the study involved a survey of parents/caregivers pertaining to their child’s demographics, family background, and child care experiences. Please note that the information presented in this report describes only those students and families who participated in the assessment.

## Key Findings

### How ready for school were children assessed in Santa Clara County?

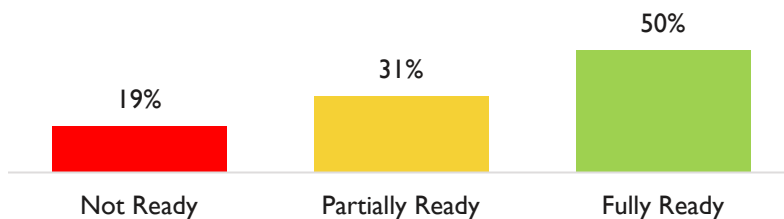
Students were considered *Fully Ready* for kindergarten in all areas if they scored at or above 3.25 out of 4 on the three *Building Blocks* – that is, if they were *Proficient* or nearing proficiency in *Self-Regulation, Social Expression, and Kindergarten Academics*.



**1 in 5**  
Children is  
*Not Ready* for K

Students were considered *Partially Ready* if they were *Proficient* or nearly proficient in one or two *Building Blocks*, and considered *Not Ready* if they were still progressing in all three areas. Using these criteria, **50%** of children in the sample were *Fully Ready* for kindergarten. Close to one in five children was *Not Ready* on any of the *Building Blocks of Readiness*. These children are at risk for a poor transition to kindergarten, as well as academic difficulties later in elementary school.

Figure 2. Percent Fully Ready for Kindergarten



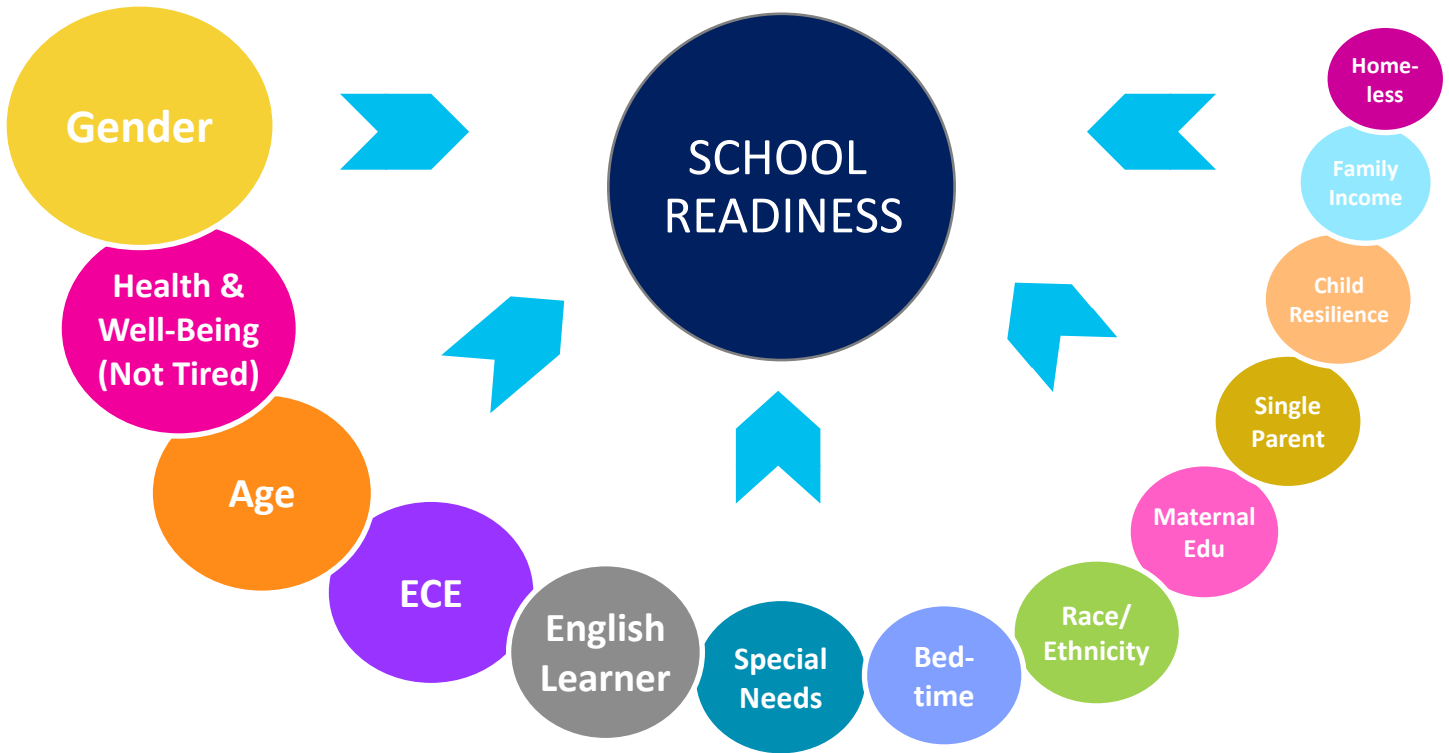
Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2018).

Note: N=1,184. Sampling weights were applied to approximate the distributions of race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and English Learner status of Santa Clara County, and the clustering effects of districts and schools were adjusted for.

### What family factors and child characteristics are associated with higher levels of school readiness?

The factors that were strongly and independently associated with readiness are illustrated in the following diagram. Although many of these predictors are related to one another, each factor in the diagram contributes to readiness even after taking into account the contributions of the other factors. For example, the impact of preschool on readiness is significant, regardless of the child’s age, race/ethnicity, or gender. The size of the circle corresponds to the strength of the relationship between the factor and readiness, after holding constant all other child and family characteristics.

Figure 3. Key Predictors of Overall School Readiness (in Order of Strength)



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2018), Parent Information Form (2018).

Note: N=729. Multi-level linear model was used to control for the clustering effects of districts and schools. All variables were significant at  $p < .05$ .

## What types of experiences and family backgrounds were characteristic of the incoming kindergarten students?

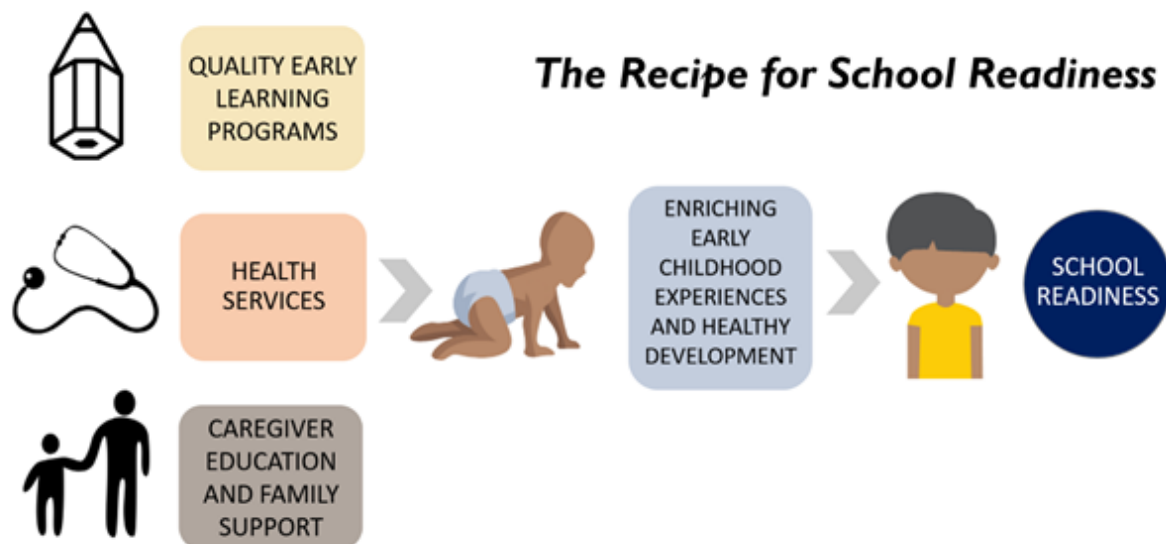
- 53% of children were female, and girls had higher readiness scores than boys.
- 18% of children came to school tired on at least some days, and these children had lower levels of readiness than their well-rested peers.
- 5.6 years old: children's average age when they entered school. Older children had higher readiness levels.
- 81% of children attended preschool, licensed family child care, or Transitional Kindergarten (TK) in the prior year; these experiences predicted higher readiness.
- 34% of children were English Learners and they had lower readiness scores than children who were proficient in English.
- 6% of children had special needs, and these children had lower readiness scores than their typically developing peers.
- 28% of children tended to go to bed after 9:00 PM; children who went to bed later had lower readiness scores.
- 34% of children were Latino/a, and they had lower readiness scores than children of other races/ethnicities.
- 23% of mothers had no more than a high school education. Lower maternal educational attainment was related to lower readiness.
- 13% of parents/caregivers considered themselves to be single. Overall, children of single parents/caregivers had lower readiness than children with more than one parent/caregiver in the home.
- 85% of children showed an average resilience score indicating that the child is able to adapt well to challenges and regulate their emotions. Children with higher resilience had higher readiness scores.
- 30% of families made under \$50,000 per year. Children from lower income families had lower readiness scores than children from higher income families.
- 7% of children had experienced homelessness at some point in their life. These children had lower readiness scores.

## What will it take to “turn the curve” on school readiness in Santa Clara County?

The findings inform approaches the community can take to help address gaps in school readiness in the county, including – but not limited to – the following:

- Quality early childhood education experiences for all children;
- Health services that promote optimal development and well-being, including developmental screenings, referrals to early intervention, and responsive early intervention systems; and
- Caregiver education and family support services to help parents/caregivers provide their children with healthy, enriching early experiences.
- Assess kindergarten readiness in the county regularly to inform early childhood policies and services, determine the effectiveness of community efforts to improve readiness, and help schools be ready to receive young children.

Partners in all sectors have a role to play in improving the quality of each child’s early experiences. The efforts of education, health, and family support providers, in collaboration with communities and parents/caregivers, can address readiness gaps in the county and ensure each child in Santa Clara County enters school ready to learn.



To learn more, access the full report here: <https://tinyurl.com/SCSRA201819>

## About the Researcher

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Applied Survey Research (ASR) is a social research firm dedicated to helping people build better communities by creating meaningful evaluative and assessment data, facilitating information-based planning, and developing custom strategies. The firm has more than 30 years of experience working with public and private agencies, health and human service organizations, city and county offices, school districts, institutions of higher learning, and charitable foundations. Through community assessments, program evaluations, and related studies, ASR provides the information that communities need for effective strategic planning and community interventions.

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