RESULTS OF THE 2015 FALL ASSESSMENT

SCHOOL READINESS
in Alameda County

DISTRICT REPORT, SAN LORENZO UNIFIED

School Readiness Assessment Model™
The ASR

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Acknowledgments

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Of course, this assessment would not be possible without the support of the 11 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 San Lorenzo Unified School District Schools and Teachers**

School	Teachers
Colonial Acres Elem.	Nancy Katen
	Tammy Braun
	Alberto Nodal
Corvallis Elem.	Kirsten Hynds
	Margie Penaranda
Grant Elem.	Angela Cattin
	Julie Henderson
Hesperian Elem.	Loredeen Burton
	Yvonne Schaff (TK class)
Lorenzo Manor Elem.	Charlotte Davis
	Cyndi Liang

Study Summary

Background

This report describes the state of school readiness and related findings for kindergarten students in five out of nine schools in San Lorenzo 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 147 students from 10 kindergarten classrooms[1] across five schools in San Lorenzo Unified. This sample was approximately half as large as the one drawn in 2013, when 283 students in 15 classrooms (from eight schools) in the district participated. Five of the eight schools from 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.

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[1] Data from the TK classroom was not included, since children attending TK are significantly younger than their peers attending kindergarten, and may differ in other, unobservable ways, as well.

Key Findings

Research Question	Findings	How to Interpret Findings
1. How do San Lorenzo USD readiness levels compare to levels countywide?	– **38%** of San Lorenzo students in the sample were *fully ready* for kindergarten. Across all students countywide, 44% were fully ready (not a statistically significant difference from San Lorenzo). – Likewise, the average score of the San Lorenzo students was slightly lower (3.28 out of 4) than the students in the full Alameda County sample (3.31). Again, however, the overall difference is not statistically significant. – More San Lorenzo students were ready in the area of **Self-Regulation** (63%) and **Social Expression** (61%) than in **Kindergarten Academics** (57%) – all of which were similar to countywide percentages.	Children who are *fully ready* 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). Some of the differences in readiness scores between San Lorenzo students and the overall county are related to the demographic make-up of the San Lorenzo sample. In particular, San Lorenzo students were more 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.
2. What kinds of experiences did San Lorenzo students and parents have that contribute to readiness?	– 79% of students attended preschool or Transitional Kindergarten (TK). – 52% of children read with parents at least five times per week. – At least 58% of parents received some kind of information about helping their child prepare for school. – 76% of parents visited the school with their child. – 58% of parents tell stories and sing songs with their children at least five times per week.	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. Families in San Lorenzo were generally as likely to engage in school readiness activities with their children as families across the county at large.
3. What characteristics and experiences were most strongly associated with being ready for school?	Each of the following were positively associated with readiness in San Lorenzo USD based on tests of statistical significance: – Child's age – Being a girl – Not having special needs – Not coming to school tired or hungry	The factors listed here are found to influence school readiness in Alameda County and nationwide. In addition to the factors associated with readiness in San Lorenzo specifically, countywide analyses showed readiness to be associated with attending preschool, English proficiency, family income, mother's education, and being regularly read to by a caregiver. 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.

Student Characteristics

Sample Description

The assessment data presented in this report were drawn from a non-representative sample of San Lorenzo 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 five-school subset of the district.

The San Lorenzo school readiness assessment sample included 147 kindergarteners across five 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 15 percent of all kindergarten students in the district. When compared to 2014-15 kindergarten enrollment data in the San Lorenzo Unified School District, the 2015 school readiness sample included a slightly larger proportion of English Learners and slightly smaller proportion of African American students than the district at large. The district also had a higher proportion of English Learners and of Latino/Hispanic children than the overall countywide school readiness study sample.

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

Student Characteristics		2014-15 SLZUSD K Enrollment (n=975)	San Lorenzo SRA Sample (n=147)	Alameda County SRA Sample (n=1530)
English Learners		42%	**50%**	40%
Race/Ethnicity	Latino/Hispanic (of any race)	57%	**61%**	43%
	Black/African American	10%	**4%**	8%
	Asian/Pac. Islander	15%	**17%**	23%
	White	9%	**6%**	12%
	Filipino	6%	**4%**	4%
	Multiple Race/Ethnicity	3%	**19%**	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 **5.6 years old**. Ten percent of students had been diagnosed with a special need by a professional.[2] The age, gender, and special needs status of children in San Lorenzo were similar to those of children in the full county sample.

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[2] 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.

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

Student Characteristics	San Lorenzo	Alameda County
Boys	47%	50%
Girls	53%	50%
Age at kindergarten entry (Avg = 5.6 years)		
Under 5 years	0%	1%
Between 5.0 and 5.5 years	42%	46%
Older than 5.5 years	59%	53%
Has diagnosed special need(s)	10%	8%
Does not have special needs	90%	92%

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2015). Note: Sample size=147 (San Lorenzo); 1530 (Alameda County). 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. Just over half the students had some sort of formal early learning experience such as a licensed preschool or child care center (54%) or Transitional Kindergarten (33%). Compared to the full countywide sample, a larger proportion of children in San Lorenzo attended TK, while a smaller proportion attended a licensed preschool or child care center. Six percent of students attended a licensed family child care home rather than a center-based preschool. Eighteen percent did not attend any type of licensed preschool, child care, or Transitional Kindergarten. These proportions were similar to the countywide sample.

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

Type of Child Care Arrangements Before Kindergarten	San Lorenzo	Alameda County
Licensed preschool or childcare center (e.g., Head Start, State Preschool, private – teacher or parent report)	54%	66%
Transitional Kindergarten (TK)	33%	22%
Attended either Preschool or TK	*79%*	*81%*
Licensed care in someone's home (teacher or parent report)	6%	5%
No TK, preschool, or licensed child care outside of home	18%	16%

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2015), Parent Information Form (2015).
Note: Sample sizes (from top to bottom): 127-142 (San Lorenzo); 1405-1483 (Alameda County). Percentages sum to more than 100 because more than one source of care could be selected.

Of the 118 children (81% of the San Lorenzo sample) whose parents who completed the income and maternal education questions on the Parent Information Form, 42 percent came from families making under $35,000, and 79 percent of children's mothers had not completed college (Figure 5). As shown in the table below, families in San Lorenzo had lower maternal educational attainment and incomes compared to families in the full countywide sample.

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

Mother's Educational Attainment	San Lorenzo	Alameda County
Less than high school	18%	15%
High school diploma	25%	16%
Some college	36%	21%
Associate's degree	10%	9%
Bachelor's degree	9%	22%
Advanced degree	3%	17%
Family Income	**San Lorenzo**	**Alameda County**
Under $15,000	12%	15%
$15,000-$34,999	30%	23%
$35,000-$49,999	20%	12%
$50,000-$74,999	18%	12%
$75,000-$99,999	9%	8%
$100,000 or more	11%	30%

Source: Parent Information Form (2015).
Note: N=118 (San Lorenzo); 1309 (Alameda County). Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

School Readiness of San Lorenzo 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.[3]

- *Self-Regulation* (basic emotion regulation and self-control skills needed to be able to perform well in the classroom)

- *Social Expression* (skills related to interacting with adults and other children)

- *Kindergarten Academics* (skills that are more academic in nature, 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, San Lorenzo students' readiness levels were not statistically significantly different from those of the rest of the county (3.28 in San Lorenzo, 3.31 countywide weighted average). However, within the area of *Kindergarten Academics,* San Lorenzo students' ratings were notably lower than those of the county at large (3.15 vs. 3.28). The differences within *Self-Regulation* and *Social Expression* were not statistically significant.

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[3] 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.

Figure 6.   **Students' Proficiency across Three Building Blocks of Readiness**
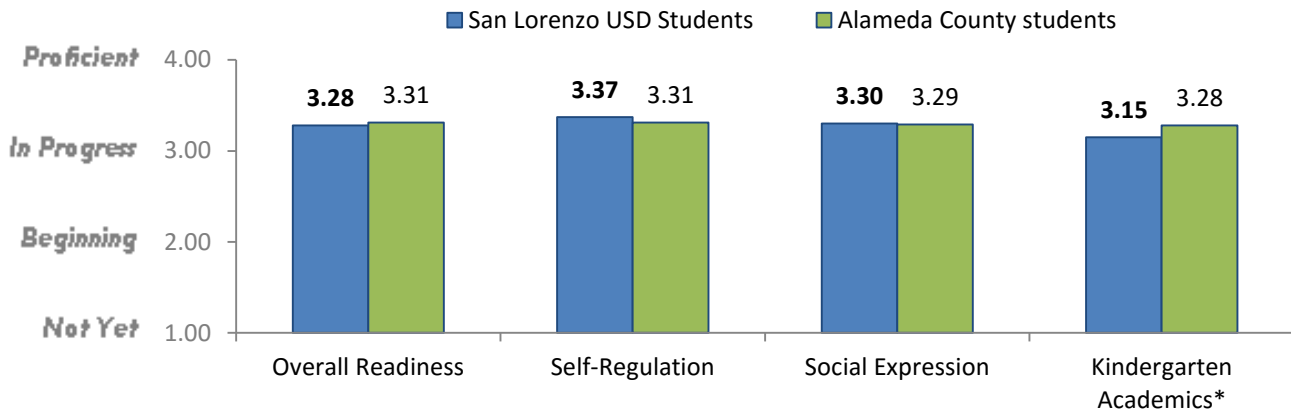
Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2015).
Note: San Lorenzo means are based on 147 San Lorenzo Unified students. For Alameda County, means are weighted by district and English Learner rates for 1,460 students.
*p<.05

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 San Lorenzo and Alameda County that were classified into each of the three categories. Although a smaller proportion of San Lorenzo students were Fully Ready compared to the countywide sample (38% vs. 44%), the differences between San Lorenzo and Alameda County students are not large enough to be considered statistically significant.

Figure 7. **Percentage of Students Fully Ready, Partially Ready and Not Ready for School**
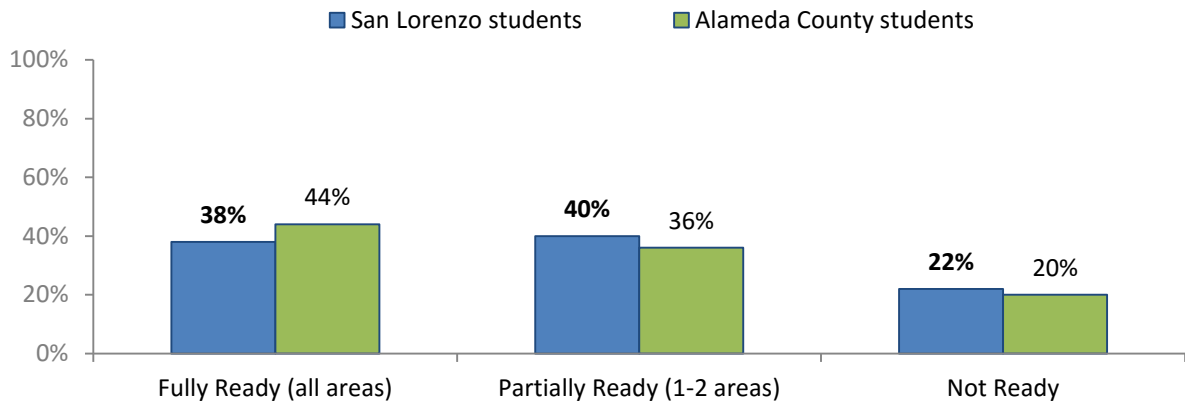
Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2015).
Note: Scores are based on 144 San Lorenzo Unified students and 1,460 countywide students weighted by district and EL status. The differences are *not* statistically significant (p>.05) based on a chi-square test.

Percent Ready by Building Block

To illustrate the relative strengths of children in the San Lorenzo 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 San Lorenzo were not significantly different from the county at large in terms of the percent Ready within each of the three Building Blocks. Though seven percent fewer students were ready in *Kindergarten Academics,* the difference and district sample size are not great enough to be considered statistically significant.

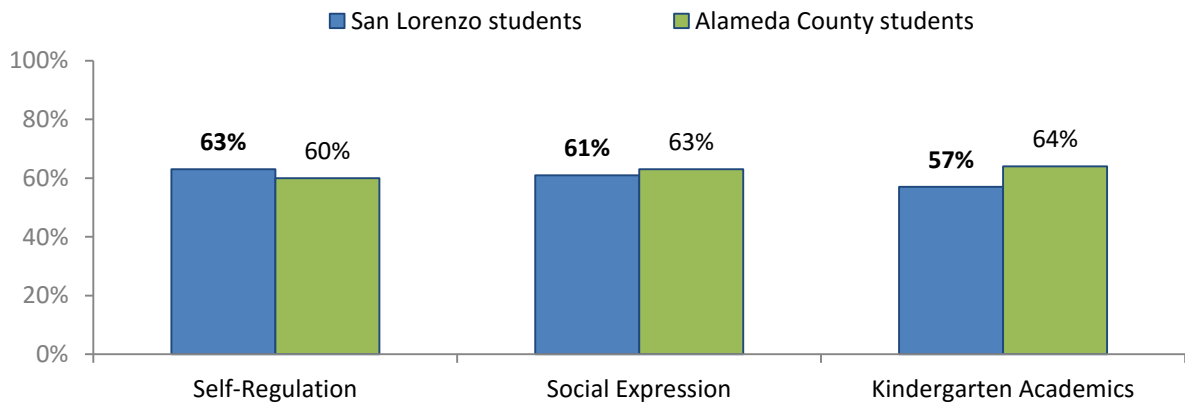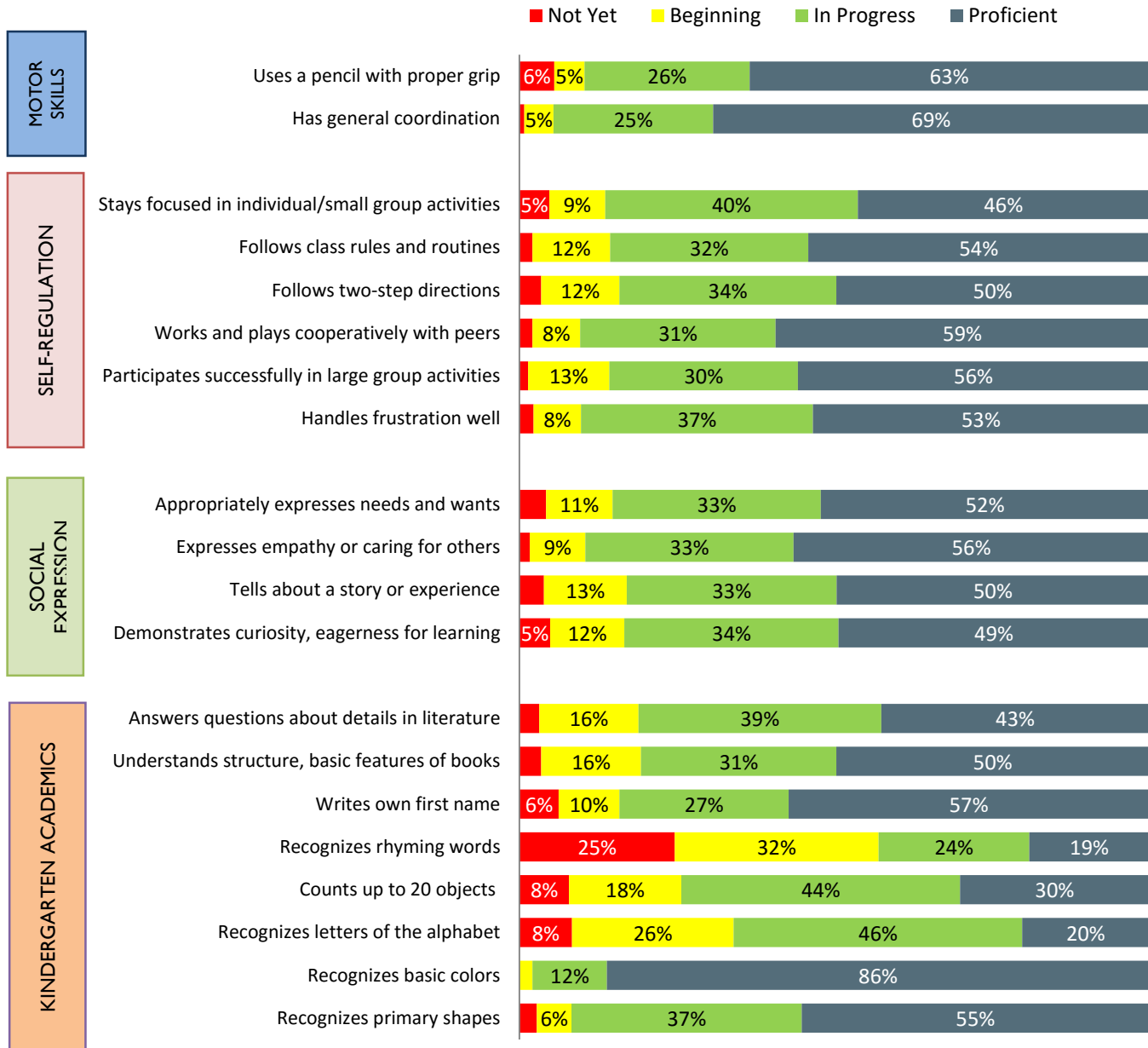Figure 8. **Percentage of Students Ready for School, by *Building Block***

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2015).
Note: Scores are based on 145 San Lorenzo Unified students and 1,460 countywide students weighted by district and EL status. None of the differences between SLZ and Alameda students are statistically significant (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. A high proportion of students were proficient in recognizing basic colors (86% proficient), while students appeared to have the least proficiency in recognizing rhyming words (19% proficient) and recognizing the letters of the alphabet (20% proficient).

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

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

MOTOR SKILLS
- Uses a pencil with proper grip: Not Yet 6%, Beginning 5%, In Progress 26%, Proficient 63%
- Has general coordination: Beginning 5%, In Progress 25%, Proficient 69%

SELF-REGULATION
- Stays focused in individual/small group activities: Not Yet 5%, Beginning 9%, In Progress 40%, Proficient 46%
- Follows class rules and routines: Beginning 12%, In Progress 32%, Proficient 54%
- Follows two-step directions: Beginning 12%, In Progress 34%, Proficient 50%
- Works and plays cooperatively with peers: Beginning 8%, In Progress 31%, Proficient 59%
- Participates successfully in large group activities: Beginning 13%, In Progress 30%, Proficient 56%
- Handles frustration well: Beginning 8%, In Progress 37%, Proficient 53%

SOCIAL EXPRESSION
- Appropriately expresses needs and wants: Beginning 11%, In Progress 33%, Proficient 52%
- Expresses empathy or caring for others: Beginning 9%, In Progress 33%, Proficient 56%
- Tells about a story or experience: Beginning 13%, In Progress 33%, Proficient 50%
- Demonstrates curiosity, eagerness for learning: Not Yet 5%, Beginning 12%, In Progress 34%, Proficient 49%

KINDERGARTEN ACADEMICS
- Answers questions about details in literature: Beginning 16%, In Progress 39%, Proficient 43%
- Understands structure, basic features of books: Beginning 16%, In Progress 31%, Proficient 50%
- Writes own first name: Not Yet 6%, Beginning 10%, In Progress 27%, Proficient 57%
- Recognizes rhyming words: Not Yet 25%, Beginning 32%, In Progress 24%, Proficient 19%
- Counts up to 20 objects: Not Yet 8%, Beginning 18%, In Progress 44%, Proficient 30%
- Recognizes letters of the alphabet: Not Yet 8%, Beginning 26%, In Progress 46%, Proficient 20%
- Recognizes basic colors: Beginning 12%, Proficient 86%
- Recognizes primary shapes: Beginning 6%, In Progress 37%, Proficient 55%

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2015). Sample size=145-147. Note: Scores range from 1 (Not yet) to 4 (Proficient). Proportions of less than 5% are not labeled.
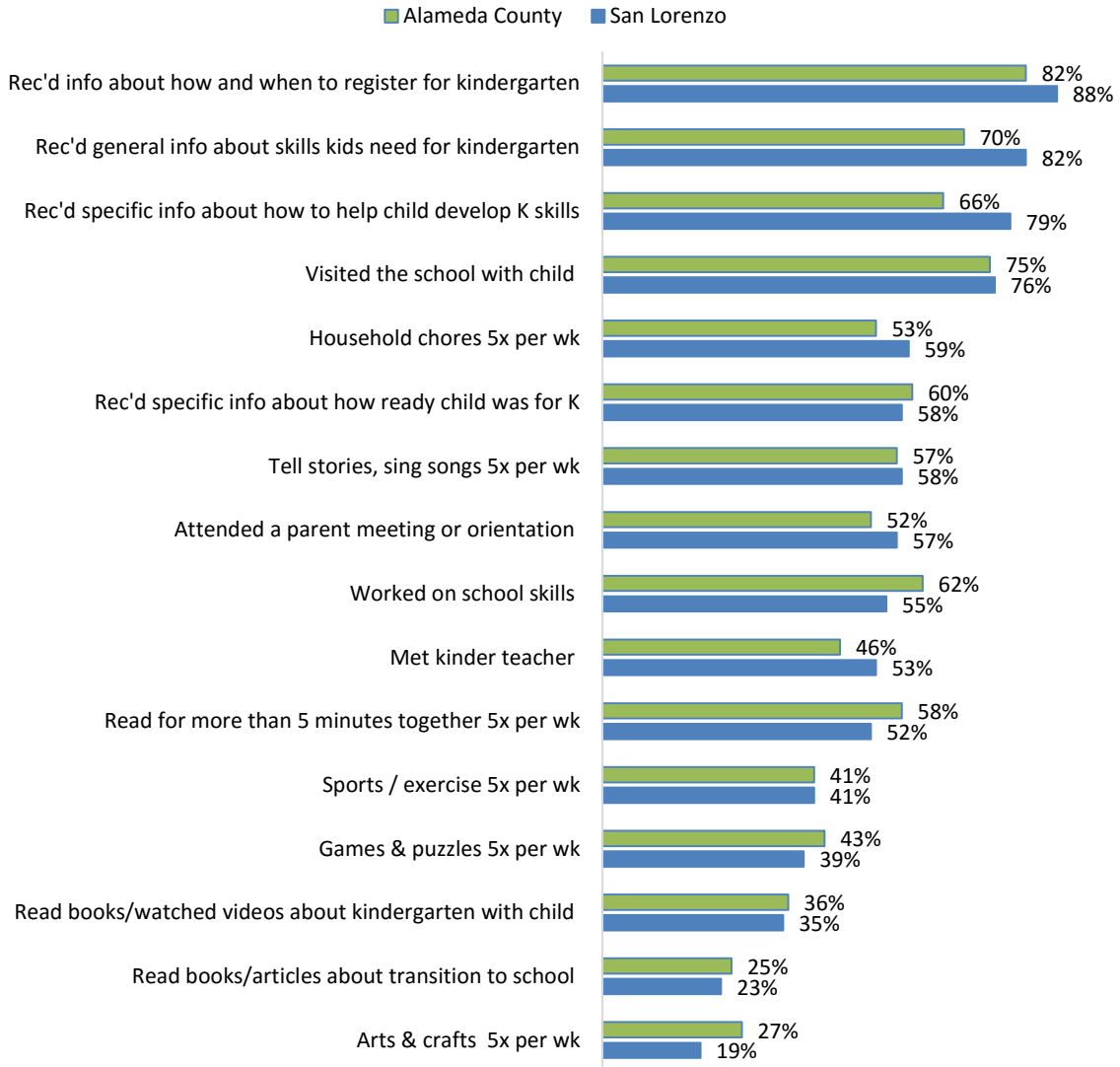
Family Support and Engagement Indicators

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). At least 58 percent of San Lorenzo parents reported receiving information about preparing for kindergarten, the most common of which was information about how and when to register for school (88%). Parents in San Lorenzo were generally more likely than parents in the countywide sample to report receiving readiness information.

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 (76%). Over half reported working on school skills with their child (55%), reading with their child at least five times per week (52%), attending a parent meeting or orientation (57%), or meeting their child's kindergarten teacher (53%). A few family activities were somewhat less common among families in San Lorenzo compared to families in Alameda County overall, such as working on school skills and reading together, while others were more common in the district, including meeting the kindergarten teacher and attending a parent meeting or orientation.

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

■ Alameda County ■ San Lorenzo

	Alameda County	San Lorenzo
Rec'd info about how and when to register for kindergarten	82%	88%
Rec'd general info about skills kids need for kindergarten	70%	82%
Rec'd specific info about how to help child develop K skills	66%	79%
Visited the school with child	75%	76%
Household chores 5x per wk	53%	59%
Rec'd specific info about how ready child was for K	60%	58%
Tell stories, sing songs 5x per wk	57%	58%
Attended a parent meeting or orientation	52%	57%
Worked on school skills	62%	55%
Met kinder teacher	46%	53%
Read for more than 5 minutes together 5x per wk	58%	52%
Sports / exercise 5x per wk	41%	41%
Games & puzzles 5x per wk	43%	39%
Read books/watched videos about kindergarten with child	36%	35%
Read books/articles about transition to school	25%	23%
Arts & crafts 5x per wk	27%	19%

Source: Parent Information Form (2015). N=147 (San Lorenzo); 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 <u>Alameda County overall</u>[4]:

- 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

Several of these factors were also predictive of readiness within the <u>San Lorenzo Unified sample specifically</u>. The charts below illustrate how differences in San Lorenzo 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.[5]

Differences in San Lorenzo between children based on family income or mother's education were small and not statistically significant.

Figure 11. **Readiness by Family Income and Mother's Education**
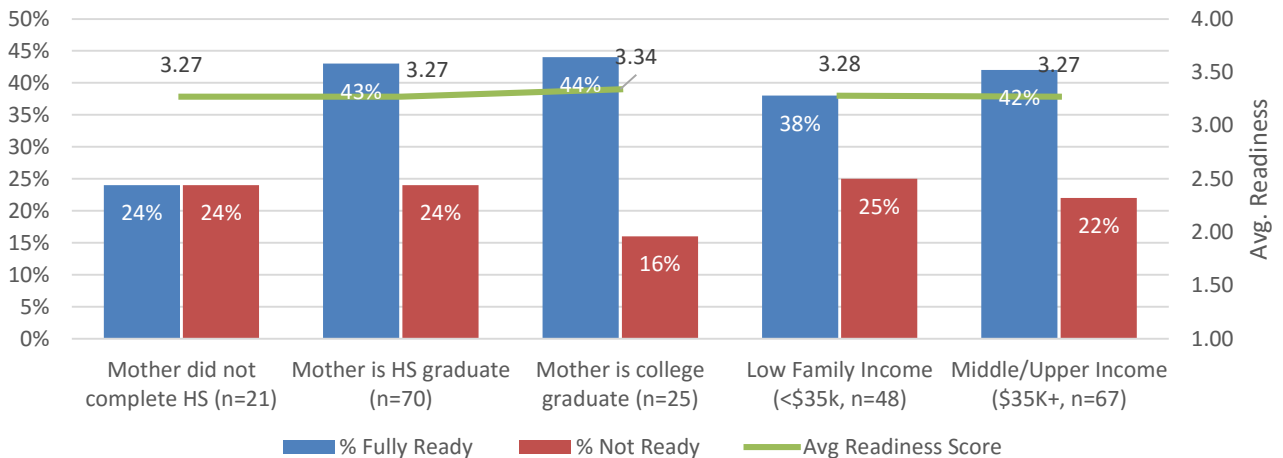
Source: KOF (2015), PIF (2015).
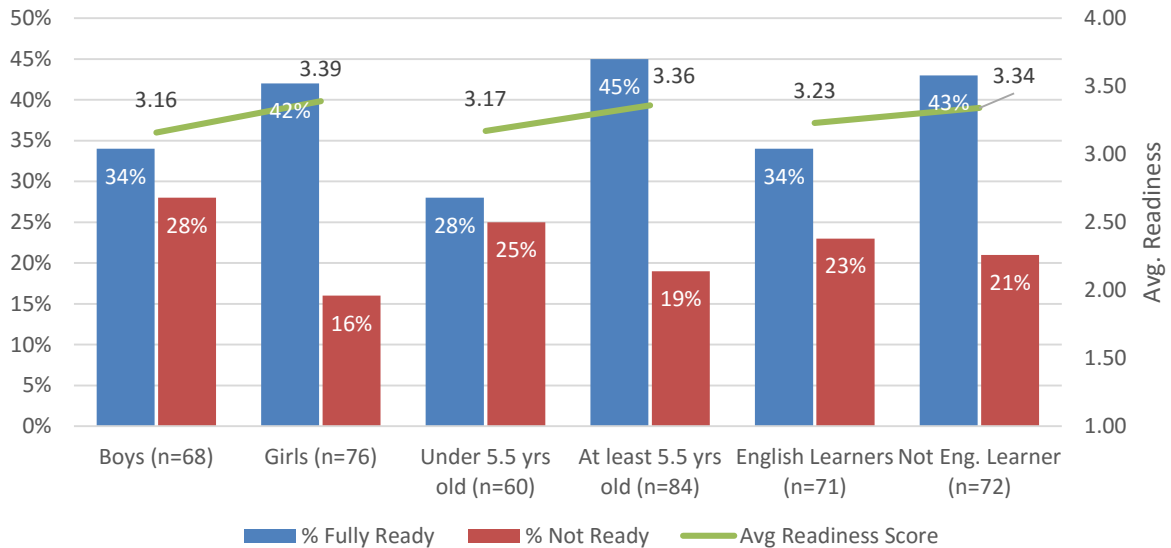Note: Mean differences were not statistically significantly different.

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

Figure 12 displays three other attributes commonly associated with readiness. As is the case with most studies of school readiness, girls in San Lorenzo were slightly more ready than boys and older children more ready than younger children by statistically significant margins. In contrast, the differences between English Learners and non-English Learner students in the district were not statistically significant.

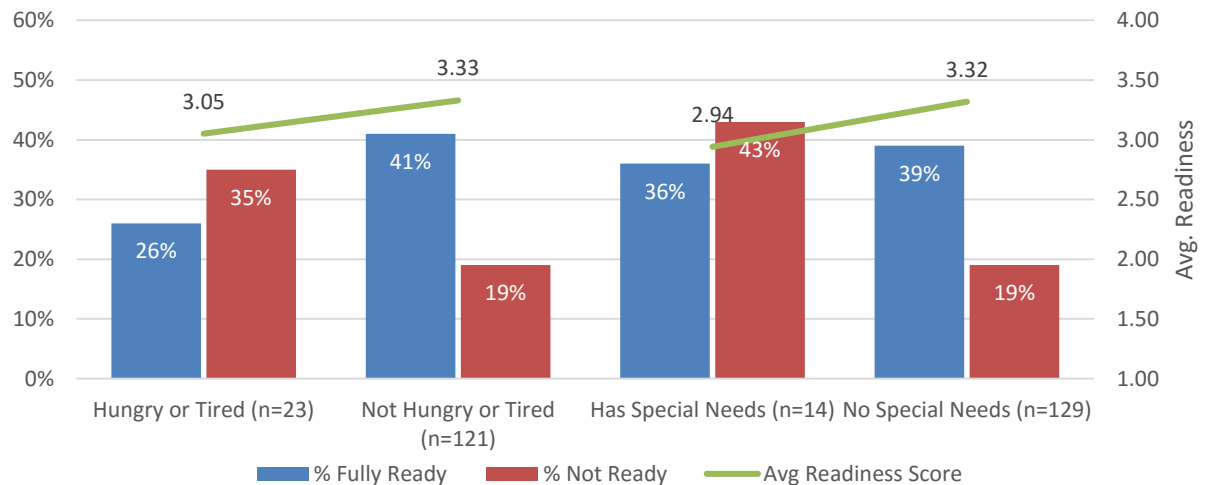Figure 12.   **Readiness by Sex, Age, and EL Status**

Source: KOF (2015), PIF (2015).
Note: Mean differences were statistically significant (p<.05) based on sex and age (not EL status).

As was the case in the countywide sample, children in San Lorenzo who came to school hungry or tired at least occasionally and children with special needs were less likely to be ready for school than those who did not come to school hungry or tired and those who 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 hungry/tired and special needs status.

Although the average readiness scores of children who attended preschool (or TK) or whose parents read with them at least five times per week were higher than those without such experiences, the differences observed in San Lorenzo were not statistically significant (Figure 14).

Figure 14.   **Readiness by Preschool Experience and Family Reading**
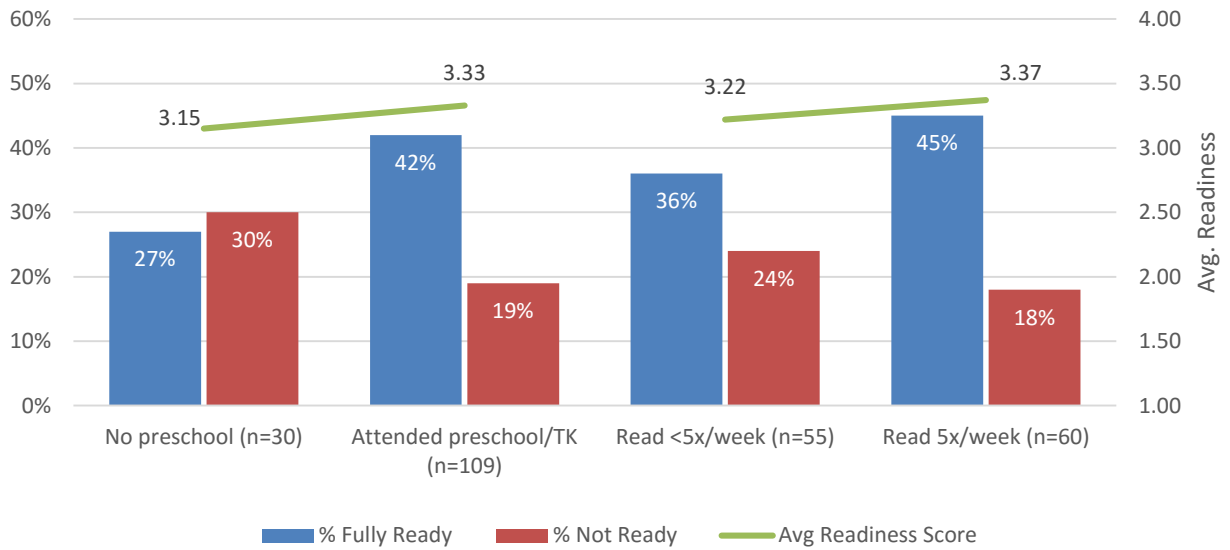
Source: KOF (2015), PIF (2015).
Note: Mean differences were *not* statistically significant (p<.05) based on preschool experience and reading time.