

EVERY CHILD READY:

→ CLOSING THE SCHOOL READINESS GAP ←

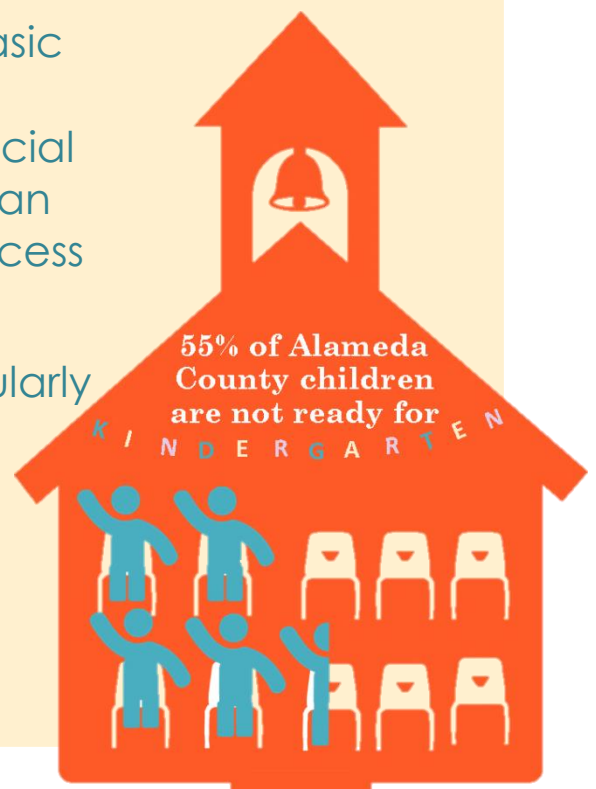
in

ALAMEDA COUNTY

Are kids in Alameda County ready for school?

Findings from the
Alameda County
Kindergarten Readiness Assessment
indicate:

- **Only 45%** of Alameda County children are ready for kindergarten in all four Basic Building Blocks of school readiness.
- Children are least ready for school in the **self-regulation** domain of the Basic Building Blocks.
- Readiness in all four of the Basic Building Blocks (Self-Care and Motor Skills, Self-Regulation, Social Expression and Academics) is an **early indicator** of a child's success in third grade.
- Third grade success is particularly important because it a strong predictor of **high school graduation**.



WHAT IS SCHOOL READINESS?

School readiness is more than academic. A child's readiness for school is multi-faceted, encompassing physical, social and emotional well-being, in addition to a child's academic readiness for school. **School readiness begins at birth.** "By the time children have turned three, they have already begun to lay the foundation for the skills and abilities that will help them succeed in school."¹

School readiness is more than just about children. School readiness skills are formed, shaped and supported by **families, communities and schools.** "Children are not innately "ready" or "not ready" for school. Their skills and development are strongly influenced by their families and through their interactions with other people and environments before coming to school."²

First 5 Alameda County uses the **BASIC BUILDING BLOCKS OF READINESS** framework, developed by Applied Survey Research, to measure children's readiness for school during the first weeks of Kindergarten:

Academics	Social Expression	Self-Care & Motor Skills	Self-Regulation
Recognizes letters Recognizes shapes Recognizes colors Can count 10 objects Engages with books Writes own first name Recognizes rhyming words	Expresses empathy Relates well to adults Has expressive abilities Curious & eager to learn Expresses needs & wants Engages in symbolic play	Use of small manipulatives Has general coordination Performs basic self-help / self-care tasks	Comforts self Pays attention Controls impulses Follows directions Negotiates solutions Plays cooperatively Participates in circle time Handles frustration well

UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL READINESS

Quality and consistent early learning experiences from birth through kindergarten are critical to children's ability to be ready to succeed. Research indicates that the achievement gap begins before children enter kindergarten. Therefore, school readiness is paramount to building children's social and emotional development and academic success before they transition into kindergarten.

WHAT THE RESEARCH TELLS US:

- Children who are persistent, attentive, and able to regulate their emotions at kindergarten entry have better reading and math performance through fifth grade.³
- Fine motor skills, attention skills, and academic readiness skills in kindergarten predict later math, reading, and science scores better than academic readiness skills alone.⁴
- While most struggling readers can learn to read if given the additional help they need in the early grades, far too many students fail to catch up. One study found that 44 out of 50 students who were poor readers at the end of 1st grade remained poor readers at the end of 4th grade.⁵
- Parents (even middle-class parents) don't always have the facts. Families don't always understand how important reading is in the early grades. Some 73% of Americans wrongly believe that if children enter kindergarten unprepared to read, they will catch up in elementary school.⁶

Based on the findings from the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, we know that:

Interventions should start early and promoting self-regulation skills in the first five years of life is essential

Focusing strategies on impacting any of the predictors of School Readiness will have a positive impact on a child's readiness for school

KEY STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE SCHOOL READINESS:

Strategies to support school readiness should be comprehensive and should focus on **families, schools and communities**.^[CH1]

We can close the school readiness gap in Alameda County

Provide Information to Parents to Help Them Work on Their Children's Readiness:

Children whose parents and other caregivers received information about how ready their child was for school and information about how to better prepare him/her for school had stronger readiness skills than children of parents who did not receive this information.

Support Children's Health and Well-being: Programs that promote positive health and well-being in young children and link their families to basic needs such as affordable housing, access to healthy food and to medical care through a primary care physician, can go a long way toward improving children's academic and social-emotional development. Early childhood home visiting is an example of an evidenced based strategy working to do to this for pregnant mothers and families with children birth to three years of age.

Screen Children Early for Developmental and Behavioral Concerns:^[CH2] Efforts to ensure that all children receive developmental screening in a variety of settings such as pediatric clinics, early care and education programs and community-based play and learn groups, help to increase families' knowledge of child development and identify when there is a need for guidance and/or a referral to resources.

Provide Additional Support for Younger Kindergartners and Their Teachers: All teachers must be provided the time and resources to support younger students, especially at the beginning of the school year. Teachers should also have access to classroom aides and/or specialists (i.e. literacy/math coaches, mental health or occupational therapists) to support their teaching.

Promote High-Quality Preschool and Early Learning Experiences: Districts and community partners should increase high-quality early education experiences, particularly for children who are currently underrepresented in licensed preschool settings. This should also include access to play and learn groups, field trips, and other engaging early learning experiences offered at a variety of places throughout the community like museums, family resource centers, parks and libraries. Mental health consultation and services should also be integrated into early learning environments to assist providers in developing strategies to support the social emotional development of the children they serve and to connect children and families to resources when social emotional issues arise.

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO CLOSE THE SCHOOL READINESS GAP

1. Encourage all Alameda County school districts to participate in the **2015 School Readiness Study**

2. Support efforts to **increase early learning** and development programs (ELD) in your community through the state's new education finance model, the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). Visit Children Now for more information: www.childrennow.org

3. Get involved with **Early Edge California**, an organization working to ensure all children have the early experiences necessary to be successful learners by the end of 3rd grade, setting them on a path to college and career readiness. www.earlyedgecalifornia.org/

4. Get involved in **local policy efforts** and training opportunities focused on improving children's school readiness. Visit the First 5 Alameda County for more information: www.First5Alameda.org

Sources

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