School Readiness in Berkeley Unified School District

2010 Assessment — District Results

RESEARCH STUDY FUNDED BY:
FIRST 5 ALAMEDA COUNTY
every child counts

Applied Survey Research
P.O. Box 1927
Watsonville, CA 95077
(831) 728-1356

991 West Hedding St., Suite 102
San José, CA 95126
(408) 247-8319

www.appliedsurveyresearch.org

March 29, 2011

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

Acknowledgements

Applied Survey Research (ASR) would like to acknowledge the following Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) and First 5 Alameda County staff who provided their support for this project:

- Maria Carriedo, Preschool Principal
- Louise Rosenkrantz, Teacher on Special Assignment for ECE
- First 5 staff members who helped with designing and implementing the 2010 Alameda County school readiness assessment project, including Melissa Luc, Chris Hwang, and Erin Hill Freschi.

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. These teachers dedicated ample time to a training, student observations, project management, and questionnaire completion. We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the many individuals listed in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Participating Berkeley Unified School District Schools and Teachers

Schools	Teachers
Cragmont	Michelle Johnson
	Kellie McElhaney
	Erica Rojo
Emerson	Kim Shevelson
	Stefanie Maida
John Muir	Barbara Vogel
	Caroline Kim
LeConte	Ashley Trinh
	Natalia Bernal
Malcolm X	Candyce Cannon
	David Seegal
	Cynthia Allman
Oxford	Renee Harris
Thousand Oaks	Sanjuana Cavazos
	Elizabeth (Libby) Trumball
Washington	Thuy-Mi (Mimi) Dang

Study Summary

Background

In 2010, First 5 Alameda County commissioned an assessment of the school readiness levels of new kindergarten students for the third consecutive year. Participating districts in the 2010 assessment included Berkeley, Castro Valley, Emery, Hayward, Livermore Valley Joint, Oakland, Pleasanton, and San Lorenzo Unified School Districts. Among the Berkeley Unified participants, 16 teachers from eight different schools took part in the assessment.

The assessment included four measurement instruments completed by teachers and parents of entering kindergarten students. Teachers indicated each of their students' proficiency levels on 24 readiness skills and they reported how smoothly students had transitioned into kindergarten. Parents completed a survey that asked them to provide information about children's early care and family environments, as well as basic demographic and background information. Finally, teachers completed a survey about their beliefs about the skills children need for school. Please note that the information presented in this report describes the students and families assessed; findings might not be the same for students in the district who were not part of this study.

Findings

Research Question	Conclusion	Data Highlights
1. Are BUSD children ready for school?	**YES** **Overall readiness score: 3.48**	For each individual readiness skill, children were scored on a scale from *Not yet* (1) to *Proficient* (4). Average scores for each of 4 *Basic Building Blocks* of readiness range from 1 to 4. Scores were highest in the *Self-Care & Motor Skills* area (3.68) and lowest for *Self-Regulation* (3.33). Across all readiness dimensions, BUSD students scored higher than students in the county-wide assessment sample.
2. Are BUSD students meeting their teachers' expectations for readiness at kindergarten entry?	**YES** **79% at/above expected levels of proficiency**	On their teacher survey, BUSD teachers indicated the level of proficiency they thought students should have to be "school ready" at kindergarten entry. Nearly all BUSD students (89%) were meeting or exceeding teachers' expected proficiency levels for *Kindergarten Academics* skills. The biggest gap between teacher expectations and student skill levels was in *Self-Regulation* skills (but even then, 70% of students were at or above teachers' expected proficiency levels).
3. What skills do BUSD teachers think are most important for kindergarten entry? Easiest to impact? Most time-consuming?	**Most important:** Self-help/self-care **Easiest to impact:** Counting 10 objects **Spend the most time:** Recognizing letters	Teachers selected 5 readiness skills that they felt were: (1) most important to have at kindergarten entry; (2) easiest to impact during the school year; and (3) where they spent the most time during the school year. The strongest consensus in teacher beliefs was in skills important for kindergarten. Notably, a number of *Self-Regulation* skills were chosen by teachers as requiring the most time during the kindergarten school year.

Study Overview

Children's school readiness levels at kindergarten entry have been increasingly recognized as playing an important role in children's later success in school. In late 2000, Applied Survey Research (ASR) was commissioned to develop research materials and a protocol to conduct assessments of Bay Area students' levels of readiness for school. The project resulted in the creation of a new tool to measure school readiness, which balanced and met two (sometimes competing) needs: (1) the need for a high-quality, valid, and reliable instrument to measure readiness levels; and (2) the need for a tool that was simultaneously "teacher-friendly" and sensitive to the measurement challenges inherent in a typical kindergarten classroom setting.

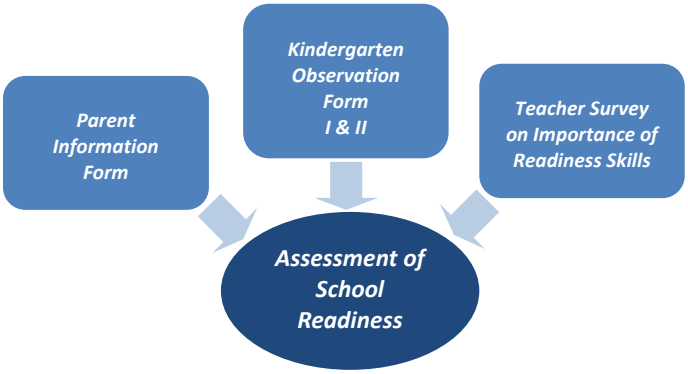
The *Kindergarten Observation Form (KOF)* was first implemented in San Mateo County in 2001, and since that initial assessment, readiness assessments have been have also been conducted in Santa Clara County, Lake County (Illinois), San Francisco County, Marin County, Santa Cruz County, and throughout the network of providers in the Los Angeles Unified Preschool (LAUP). To date, approximately 30,000 students have been measured using the *KOF.*

In Fall 2008, First 5 Alameda County (F5AC) commissioned Applied Survey Research (ASR) to conduct its first assessment of the school readiness levels of new kindergarten students in a small set of three school districts in Alameda County. Assessments were again conducted in 2009 and 2010, with additional schools and districts taking part in each subsequent study.[1] Participants in the 2010 assessment included students from eight districts: Berkeley, Castro Valley, Emery, Hayward, Livermore Valley Joint, Oakland, Pleasanton, and San Lorenzo Unified School Districts. Participating kindergarten teachers were trained to conduct the readiness assessment, which included completion of the following forms:

- The *Kindergarten Observation Form (I and II),* in which teachers assess children's readiness skills and the smoothness of their transition to kindergarten, respectively;
- A *Parent Information Form (PIF*), which parents complete to provide information about children's early care and education experiences prior to kindergarten, family environments, and basic demographic and socioeconomic information; and
- The *Teacher Survey on Importance of Readiness Skills,* which measures teachers' beliefs about readiness and the skills required for successful transition to kindergarten.

[1] For a comprehensive description of the 2010 School Readiness Assessment method and results, please see the forthcoming report "School Readiness in Alameda County: Results of the Fall 2010 Assessment."

Figure 2. Sources of Information to Assess the Readiness of Incoming Kindergarten Students



This short report summarizes key Fall 2010 findings for participating teachers, students, and families in the Berkeley Unified School District. A summary of the completion metrics for the district follows. Eighty percent of parents agreed to have their child take part in the study, and of those, 91% also returned a parent survey. In all, Berkeley Unified students represented 245 of the 1,384 participants (18%) in the county-wide sample.

Figure 3. Completion Metrics – Alameda County School Readiness Assessment

Data	Berkeley Unified sample	Alameda County sample (8 districts)
Total number of elementary schools with kindergarten students in district	11	143
Number of schools participating in 2010 school readiness assessment	8	44
Number of participating classrooms	16	81
Number of children in these classrooms	305	1,826
Number of KOFs returned	245	1,384
Parent consent rate	80%	76%
Number of PIFs that were matched to a KOF	223	1,255
Parent PIF response rate (# PIFs received/ # consents)	91%	91%

The sections that follow include a brief summary of who the Berkeley Unified students participating in the assessment were, what their school readiness levels were found to be, and what the participating teachers believed about school readiness. While reading through this summary, it is important to keep in mind that there was some intention to achieve representativeness at the district level, but ultimately schools and teachers participated in the readiness study voluntarily. **As a result, although the data may hint at the broader picture of readiness district-wide, the findings cannot be extrapolated to the district-level population as a whole.**

Student Characteristics

Fifty-one percent of participants in the Berkeley Unified School District Fall 2010 readiness assessment were boys; 49 percent were girls. The average age of students was 5.31 years old (just under 5 years and 4 months). Caucasian students were the largest racial/ethnic group in the sample, comprising 42 percent of students. Eight percent of students were identified as having special needs; another three percent of students were suspected to have a special need by their teacher or parent, but had not been formally diagnosed as having special needs.

Figure 4. Students' Sex, Age, Race/Ethnicity, and Special Needs

Sex	Percent of students
Sex	
Boys	51%
Girls	49%
Age at kindergarten entry	
Between 4 1/2 and less than 5	17%
At least 5 and less than 5 1/2	53%
At least 5 1/2 and less than 6	28%
6 and older	2%
Race/ethnicity	
Hispanic/Latino	15%
Asian	6%
African American	15%
Caucasian	42%
Multi-racial	20%
Other	2%
Special needs status	
Has special needs	8%
Teacher or parent suspects a special need (not [yet] identified by a professional)	3%
Does not have special needs	89%

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form I and Parent Information Form (2010)

Note: Sample size = 245, 242, 243, and 244, respectively. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Comparisons of the race/ethnicity of students by school in the Berkeley Unified sample show large differences from one school to another. Thousand Oaks, for example, had the highest percentage of Hispanic/Latino students (48%) – more than twice that of any other school in this district sample. Oxford and Washington had a more even distribution of multi-racial and Caucasian students, with a lower percentage of African American students. At least half of the students in the Emerson and Malcolm X samples were Caucasian, whereas at John Muir, Cragmont, and LeConte, there was a broader ethnic distribution overall.

Figure 5. Student Race/Ethnicity by School

	School (N)							
Race/ Ethnicity	Oxford (19)	Washing-ton (17)	Thousand Oaks (29)	John Muir (29)	Malcolm X (32)	Cragmont (36)	Emerson (45)	LeConte (36)
Hispanic/Latino	0%	0%	48%	14%	0%	19%	9%	22%
Asian	11%	0%	0%	7%	3%	14%	9%	3%
African American	21%	0%	7%	17%	16%	11%	20%	19%
Caucasian	37%	41%	31%	41%	56%	42%	51%	33%
Multi-Racial	32%	41%	14%	21%	25%	11%	11%	22%
Other	0%	18%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form I and Parent Information Form (2010)

Note: Percentages are by school and may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Compared to many districts in Alameda County and the state as a whole, the Berkeley Unified sample included few English Learners; they comprised 22 percent of the sample. As Figure 6 shows, among those who spoke a primary language other than English, Spanish was the most commonly spoken language (13% of the students).

Figure 6. Student Language Variables

Children's Language	Percent
English Learner	22%
Not an English Learner	78%
Primary language	
English	77%
Spanish	13%
Vietnamese	<1%
Chinese/ Mandarin/ Cantonese	1%
Korean	0%
Other language	6%
(Teacher chose both Spanish and English)	2%
(Teacher chose both Chinese and English)	1%
(Teacher chose both Punjabi/Hindi and English)	<1%

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form I (2010)

Note: Sample size = 241 and 239. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

As the following figure shows, Thousand Oaks had the highest percentage of English Learners (45%) among the students in the Berkeley Unified study sample, followed by Cragmont and LeConte, with approximately one third of their sampled students (33% and 36%, respectively) classified as English Learners.

Figure 7. English Learner Status by School

	School (N)							
English Learner	Oxford (19)	Washing-ton (17)	Thousand Oaks (29)	John Muir (27)	Malcolm X (33)	Cragmont (36)	Emerson (44)	LeConte (36)
English Learner	5%	12%	45%	22%	3%	33%	11%	36%
Not an English Learner	95%	88%	55%	78%	97%	67%	89%	64%

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form I (2010)

Children in the district had spent time in a range of early care settings in the year prior to starting kindergarten. For more than half (56%), a parent served as the child's usual source of child care, and small percentages had been cared for by a relative or neighbor, babysitter or nanny, or by a licensed child care home. A large percentage of students (87%) had attended a licensed child care center or preschool, including Head Start, state-funded, private, or other licensed program.

Figure 8. Students' Early Care Experiences

Type of Child Care Arrangements	Percent of students
Parent provided usual child care	56%
Relative or neighbor	11%
Babysitter or nanny	9%
Licensed care in someone's home (teacher or parent report)	9%
Licensed preschool or childcare center (e.g., Head Start, State Preschool, private – teacher or parent report)	87%

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form I and Parent Information Form (2010)

Note: Percentages are based on the following sample sizes: 220, 220, 220, 222, and 235. Percentages sum to more than 100 because more than one source of care could be selected.

School Readiness of Berkeley Unified Students

This section describes the readiness skills that students in Berkeley Unified School District possessed as they entered kindergarten in Fall 2010. Students' skills are presented for each of the 24 readiness skills and according to two approaches that classify the skills into broader readiness dimensions, as follows[2]:

(1) skill groupings that align with the *National Education Goals Panel (NEGP)*, which has defined five dimensions of development and skills that are critical to a child's readiness for school: *Physical Well-Being & Motor Development, Social & Emotional Development, Approaches Toward Learning, Communication and Language Usage,* and *Cognition & General Knowledge.* In different communities throughout the country, these NEGP dimensions of readiness have become the foundation for the development of school readiness measurement tools attempting to quantify children's school readiness.

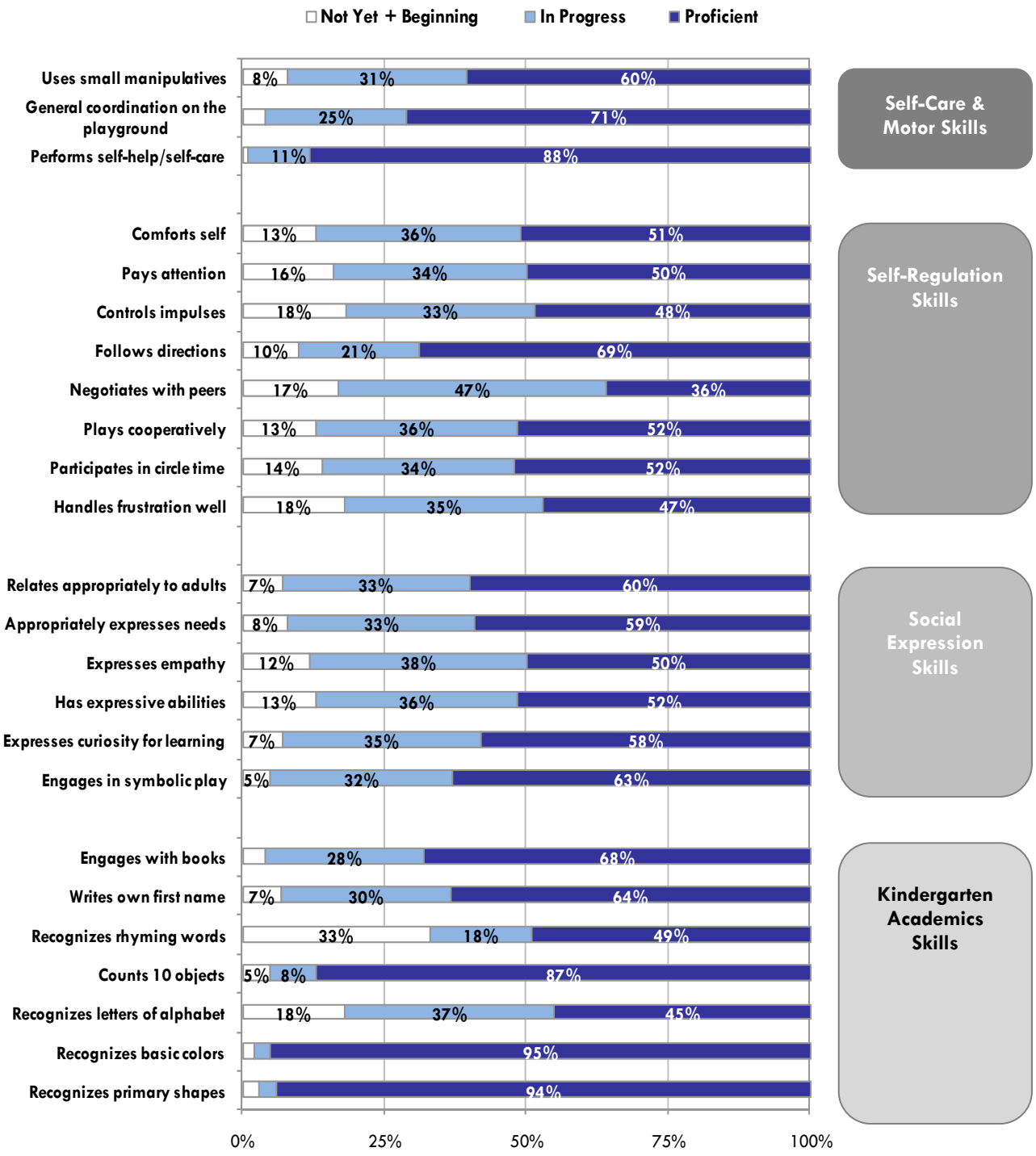
(2) skill groupings that correspond to four skill dimensions called the *Basic Building Blocks* of readiness, which have been defined by patterns of associations between skills that have been consistently observed across administrations of the *Kindergarten Observation Form*.

In addition, students' skills are presented in the context of what readiness levels teachers believe are necessary for successful transition into kindergarten. Finally, recognizing that there are identifiable readiness patterns of strengths and needs among entering kindergarten students, four "readiness portraits" are described.

Students' scores on the 24 readiness skills are shown in Figure 9 that follows.

[2] A "crosswalk" of how the 24 skills map onto each of the two readiness classifications is included as Appendix 1.

Figure 9. Students' Proficiency Levels Across 24 School Readiness Skills



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form I (2010)

Note: Percentages are based on 230-245 students. Don't know/ Not observed responses are not included. Percentages less than 5% are not labeled. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Students' top five readiness strengths and challenges are presented below. Students came into school strongest on skills related to knowing colors, shapes, and in their self-help/self-care skills. They were also well-prepared in counting ten objects and coordination on the playground. The skills they were still developing included rhyming skills, several skills related to self-regulation, and recognition of letters.

Figure 10. Students' Top Five Readiness Strengths

Top five strengths	Basic Building Block	Students' average score (out of four possible)
1. Recognizes basic colors	Kindergarten Academics	3.93
2. Recognizes primary shapes	Kindergarten Academics	3.90
3. Performs basic self-help/self-care tasks	Self-Care & Motor Skills	3.86
4. Count 10 objects correctly	Kindergarten Academics	3.81
5. Has general coordination on playground	Self-Care & Motor Skills	3.66

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form I (2010)

Note: Means can range from 1 to 4. Scale points are as follows: 1=not yet, 2=beginning, 3=in progress, 4=proficient. Scores are based on 241-245 students.

Figure 11. Students' Top Five Readiness Challenges

Top five challenges	Basic Building Block	Students' average score (out of four possible)
1. Recognizes rhyming words	Kindergarten Academics	2.99
2. Negotiates with peers to resolve social conflicts with adult guidance	Self-Regulation	3.14
3. Handles frustration well	Self-Regulation	3.24
4. Controls impulses and self-regulates	Self-Regulation	3.25
5. Recognizes letters of the alphabet	Kindergarten Academics	3.25

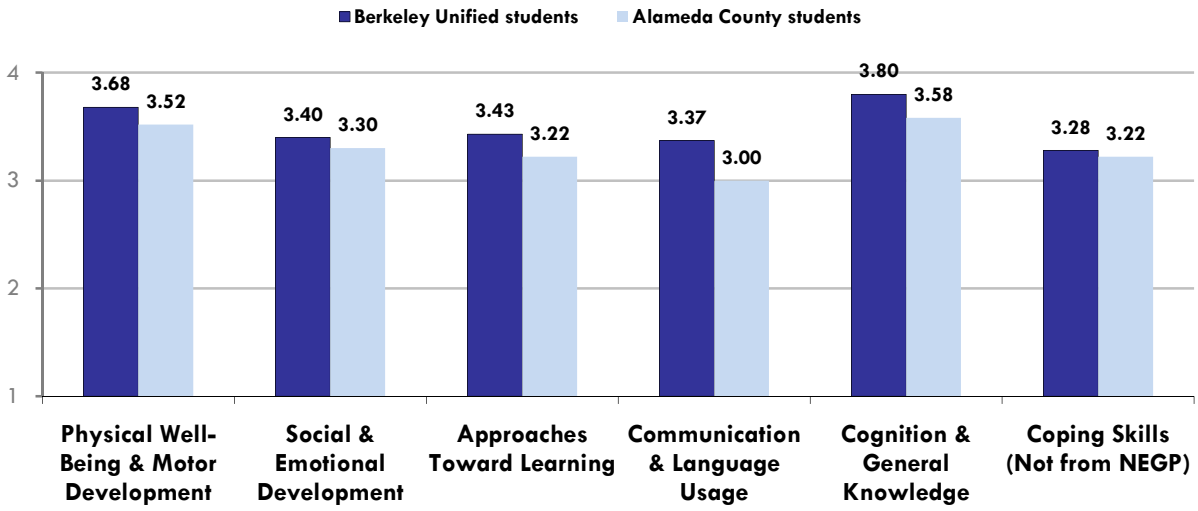
Source: Kindergarten Observation Form I (2010)

Note: Means can range from 1 to 4. Scale points are as follows: 1=not yet, 2=beginning, 3=in progress, 4=proficient. Scores are based on 230-244 students.

The 24 readiness skills can be further grouped according to different categories of readiness. Two of the ways that readiness dimensions have been described are presented here, including: (1) five developmental domains identified by the *NEGP*; and (2) a data-driven sorting of readiness skills, called the *Basic Building Blocks* of readiness.

In Figure 12, Berkeley Unified students' readiness scores are displayed according to five *NEGP* categories, with an additional category (not part of the *NEGP*) comprising a "coping skills" dimension. As the figure shows, across all readiness dimensions, Berkeley Unified students had readiness levels that were higher than those of the county-wide sample of students.

Figure 12. Students' Proficiency across the Five *NEGP* Readiness Dimensions



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form I (2010)

Note: Means can range from 1 to 4. Scale points are as follows: 1=not yet, 2=beginning, 3=in progress, 4=proficient. Scores are based on 241-245 Berkeley Unified students and 1,350-1,379 county-wide students.

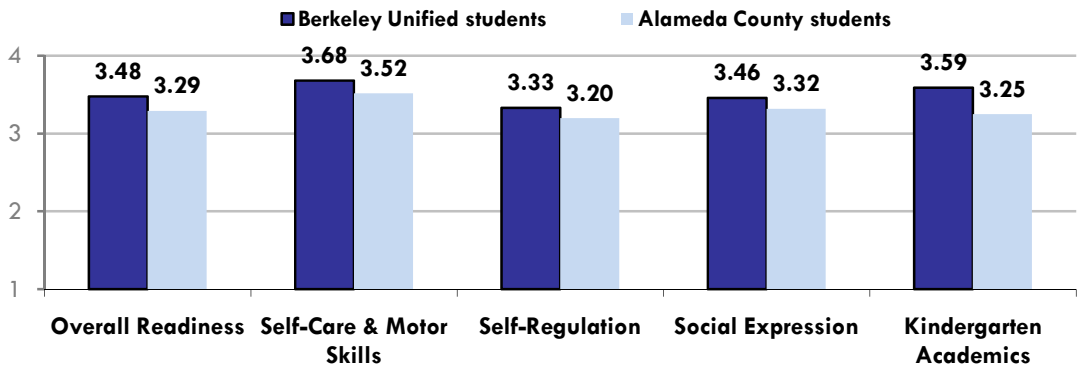
Statistical exploration of children's performance across 24 readiness skills revealed that skills reliably sorted into an alternate readiness skills framework, which has been labeled the four *Basic Building Blocks* of readiness:[3]

- *Self-Care & Motor Skills*
- *Social Expression*
- *Self-Regulation*
- *Kindergarten Academics*

Figure 13 that follows shows students' readiness according to the four *Basic Building Blocks* of readiness. Readiness levels were highest in *Self-Care & Motor Skills*, and they were lowest in *Self-Regulation*.

[3] A procedure called factor analysis is used to determine what readiness dimensions are represented by the data.

Figure 13. Students' Proficiency across Four *Basic Building Blocks* of Readiness



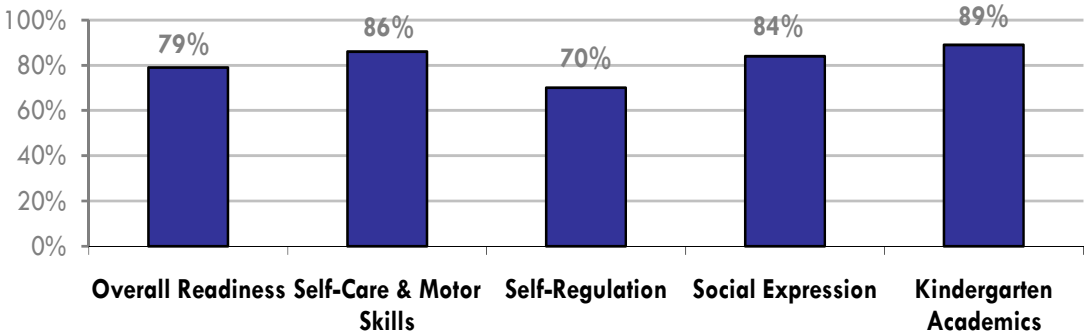
Source: Kindergarten Observation Form I (2010)

Note: Means can range from 1 to 4. Scale points are as follows: 1=not yet, 2=beginning, 3=in progress, 4=proficient. Scores are based on 244-245 Berkeley Unified students and 1,373-1,379 county-wide students.

Although knowing these readiness levels is instructive for understanding relative strengths and needs of students – as well as how Berkeley students compare with other students in the county – they do not address the question of how ready is "ready enough" for school. To provide some context for understanding students' readiness levels, as part of the teacher survey they completed, participating Berkeley Unified teachers were asked to indicate the level of proficiency that they believed children should have on each of the 24 assessed skills in order to be school-ready. (More information on the results of those surveys can be found in the section that follows.) These ratings were compiled for the four *Basic Building Blocks* readiness dimensions and the percentage of children who met or exceeded those levels of proficiency was computed. The figure that follows presents the percentage of students who met or exceeded the average levels of readiness that Berkeley Unified teachers believed they should have to be ready for school.

Overall, most students (79%) assessed in the Berkeley Unified classrooms were at or above the readiness levels their teachers thought they should have at kindergarten entry. The largest percentage of students were prepared on *Kindergarten Academics* skills; the largest gap in actual versus desired levels of readiness occurred in *Self-Regulation* skills.

Figure 14. Percentage of Children Meeting or Exceeding the Readiness Levels Teachers Felt They Needed for a Successful Transition



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form I (2010) and Teacher Survey on Importance of Readiness Skills (2010)

Note: Percentages are based on the readiness skills of 244-245 Berkeley Unified students and the teacher expectations of 15 Berkeley Unified teachers. Percentages are based on students meeting the average expectations of all Berkeley teachers, rather than each student's own teacher.

Children also exhibited different patterns of readiness strengths and challenges. For a more detailed look at different patterns of readiness, children were sorted into one of four *Readiness Portraits* based on their pattern of proficiency across the readiness skills.[4] The dark shading in Figure 15 shows where children in each of the four portraits are at or near proficiency on the associated skills.

Figure 15. Four Readiness Portraits

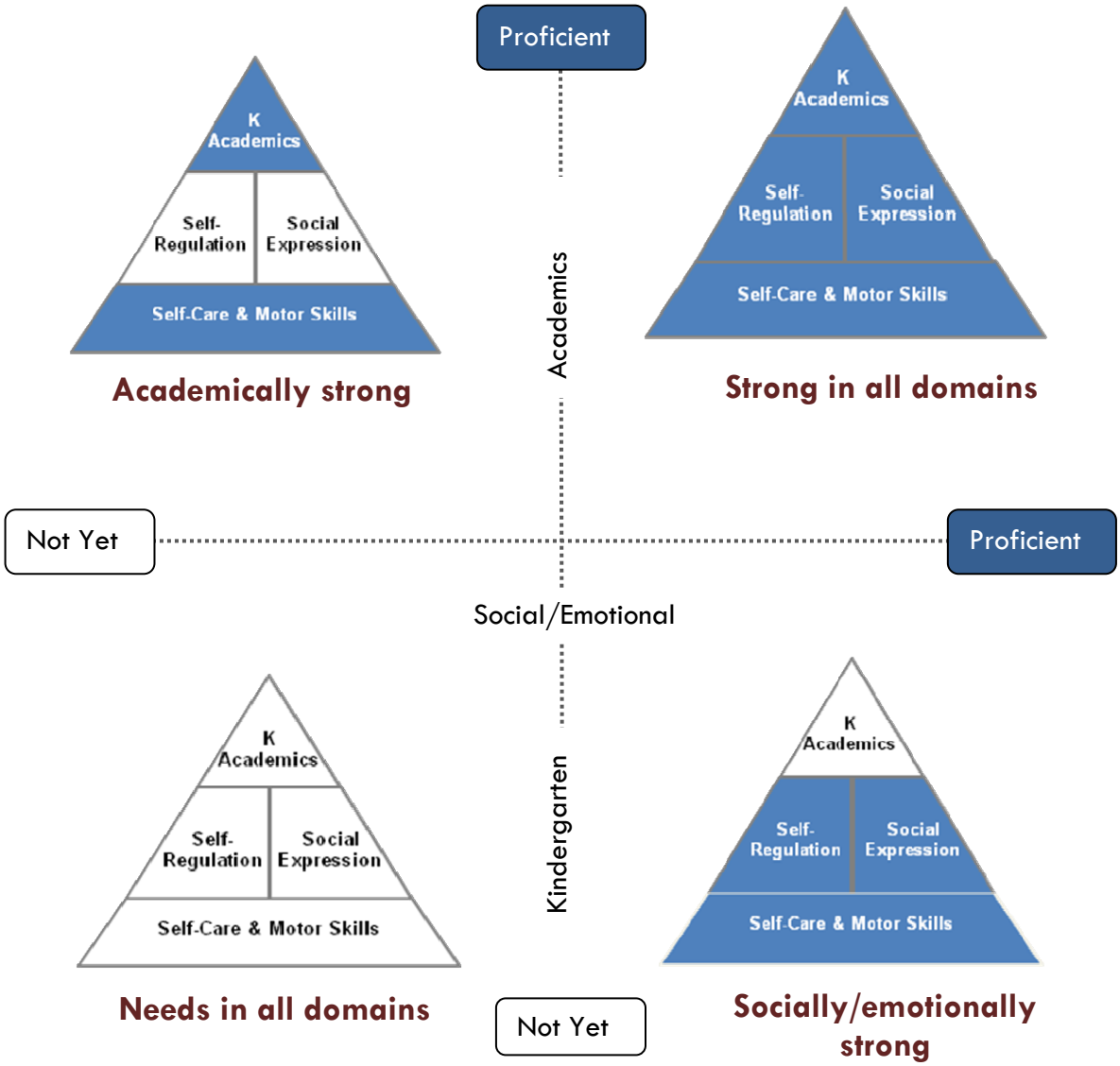


Figure 16 on the following page shows the percentage of Berkeley and county-wide students who sorted into each of the four *Readiness Portraits*.

- *Strong in all domains:* Two thirds (67%) of assessed Berkeley students entered kindergarten classrooms at or near proficiency across all four *Basic Building Blocks* of readiness (corresponding to the pattern of readiness displayed in the upper right quadrant of Figure 15).

[4] Children were sorted into one of the four *Readiness Portraits* via a data-driven technique called cluster analysis.

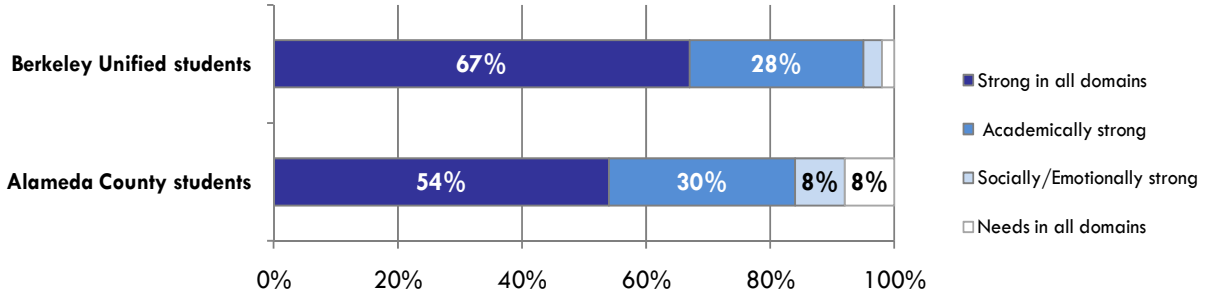
- *Needs in all domains:* Just two percent of students had significant readiness needs across all four skill domains. These students had not yet learned – or were just beginning to learn – almost all of the 24 readiness skills (lower left quadrant of Figure 15).

- *Academically strong:* Consistent with the readiness pattern shown in the upper left of Figure 15, slightly more than one in four students (28%) had strong skills in their early academics (and *Self-Care & Motor Skills*) but demonstrated some challenges in the social-emotional areas of readiness (skills within the *Self-Regulation* and *Social Expression* dimensions).

- *Socially/emotionally strong :* Three percent of students were well-equipped on the social-emotional dimensions of readiness, but they had needs in the realm of *Kindergarten Academics* – learning their letters, numbers, shapes, and colors (lower right quadrant of Figure 15).

Comparisons with the full sample of students assessed county-wide show that Berkeley Unified students in this sample were more likely to be ready for school across all readiness dimensions.

Figure 16. Prevalence of Four Portraits of Students' Readiness



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form I (2010)

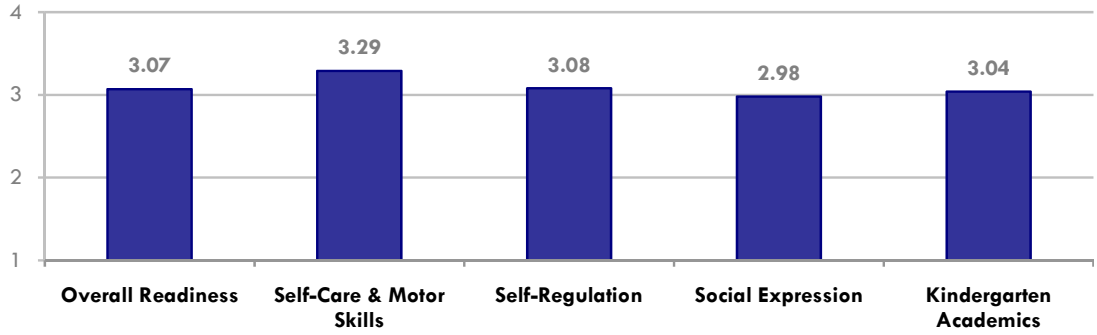
Note: This chart is based on 244 Berkeley Unified students and 1369 county-wide students. Percentages less than 5% are not labeled.

An Overview of Berkeley Unified School District Teacher Beliefs

The *Teacher Survey on Importance of Readiness Skills* included a number of questions asking teachers to provide their opinions about students' readiness for school – including what proficiency levels they think are required for success in school (briefly described in the previous section), as well as the skills that they think are most important for school entry, the skills they believe are easiest to impact, and on which skills they spend the most time.

Figure 17 shows the average levels of proficiency that the participating Berkeley Unified kindergarten teachers thought their students should have when they enter school. As Figure 14 in the previous section showed, the majority of Berkeley Unified students were at or above these levels on each of the four *Basic Building Blocks* dimensions. Teachers expected the highest proficiency on *Self-Care & Motor Skills* and the least proficiency on *Social Expression*.

Figure 17. Teachers' Desired Levels of Proficiency on the *Basic Building Blocks* of Readiness



Source: Teacher Survey of the Importance of Readiness Skills (2010)

Note: Means can range from 1 to 4. Scale points are as follows: 1=not yet, 2=beginning, 3=in progress, 4=proficient. Means are based on 15 Berkeley Unified teachers.

When Berkeley Unified teachers were asked to choose only five skills that they believed were most important for entry into kindergarten, skills from three different *Basic Building Blocks* of readiness emerged as the most crucial ones for children to possess. By far, the most important skill – selected by 14 of 16 teachers – was children's ability to perform basic self-help and self-care tasks.

Figure 18. Skills Most Often Selected by Teachers as One of Five Most Important for Kindergarten Entry

School Readiness Skills	Basic Building Block	Number of teachers selecting
Performs basic self-help/self-care tasks	Self-Care & Motor Skills	14
Appropriately expresses needs and wants verbally in primary language	Social Expression	8
Stays focused / pays attention during activities	Self-Regulation	6
Expresses curiosity and eagerness for learning	Social Expression	6
Works and plays cooperatively with peers	Self-Regulation	5

Source: Teacher Survey on Importance of Readiness Skills (2010)

Note: Scores are based on 16 Berkeley Unified teachers.

Teachers also chose five skills that they believed were the easiest ones for them to impact during the kindergarten year. The most commonly selected skills were part of the *Kindergarten Academics* readiness dimension.

Figure 19. Skills Most Often Selected by Teachers as One of Five Easiest to Impact

School Readiness Skills	Basic Building Block	Number of teachers selecting
Can count 10 objects correctly	Kindergarten Academics	10
Writes own name	Kindergarten Academics	9
Engages with books	Kindergarten Academics	6
Follows one-to-two step directions	Self-Regulation	6
Uses small manipulatives	Self-Care & Motor Skills	6

Source: Teacher Survey on Importance of Readiness Skills (2010)

Note: Scores are based on 15 Berkeley Unified teachers.

Finally, teachers in Berkeley Unified prioritized the five skills on which they spent the most class time. Again, the top two skills were related to *Kindergarten Academics,* but all but one of the other most-selected skills were related to children's self-regulation.

Figure 20. Skills Most Often Selected by Teachers as One of Five on Which They Spend the Most Time

School Readiness Skills	Basic Building Block	Number of teachers selecting
Recognizes the letters of the alphabet	Kindergarten Academics	14
Engages with books	Kindergarten Academics	11
Stays focused / pays attention during activities	Self-Regulation	8
Controls impulses	Self-Regulation	6
Negotiates with peers to resolve social conflicts	Self-Regulation	5
Works and plays cooperatively with peers	Self-Regulation	5
Participates successfully in circle time	Self-Regulation	5
Has expressive abilities	Social Expression	5

Source: Teacher Survey on Importance of Readiness Skills (2010)

Note: Scores are based on 16 Berkeley Unified teachers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Preschool experience is a consistently strong predictor of readiness levels among entering kindergarteners. Among the sampled Berkeley Unified students, preschool attendance rates are quite high, which likely contributes to the generally strong readiness levels of students. The district and its community partners should continue to promote the availability of high-quality early education experiences for local children – and to look for new opportunities to reach out to those children who are not currently exposed to quality preschool programs prior to starting kindergarten. One example is the First 5 Summer Pre-K Program, which offers quality early childhood experience to children with no preschool or licensed childcare experience. In addition, Berkeley has a strong network of short-term pre-k programs offered through its Parks and Recreation Department available to children who have not been exposed to a longer-term early education experience.

The majority of students in Berkeley Unified School District are entering kindergarten ready for school. Most students are meeting their teachers' expectations, and two-thirds of students demonstrate strong readiness levels across all domains of readiness. If there are needs among BUSD students, they are arguably in the development of skills that relate to *Self-Regulation*; this domain has the greatest number of students who are not meeting teachers' expected proficiency levels. Information about students' patterns of readiness also suggests that more than one in four students are strong on academic skills, but are less prepared in social-emotional domains. To help address this:

- Prior to kindergarten, parents and early care and education providers can work on developing children's skills related to emotional regulation and self-control.

- In kindergarten, teachers and district staff can develop strategies and ensure that curricula are addressing entering students' developmental needs related to self-regulation.

The collection of school readiness assessment data can help inform and guide school and district initiatives to support children's development. Some recent examples of school readiness data informing school and community action include the following:

- In San Lorenzo Unified School District, data from the 2008 and 2009 school readiness assessments have provided important evidence to support increasing the district's funding of summer pre-k programs and access to year-long preschool programs. With these data, they could justify the attention, cost, and resources for supporting preschool experiences for their underserved families.

- Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District has used data from recent readiness studies to support their applications for federal and city grants, and they intend to use the data to encourage the district to continue supporting preschool for their students.

- In Santa Clara, San Mateo, and San Francisco counties, county-wide readiness assessments conducted every 2-3 years have helped to track population-level trends in entering kindergarten students over time, in order to monitor changes in important predictors of readiness (such as preschool attendance rates) as well as student

readiness levels. For Santa Clara County in particular, this has allowed them to demonstrate that focused intervention and support for low-income families have been related to readiness improvements in this population.

- Both Santa Clara and San Mateo counties have used data they have collected on the readiness of kindergarten students to show that readiness levels – particularly in the *Kindergarten Academics* and *Self-Regulation Basic Building Blocks* – strongly predict performance on third grade standardized tests, thus further supporting the need for strong interventions that begin even before a child begins kindergarten.

- Several Bay Area school districts have used the *Kindergarten Observation Form* and a parallel preschool version of the form (the *Pre-Kindergarten Observation Form* [*P-KOF*]) to build connections between their pre-K and K-12 education systems and the providers in each. When preschool providers have used the *P-KOF* alongside kindergarten teachers using the *KOF*, this facilitates the development of a common language and set of expectations for discussing children's readiness and how providers in both systems can support it.

- One local, recently-developed, short-term pre-K program has also used findings from their student P-KOF assessments to shape their curriculum to better support the needs of their students, and they have used it as a reflective practice tool for their providers.

- Importantly, several Northern California regions have used their readiness data to develop resources for parents who have a child who will soon enter (or has recently entered) kindergarten. These resources include high-quality, easy-to-read parent handbooks organized around the four *Basic Building Blocks*. The handbooks provide information about the types of readiness skills children need and how to promote children's development of those skills at home. In addition, in response to findings that showed that families who used more local community resources had children with better readiness outcomes, one local First 5 has partnered with other organizations in their community to provide parents with passes to enrichment activities, such as the zoo, to support children's learning.

Individual districts, schools, teachers, and communities are encouraged to reflect on their own readiness findings and discuss ways that this data can help guide and inform action in their own schools and communities.

Appendix 1: Crosswalking Readiness Items from *NEGP* to *Basic Building Blocks*

Skill Items	NEGP Dimensions	Basic Building Blocks
Uses small manipulatives	Phys Well-Being/Motor Dev	Self-Care & Motor Skills
Has general coordination on the playground	Phys Well-Being/Motor Dev	Self-Care & Motor Skills
Performs self-help/self-care tasks	Phys Well-Being/Motor Dev	Self-Care & Motor Skills
Relates appropriately to adults other than parent / primary caregiver	Social & Emotional Dev	Social Expression
Appropriately expresses needs and wants verbally in primary language	Social & Emotional Dev	Social Expression
Works and plays cooperatively with peers	Social & Emotional Del	Self-Regulation
Controls impulses and self-regulates	Social & Emotional Dev	Self-Regulation
Expresses curiosity and eagerness for learning	Approaches to Learning	Social Expression
Stays focused / pays attention during activities	Approaches to Learning	Self-Regulation
Follows one- to two-step directions	Approaches to Learning	Self-Regulation
Participates successfully in circle time	Approaches to Learning	Self-Regulation
Has expressive abilities	Communication & Lang	Social Expression
Recognizes the letters of the alphabet	Communication & Lang	Kindergarten Academics
Writes own name	Communication & Lang	Kindergarten Academics
Can recognize rhyming words	Communication & Lang	Kindergarten Academics
Engages with books	Communication & Lang	Kindergarten Academics
Engages in symbolic/imaginative play	Cognition & Gen'l Knowledge	Social Expression
Can count 10 objects correctly	Cognition & Gen'l Knowledge	Kindergarten Academics
Recognizes primary colors	Cognition & Gen'l Knowledge	Kindergarten Academics
Recognizes primary shapes	Cognition & Gen'l Knowledge	Kindergarten Academics
Comforts self with adult guidance	N/A	Self-Regulation
Negotiates with peers to resolve social conflicts with adult guidance	N/A	Self-Regulation
Expresses empathy or caring for others	N/A	Social Expression
Handles frustration well	N/A	Self-Regulation