



Monday May 7, 2018

Agenda Item 6.0

Presentation of findings from the African American Needs Assessment Project



Memo

To: Lisa Johnson, First Five Contra Costa County
From: VaShone Huff and LaNiece Jones, TILE
Date: January 25, 2018
Re: First Five Contra Costa African American Needs Assessment Staff Review Highlights

This memorandum provides an overview of highlights from First Five Contra Costa Project Staff Team document review session with TILE project team on December 10, 2017. This document includes additional feedback as well as specific strategies and tactics from TILE's Project Team on recommendations provided in the draft First Five Contra Costa County African-American (AA) Families Needs Assessment Report submitted November 3, 2017.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Focus Group Eligibility Criteria

TILE had a simple threshold for outreach and selection of program participants. Potential focus group participants were asked two specific questions for eligibility:

- 1) Are you a parent or guardian of an African-American child ages 0 – 6 years?
- 2) Do you reside in Contra Costa County?

If a potential family fit the above criteria then they were invited to participate in the focus group discussion. For the non-user focus groups, each respective focus group host also confirmed participants met the eligibility criteria. Overall the focus group participants represented diverse cross section of the community. There was no income requirement for participation.

Outreach

TILE field team outreach efforts included distribution of printed flyers throughout the region including faith institutions, coffee shops, salons, grocery stores, community events as well as the personal and professional networks of the project team and BWOPA & TILE organization.

Development of Needs Assessment Report

The TILE Project team wrote and submitted the report with the African-American community in mind. As outlined in TILE's proposal and budget, the team aimed to create a document that could be shared with the entire community including First Five staff, stakeholders, influencers, elected officials, community leaders and families.

Tailoring Outreach Services

Focus group respondents identified a lack of representation of African-Americans within F5CC administration and Center employees as well as program participants. As outlined in the report, respondents felt that it was important to have "knowledgeable, well-qualified staff" who "looked like" them.

- **Hire African-American Staff** - This is based on resounding feedback from focus groups, stakeholder meetings and TILE Team. TILE recommends hiring one or two staff to serve as liaisons to establish and strengthen relationships with the African-American community in the region. In addition to the African-American Community liaison roles, we recommend F5CC carve out funds to create positions for participant parents to serve as F5CC Ambassadors to also support the work at F5CC Centers as well as targeted engagement and outreach efforts.

These staffers must be well connected to the African-American community in Contra Costa County and/or have the ability to quickly and respectfully establish relationships with the respective community and families.

- **Provide cultural competency and sensitivity training for First Five Staff and contractors** - Hire professional and culturally competent staff who reflect and are relatable to the African-American community. This is integral to connecting with the community.

- **Specific targeted public relations and outreach efforts** - Many know or heard of F5CC but are unclear of the services and if they are available to the entire community. It is imperative to educate community stakeholders on the mission, vision and benefits that First Five offers.

Specific recommendations to improve F5 CC social media and print outreach materials

- **Establish African-American Advisory Council.** Council participants can support development of and/ or provide feedback on programming, materials and other specific opportunities for engagement of AA communities.
- **Hire an African-American marketing or PR firm.** This firm's work should include development of a comprehensive strategic media, marketing and public relations plan. This firm would also support F5CC concept design and messaging for key collateral for outreach, marketing and communications. The firm may also engage directly with leadership of African-American Advisory Council.
- **Engage current program participants and leaders.** Develop a process and/or opportunity to receive input and feedback from current program participants in the development of outreach materials especially those geared toward the AA community. This builds trust and empowers the African-American families that are currently engaged in F5CC programming.

Focus Group and stakeholder feedback on F5 CC Marketing and Messaging

African-American families already have goals for their children that surpass early childhood and primary years. F5CC should be recognized as an enthusiastic partner and “member of the village” responsible for supporting each families' goals for their child's development and success.

There is a community misperception about the brand and services of F5 CC. For example, some respondents' impression F5CC communications led them to believe:

- “There is something wrong with our family.”
- “Let us help you.”
- “You need our help! Come to our center so we can help you.”

- “I am not on WIC or Cash AID so I cannot go to the center.”

TILE understands this is absolutely not the intention of any brand services or communications. Therefore, TILE believes F5CC must work to remove the stigma associated with its services in order to improve public relations and participation among families in Contra Costa. F5CC welcomes every family that wants to see their child thrive, learn and grow.

F5CC communications and collateral should:

- 1) Focus on the strengths and vibrancy of the community using uplifting language with culturally specific messages and tone.
- 2) Make clear “everyone is welcome” and can utilize F5 Services.
- 3) Develop “elevator pitch” to provide a simple overview First Five’s mission, vision and services
- 4) Describe classroom and program expectations using more family friendly verbiage.
- 5) Promote that some F5CC classes meet certain requirements for foster care or court ordered mandates.
- 6) Highlight actual F5CC African-American families, staff and partners successes and experiences utilizing F5CC services.

Additional ideas for improving F5CC brand and presence:

Printed Collateral and Social Media

Images representative of the diverse African American cultural experience should be used in materials and collateral and these same images of prominent African - American leaders, influencers and current/past program participants should also be found in each respective F5CC Center. For example, images of President Barack and First Lady Michelle Obama, Jay-Z and Beyoncé, Stephen and Ayesha Curry, local pastors and elected officials with young children. Other ideas include:

- Develop less “corporate, more vibrant” or “younger” concept designs for materials to attract the community
- Recruit F5CC interns (e.g. college students, volunteers, parents) to support development of Social Media content
- Train parents to help develop copy and participate in F5 newsletter, direct reports and other communications
- Host discussions and forums by going live on Facebook and Instagram

- Create a Parents' Corner blog, vlog, newsletter or website page

Additional feedback about customer experience in First 5 Centers and other First 5 services

Facility Improvements:

Some locations were difficult to find or did not look aesthetically “welcoming” for children or families. The reasons cited included location and neighborhood safety, “too commercial” or “business looking” and some families could not find the actual entrance to the facility.

Recommendations:

- Update vibrant center signage and curb appeal at centers
- Create better directional signage for main entrance to center
- Ensure main entrance doors wide enough for double and triple strollers (ADA compliant)
- Open café space for engaging and watching children play and parent engage

Staff:

Overall F5CC focus group participants felt that F5CC Centers were not “welcoming,” or unclear what to do upon entry of facility. Some cited reception staff were “rude”, “dismissive” or assumed a lack of competence from program participants. For example, staff “talked slowly in a condescending” manner to respondents or asked, “Did you read this first?” when asking questions about programming and service offerings. In addition, an overwhelming majority of respondents felt that “staff catered to Spanish speaking” population.

Richmond/San Pablo Center: This location received superb feedback from respondents. Notably participants noted the “warm welcome”, engaging staff and facility created a safe space conducive for engagement. They “love Ayisha” Lopes, Early Childhood Educator at this site. In particular they noted Lopes’ responsiveness to their respective needs and has created a “warm and welcoming space for us”.

Brentwood Center: Respondent feedback seemed “exclusive” according to several respondents. The Brentwood location was “exclusively” catered largely to “white, affluent moms”. Overall respondents felt programs, services and staff

at this site were not welcoming or geared to meet their needs as African-American parents.

First Five Contractors: Who are they? What are their Qualifications?

Families shared that they would like information about the professional staff who are advising and/or leading the programs and classes. Respondents shared and interest in having brief bios of program instructors and share quality reviews of grantees that provide services for First Five Contra Costa. This is important because families are making lifelong decisions about their children's health, education and social development. Having a knowledge about F5CC staff and their background also helps build trust with the community.

Other Recommendations:

- Hire Greeters to create an inviting and welcoming experience upon entry; person or receptionist to help navigate through offerings and registration process
- Improve F5CC signage and clearly mark location entry
- Ensure brochures and information at entry are in English
- Provide success stories about children and families in program
- "A Wall of Fame" highlighting current and past program participants as well as volunteers in main areas of center

How specifically should F5 engage with parents differently than how it currently works with parents through its Community Engagement program and in the F5 Centers?

It is important to understand the African-American community is insulated and not necessarily isolated. The top barriers for participation include time of programming and proximity of location from respective families home. Most families with one or more working-parent cited traffic or limited access to public transportation as a barrier to participation. Besides fully understanding F5CC the menu of services and that F5CC services are available to all, there are some other findings and specific examples to be considered to improve engagement of African-American families.

Programming

Diversify Course Offerings:

Date and Times - Offer programs and services with later weekday evening start times (e.g. 7:00 PM or 7:30 PM start times); weekend classes on Saturday morning or Sunday morning/early afternoon

Class Instruction Platforms - Offer virtual classes (e.g. on-line classes on various platforms – Facebook Live, Zoom, Google Hangout, Instagram Live) and /or hybrid courses that include a combination in-person and virtual class meetings.

Shorter Course Sessions – Extend the time of class meetings to 3 to 4 hours and meet over a shorter period of time. For example, if a course is 12 hours total consider offering the course for 3 to 4 hours or 3 to 4 weeks instead of 2 hours for 6 weeks.

Other ideas to make programming more attractive for parents:

- Family Friendly – Homework for other children older than 5 years and food for all participants
- Incentivized programming especially for specific initiatives or programming; incentives are not needed all the time but should be included intermittently
- Decentralizing Services and Programing; not at centers, partner with faith institutions, sports clubs and rec centers
- Empower Parent Participants - Allow parents opportunity to teach/present in the classes or create opportunities for parent participating and leadership in-classes

More Contemporary Classes

In addition to the current programs, F5CC should consider more contemporary classes that are relevant to African-American Community including classes for fathers and non-traditional families. Respondents suggested topics and opportunities from focus group respondents:

- How to successfully navigate through the school system
- The importance of assessments for children
- What is STEM? Early exposure to sciences
- Understanding Common Core and State Mandates
- Art and Play Therapy
- Paint Night for families

- Do-It-Yourself and at home activities for families
- Diverse relationships and family structure
- Co-Parenting Workshops
- Diversifying Instructors to include African-American Fathers and African-American Males
- Courses that support African-American Fathers and African-American Male children
- Allowing parents to drop in/survey playgroups and classes
- Children's cooking classes
- Language development and tools to use at home
- Spanish language classes for parents and children

Easier Registration Process

Recommendation: Streamline and simplify the registration process and forms

Stakeholder feedback:

- "Process is too cumbersome"
- Needs to be shorter and less redundant (specific information on forms)
- Offer online or by phone registration
- Better system on managing the waitlist for classes
- Make some demographic information optional and/or a part of the evaluation or actual class activities



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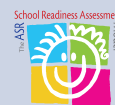
Agenda Item 7.0

Presentation of findings from the 2018 Countywide Kindergarten Readiness
Assessment Project

Executive Summary: *Ready or Not, Here We Come!*

APRIL 2018

AN ASSESSMENT OF KINDERGARTEN READINESS IN CONTRA COSTA, 2017



To understand the needs of children in Contra Costa, First 5 Contra Costa contracted with Applied Survey Research to conduct a county-wide assessment of kindergarten readiness. A total of 1,154 students from ten elementary school districts participated in this study.

OVERALL KINDERGARTEN READINESS

According to this research, **less than half of Contra Costa children are fully ready for kindergarten.** Across the county, **44% of children meet the definition of “fully ready.”** Over a third of children are “partially ready,” and **22% of children did not demonstrate proficiency in any of the measurements for kindergarten readiness.**

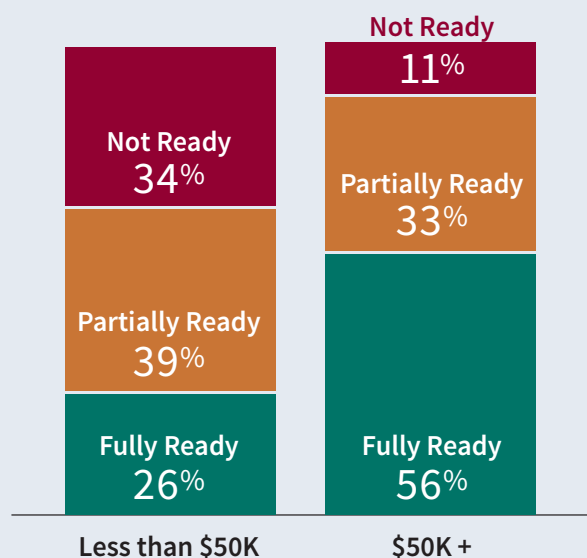
By Income: To meet the basic costs of living in Contra Costa, a family of one adult and one child must earn annual wages of \$55,000; a family with two adults and two young children must earn an annual wage of \$85,000 to meet the self-sufficiency standard. **Over a third of children living in households with incomes less than \$50,000 are not ready for school,** compared to just 11% of children with higher income.

HOW DO WE IMPROVE SCHOOL READINESS?

The results of this study suggest that there are barriers to school readiness that can be mitigated with the help of programs and services. The data indicates that children who are well-fed, well-rested, visit a library with a caregiver, attend preschool or Transitional Kindergarten (TK), or have parents who are confident and knowledgeable about parenting are more prepared to enter kindergarten ready to learn. **TK emerges as particularly beneficial** to children with low family income, less maternal education, or status as an English-learner. Preschool attendance was found to have **two kinds of effects on a child’s readiness:** children learn skills and socialization from the school setting, and in addition, parents of children in preschool were more likely to get involved with school preparation activities.

The overall lack of readiness among children in Contra Costa indicated by this research, though not dissimilar to neighboring counties, is still unacceptable. It will require the focus, creativity, and investment of all levels of governance to enrich the services available to families in our community so that all children have the best chances of success in school. The recommendations on the next page offer tested ideas about how school districts, cities, and the county could play a larger and more impactful role in improving children’s kindergarten readiness.

SCHOOL READINESS BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME



RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE KINDERGARTEN READINESS

School Districts

- **Expand access to and quality of early childhood education.** School districts can directly impact access to high-quality early learning programs by establishing or expanding Head Start, state-funded preschool and Transitional Kindergarten programs. All early childhood education programs that operate as part of the school district should be enrolled in Contra Costa's Quality Rating and Improvement System, Quality Matters.
- **Foster partnerships between early childhood and kindergarten educators.** Districts could improve collaboration and communication between kindergarten and early childhood teachers by coordinating classroom visits and other opportunities to learn from one another. In addition, by working with state preschool and Head Start programs, districts can assign unique identifiers to students before they enter kindergarten, so that information about child attendance and other indicators of performance can be tracked over time.
- **Employ a dedicated Early Learning Coordinator.** Early Learning Coordinators could ensure that children from birth through third grade are supported, and improve the connection of classroom experiences and curricula from year to year. This position could help districts and schools stay connected with community resources, such as the Help Me Grow system, libraries, the food bank, health clinics, and other local efforts and tools.
- **Include early childhood programs in LCAPs.** Districts should build family and community support programs into their Local Control Action Plans (LCAPs) to reflect the importance of those activities to a child's readiness to learn.

Cities

- **Expand access to early childhood education with new facilities.** Cities can assess the accessibility of quality early education programs in their communities, and the facilities available to house programs. In addition, they could encourage the creation of new early education programs by working with developers and community partners to ensure that there are sufficient facilities to meet the need.

- **Outreach to families about early childhood programs.** Cities should partner with CocoKids and First 5 Contra Costa to implement effective and innovative ways of messaging to families about how to sign up for early learning programs, especially subsidized programs. Outreach should be targeted and culturally appropriate.
- **Build and improve the spaces that strengthen families.** Cities should ensure that families have safe, welcoming and enriching parks, family resource centers, and recreation programs in their neighborhoods that encourage curiosity and experiential learning.

Contra Costa County

- **Prioritize children.** The County is the largest single provider of early learning programs in Contra Costa, and maintains additional investments supporting safety net, mental health and child welfare programs that all benefit children, yet there is more to be done. The County should prioritize increasing the funding and improving the effectiveness of these and other services to ensure that all eligible children are served at the highest level of quality.
- **Expand early childhood education programs.** The County should expand its system of Head Start and State Preschool programs to meet demand and reduce waiting lists. Providing high quality early education to the children who can benefit the most is the single most important step towards closing gaps in equity, opportunity and achievement for all children.
- **Invest in early literacy programming.** Libraries play a central role in many of the activities and external resources that were shown to significantly affect children's readiness for kindergarten. County libraries should expand their outreach to young families and early literacy activities in all the communities they serve.
- **Increase investment in early mental health services.** Programs that strengthen a child's social-emotional resiliency directly improve his or her ability to thrive at school. The County should draw down all available local, state and federal funds to support an effective system of children's mental health services that emphasizes the preventive advantage of serving children and their families as early as possible.

Ready or Not, Here We Come!

AN ASSESSMENT
OF KINDERGARTEN
READINESS IN
CONTRA COSTA
COUNTY

2017



Research by:



APRIL 2018

I. Introduction



Most American children arrive at their first day of kindergarten without the skills and tools that would make them most successful in school. The educational achievement gap between the affluent and the middle income, as well as between middle income and low income groups, is large and growing.¹

At the same time, scientific research about the importance of infant and toddler brain growth and development has become irrefutable, and more widely understood. Research makes the unmistakable case that early learning is formative to later indicators of personal and professional success.

For these reasons, states and localities have been focusing more and more attention on the notion of “kindergarten readiness” to improve children’s outcomes in school and thereby ensure all children are equally prepared when they enter the K-12 school system.

First 5 Contra Costa commissioned this study of kindergarten readiness skills among Contra Costa County children. It is the first county-wide study of its kind. It describes the factors that influence skill-building among young children, and provides comprehensive information to school administrators at all levels, so that schools and communities are better equipped to support and educate the children of Contra Costa County.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY KINDERGARTEN READINESS?

Although this study describes the attributes that children come to school with, First 5 Contra Costa holds a wider definition of kindergarten readiness. In our view, the ingredients that are required for a child to be most successful in school include the preparation that the child receives at home and in early childhood education and development settings, the support and stability of families and communities, and the commitment of schools to meet the needs of every child. This study provides information about one slice of that definition—that of the child’s measurable skills during the first weeks of kindergarten—and is intended to add to the body of knowledge that is necessary to understand and then improve children’s success in school and beyond.

¹ Reardon, S. July 2011. “The Widening Academic Achievement Gap Between the Rich and the Poor: New Evidence and Possible Explanations. *Whither Opportunity? Rising Inequality, Schools, and Children’s Life Chances*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

II. Methods and Evidence

First 5 Contra Costa contracted with Applied Survey Research to conduct this research. A total of 1,154 students from ten elementary school districts participated in this study.² The research is based on ASR's School Readiness Assessment, which measures readiness dimensions that are consistent with those found in other frameworks and standards, and its findings have been strongly correlated with 3rd grade test scores.³ The assessment uses two sources of information:

- A **Kindergarten Observation Form**, a two-page instrument conducted by the kindergarten teacher within the first few weeks of school. Teachers rate students' proficiency levels on 20 skills, which comprise the "Building Blocks" of school readiness. See box for more information on the Building Blocks of school readiness.⁴ Within a small margin of error, this sample is statistically representative of the county.
- A **Parent Information Form**, a one-page form, filled out by parents, that includes questions about research-based predictors of readiness, including child demographics, family background, parenting activities, family stressors and child care experiences. The form was offered to families in English or Spanish. A total of 936 parents completed this form for this study (81% return rate).

BASIC BUILDING BLOCKS OF SCHOOL READINESS

KINDERGARTEN ACADEMICS		
• Recognizes numbers	• Counts 20 objects	• Understands details in literature
• Recognizes shapes	• Writes own first name	• Understands basic features of books
• Recognizes letters	• Recognizes rhyming words	

SOCIAL EXPRESSION	SELF REGULATION
• Eager to learn	• Stays focused
• Expresses empathy	• Follows rules
• Expresses needs and wants	• Follows directions
• Tells about a story/experience	• Plays cooperatively
	• Participation in circle time
	• Handles frustration well

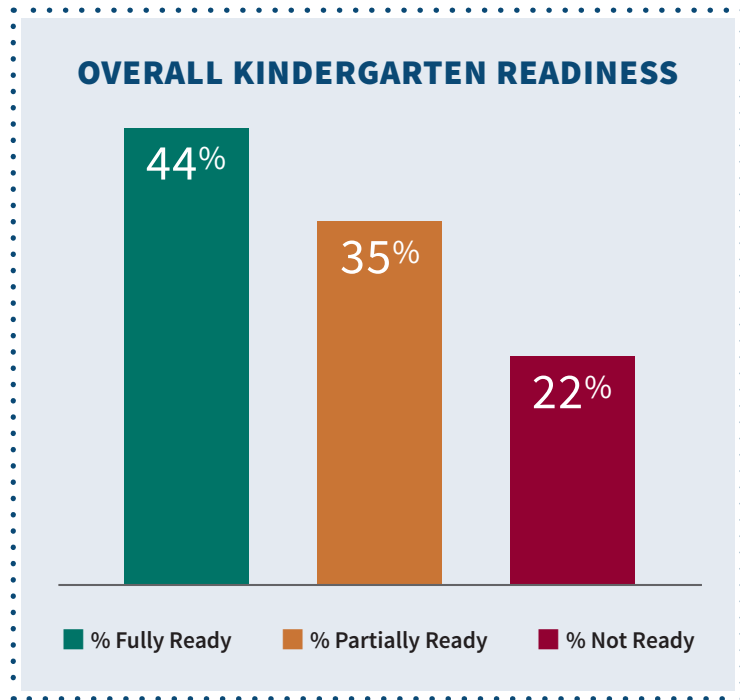
²Participating districts included Antioch, Brentwood, John Swett, Lafayette, Moraga, Mt. Diablo, Orinda, Pittsburg, San Ramon Valley, and West Contra Costa. See Appendix A for more information about the number of classrooms and students included per district.

³For more information, see <http://www.appliedsurveyresearch.org/school-readiness-assessments>

⁴Children's overall school readiness scores are based on these Building Blocks as well as measurements of fine and gross motor skills.

III. Overall Kindergarten Readiness

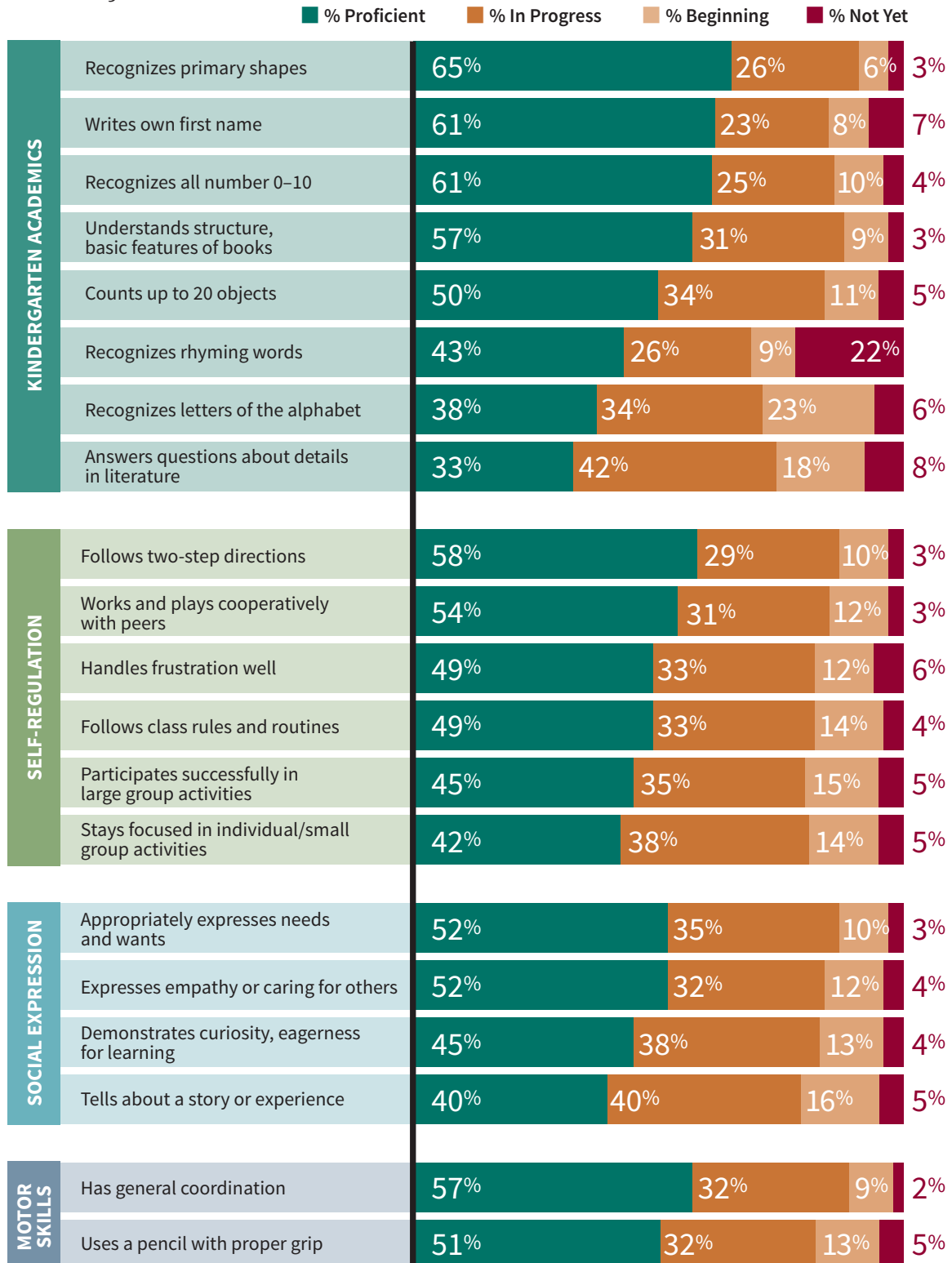
According to this research, **less than half of Contra Costa children are fully ready for kindergarten.** Across the county, **44% of children meet the definition of “fully ready,”** by demonstrating proficiency in all Building Blocks of Readiness. Over a third of children are “partially ready,” meaning they demonstrate proficiency in one or two Building Blocks. **Twenty-two percent of children did not demonstrate proficiency in any of the Building Blocks.** These findings are similar to those found in other Bay Area counties that have assessed kindergarten students with the same methodology.



22% of children did not demonstrate proficiency in any of the Building Blocks

PROFICIENCY BY BUILDING BLOCK

The figure below describes the levels of proficiency found for students within each Building Block in Contra Costa County.



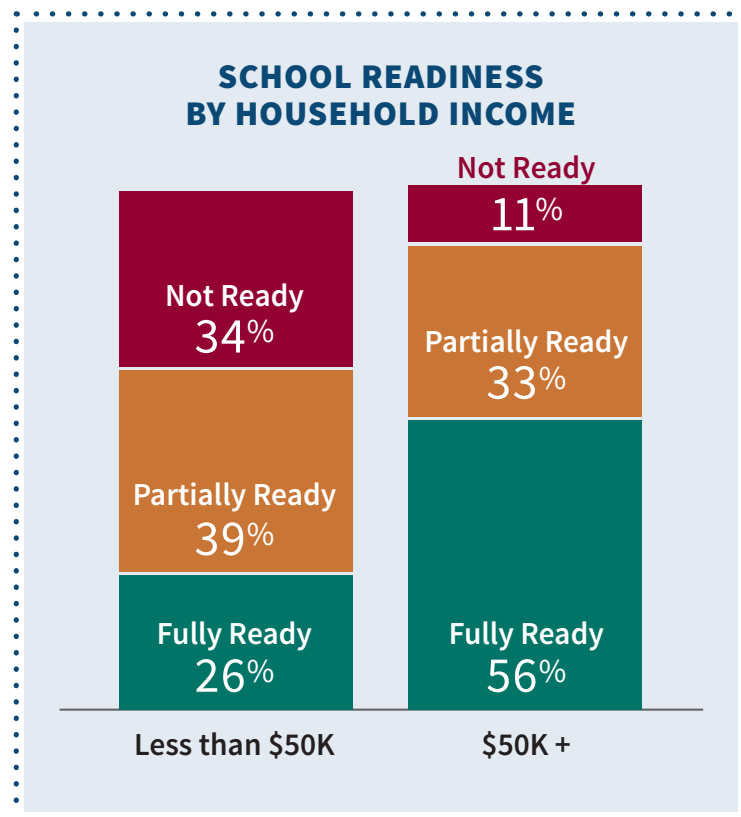
Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2017). N=1,082-1,152. Note: Scores range from 1 (Not Yet) to 4 (Proficient). Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding. Scores were omitted for students for whom language barriers were a concern. Post-stratification weights are applied to approximate socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity and English learner status proportions to the county.

Across the county and among different groups, however, important differences in readiness emerge.

BY INCOME

To meet the basic costs of living in Contra Costa, a family of one adult and one child must earn annual wages of \$55,000; a family with two adults and two young children must earn an annual wage of \$85,000 to meet the self-sufficiency standard.⁵ Applied Survey Research analyzed readiness scores among children whose family income was less than \$50,000 to understand how living below the self-sufficiency standard may affect school readiness. They found that over a third of children living below the self-sufficiency standard are not ready for school, compared to just 11% of children with higher income.

Over a third of children living below the self-sufficiency standard are not ready for school.

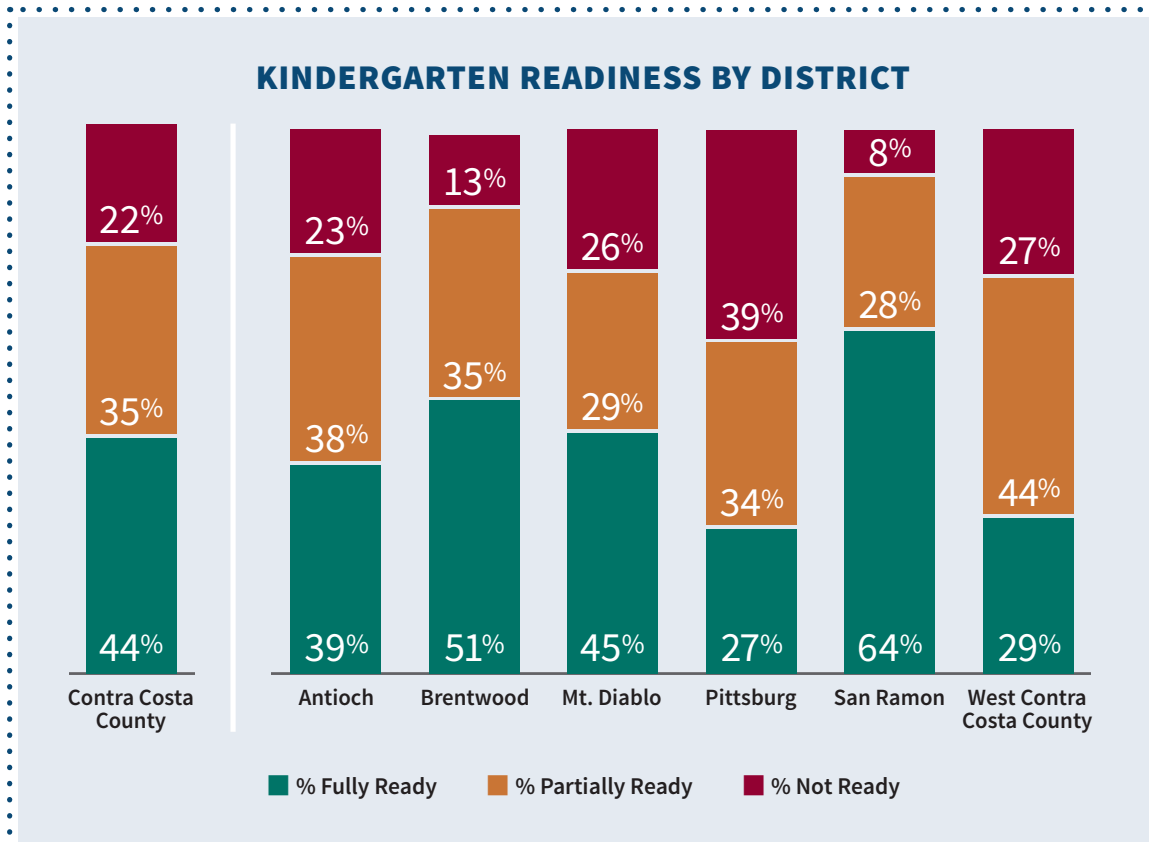


⁵ See Insight Center Self-Sufficiency Standard Tool for California. <https://insightccd.org/tools-metrics/self-sufficiency-standard-tool-for-california/>



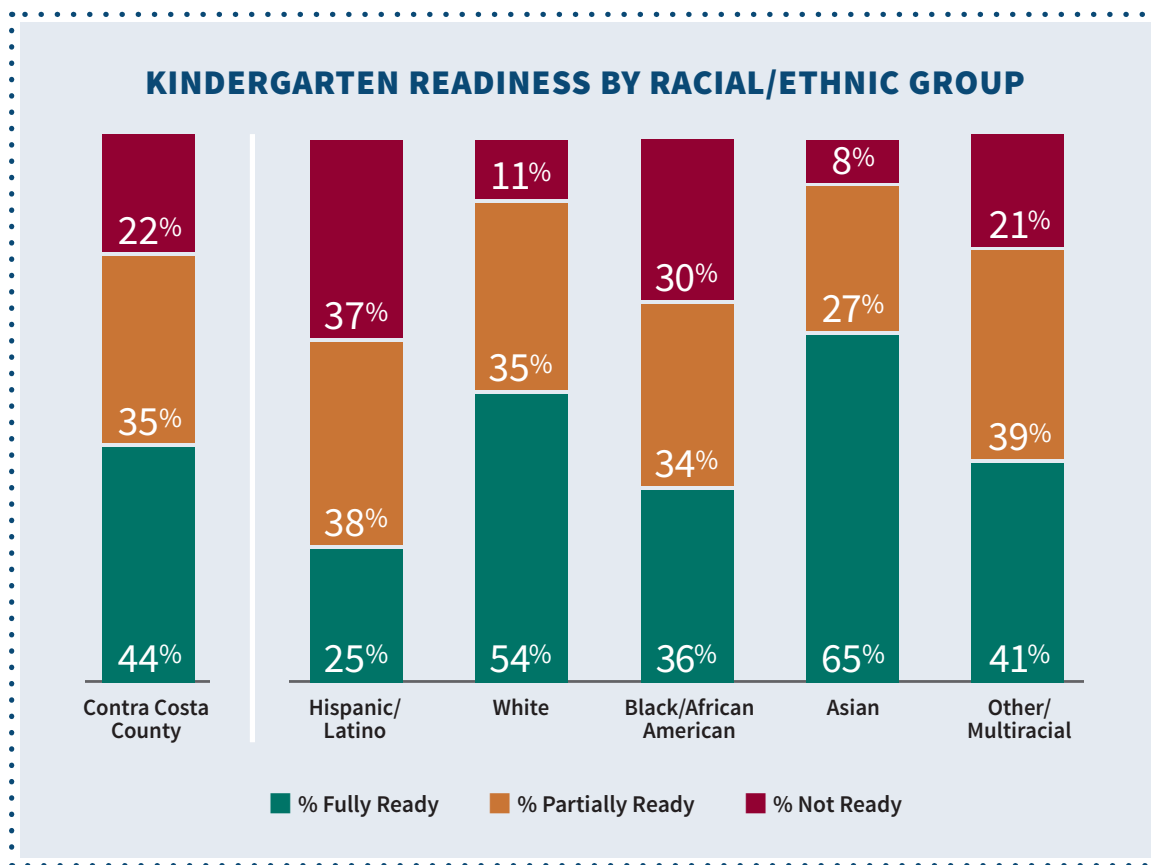
BY DISTRICT

Contra Costa mirrors the rest of the Bay Area in that it is home to very affluent communities as well as areas with dense poverty. Antioch, Pittsburg, and West Contra Costa County, the regions with the highest concentrations of poverty, have the lowest rates of children being “fully ready.”



BY ETHNICITY

The rates of Latino and African American children who are “not ready” are much higher than for the county overall. Thirty-seven percent of Latino children, and 30% of African American children included in this study were found to be not ready. These findings are echoed in other school readiness assessments done of Bay Area counties as well as national studies of school readiness. A national study found that 27% of Hispanic three- to six-year-olds could recognize all 26 letters of the alphabet, compared with 41% of white children and 44% of black children, for example.⁶ Over a third of children who are English learners, the vast majority of whom are Latino, were found to be underprepared for school in this study.



⁶ Child Trends Data Bank. July 2015. “Early School Readiness: Indicators of Child and Youth Well-Being.” <https://www.childtrends.org/indicators/early-school-readiness/>

IV. Factors Affecting Kindergarten Readiness

ASR researchers use a series of statistical tests to determine which factors and characteristics predict whether or not children are ready for school. Understanding these factors can inform school districts and community leaders about how to create learning environments that meet children where they are, and support early childhood services that are most likely to improve school success.

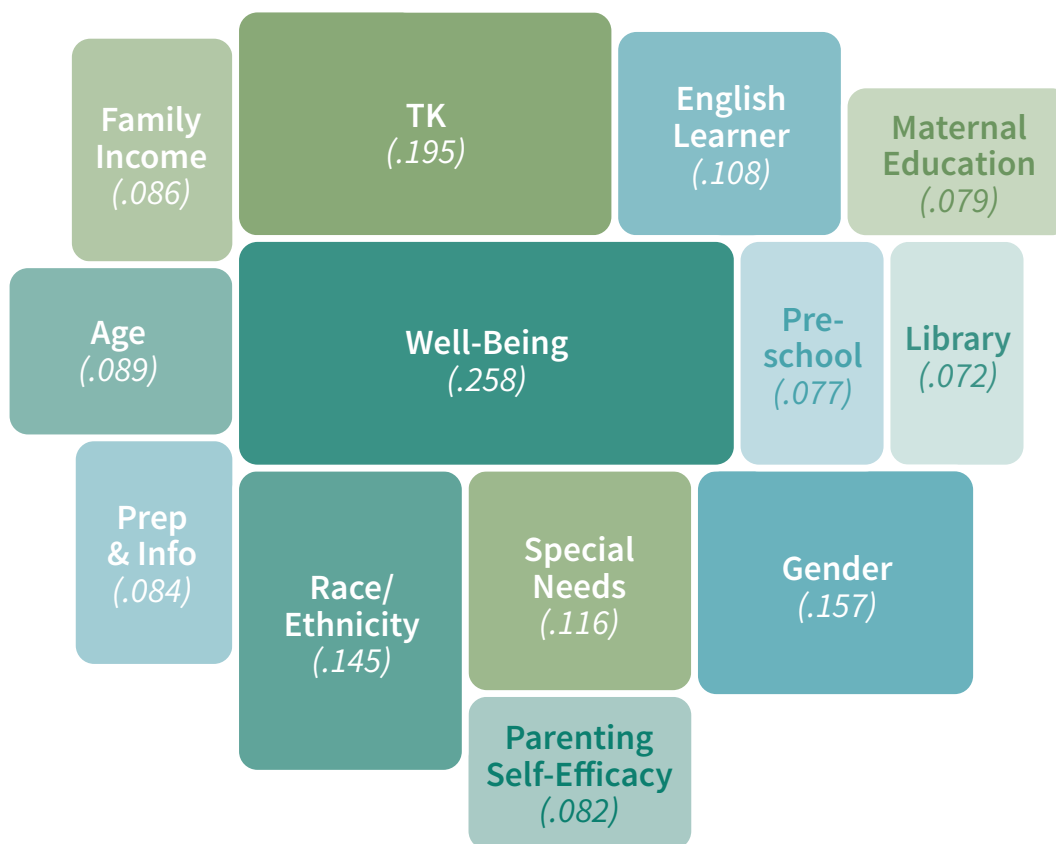
- **The most powerful influencer of kindergarten readiness was the child's well-being.** Those who were perceived by their teachers to be frequently hungry or tired had readiness levels that were lower than their peers without these well-being concerns.



- Beyond the child's physical health, **attending Transitional Kindergarten (TK)** was also very influential in predicting readiness. Experience with other types of licensed preschool also contributed to a child's readiness, but was less influential. Unlike TK, the curriculum and approach across preschool classrooms varies widely, and there is less expectation that a child will attend every day over the course of an academic year. The difference between the effects of these two kinds of early childhood education may be related to those differences.
- Demographic variables played a significant role in predicting readiness. **Race/ethnicity, English learner status, gender, age, and special needs** were significant predictors of readiness. White and Asian children showed higher scores than children in other race/ethnicity groups including Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American and Other/More than one. Being an English Learner decreased the likeliness that a child would be ready for school compared to native English speakers. Girls and older children tended to be more ready relative to boys and younger children. Lastly, children with special needs were less likely to be ready than children without special needs.
- Children from families with **higher income** tended to have higher readiness than children from less affluent families.
- Children whose parents reported that they did more than three **kindergarten preparation activities** or received more than three types of information about kindergarten also had higher readiness scores.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH KINDERGARTEN READINESS: ALL CHILDREN

The numerical values show the relative influence of these factors, based on statistical analysis.



For each Building Block of kindergarten readiness, the list of factors that most influence kindergarten readiness varies a bit. For all of them, **getting adequate sleep, attending Transitional Kindergarten, and learning about kindergarten** in advance help children come to school ready. **TK experience was found to be more helpful for children who are relatively at risk, especially those from low-income families, or whose mothers had low levels of educational attainment, and for English learners.**

- Performance on *Kindergarten Academics*, which measures cognitive skills of children, was more associated with factors such as higher maternal education, attending preschool, or visiting a library.
- *Self-Regulation*, which is indicative of behavioral control and inhibition, was more closely associated with being adequately fed at school, two-parent households, and higher parenting confidence.
- *Social Expression*, which is more indicative of quality social relationships, was also associated with two-parent households and higher parenting confidence, in addition to visiting a library.

See the figure below for more detailed information about which factors were found to influence readiness for each Building Block.

SIGNIFICANT PREDICTORS OF READINESS BY BUILDING BLOCK

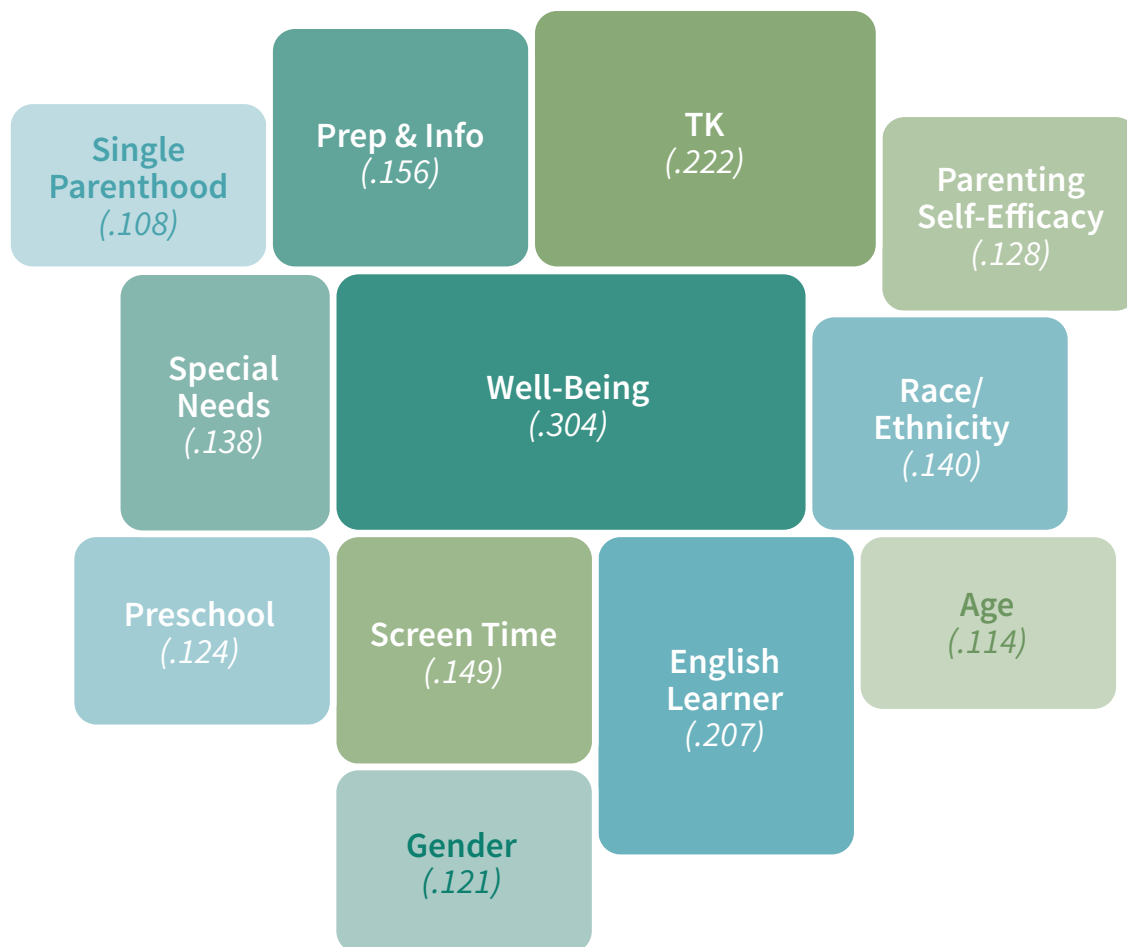
		Overall	Kindergarten Academics	Self-Regulation	Social Expression
DEMOGRAPHICS	• Female	✓	✓	✓	✓
	• Older				
	• White/Asian				
	• No Special Needs				
	• Not an English Learner				
FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS	Higher maternal education	✓	✓		
	Higher family income	✓	✓	✓	
	Two-parent household	✓		✓	✓
WELL-BEING	Not hungry	✓		✓	
	Not tired	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Not tardy		✓		
ACTIVITIES & EXTERNAL RESOURCES	Attend TK	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Attend preschool	✓	✓		
	Preparation activities and information about kindergarten	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Parenting confidence	✓		✓	✓
	Visit library with child	✓	✓		✓

Among low-income children, the factors that affect readiness are somewhat different. Understanding which factors are most influential for children who are living below the self-sufficiency standard may be most important for designing programs or policies to close the achievement gap. For these children, demographic factors had a smaller impact on kindergarten readiness, whereas engagement in supportive activities, child well-being, and participating in TK had a larger effect. **This suggests that for children in low-income households, early educational resources have a particularly pronounced impact on school readiness.**

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH KINDERGARTEN READINESS: CONTRA COSTA FAMILIES EARNING LESS THAN \$50,000

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The numerical values show the relative influence of these factors, based on statistical analysis.



V. How Do We Improve School Readiness?

The results of this study suggest that there are barriers to school readiness that can be mitigated with the help of programs and services. The data indicates that children who are well-fed, well-rested, visit a library with a caregiver, attend preschool or TK, or have parents who are confident and knowledgeable about parenting are more prepared to enter kindergarten ready to learn. **TK emerges as particularly beneficial to children with low family income**, less maternal education, or status as an English-learner. Preschool attendance was found to have **two kinds of effects on a child's readiness**: children learn skills and socialization from the school setting, and in addition, parents of children in preschool were more likely to get involved with school preparation activities.



Based on these findings, a few interventions emerge as having the most potential to improve children's school readiness:

- **Increased access to preschool and Transitional Kindergarten:** Improving access to quality preschool or early education experiences would likely have the largest impact on readiness levels of children in the county given the multiple ways it improves school readiness and the impact it has, particularly among children with low income.
- **Parenting support services:** Helping parents feel confident and connected to their community is a significant part of kindergarten readiness. Services like intensive family therapy, developmental playgroups for vulnerable children, and evidence-based parenting classes can help parents in a variety of ways, including boosting parenting confidence, as well as impart knowledge about the importance of preparing children for the transition to kindergarten.
- **Early literacy activities:** The availability of early literacy activities provided by libraries and other programs remain important resources for families as well.

VI. Conclusion and Recommendations

First 5 Contra Costa sponsored this research to help schools understand the set of skills and challenges that young children come to their doors with; to use this knowledge to best serve those children and their families; and ultimately ensure that all children meet educational milestones.

The findings are intended to speak to other stakeholders, as well. The overall lack of readiness among children in Contra Costa indicated by this research, though not dissimilar to neighboring counties, is still unacceptable. It will require the focus, creativity, and investment of all levels of governance to enrich the services available to families in our community so that all children have the best chances of success in school. The recommendations below offer tested ideas about how school districts, cities, and the county could play a larger and more impactful role in improving children's kindergarten readiness.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

- ***Expand access to and quality of early childhood education.*** School districts can directly impact access to high-quality early learning programs by establishing or expanding Head Start, state-funded preschool and Transitional Kindergarten programs. All early childhood education programs that operate as part of the school district should be enrolled in Contra Costa's Quality Rating and Improvement System, Quality Matters. Quality Matters works with teachers and program directors to continually improve the quality of care through coaching, stipends, grants, and other supports.
- ***Foster partnerships between early childhood and kindergarten educators.*** Districts could improve collaboration and communication between kindergarten and early childhood teachers by coordinating classroom visits and other opportunities to learn from one another. In addition, by working with state preschool and Head Start programs, districts can assign unique identifiers to students before they enter kindergarten, so that information about child attendance and other indicators of performance can be tracked over time.
- ***Employ a dedicated Early Learning Coordinator.*** Early Learning Coordinators could ensure that children from birth through third grade are supported, and improve the connection of classroom experiences and curricula from year to year. Moreover, this position would help districts and schools stay connected with community resources that improve kindergarten readiness, such as the Help Me Grow system, libraries, the food bank, health clinics, and other local efforts and tools.
- ***Include early childhood programs in LCAPs.*** Districts should build family and community support programs into their Local Control Action Plans (LCAPs) to reflect the importance of those activities to a child's readiness to learn.



CITIES

- **Expand access to early childhood education with new facilities.** Cities can assess the accessibility of quality early education programs in their communities, and the facilities available to house programs. In addition, they could encourage the creation of new early education programs by working with developers and community partners to ensure that there are sufficient facilities to meet the need.
- **Outreach to families about early childhood programs.** Cities should partner with CocoKids and First 5 Contra Costa to implement effective and innovative ways of messaging to families about how to sign up for early learning programs, especially subsidized programs. Outreach should be targeted and culturally appropriate.

- **Build and improve the spaces that strengthen families.** Cities should ensure that families have safe, welcoming and enriching parks, family resource centers, and recreation programs in their neighborhoods that encourage curiosity and experiential learning.

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

- **Prioritize children.** The County is the largest single provider of early learning programs in Contra Costa, and maintains additional investments supporting safety net, mental health and child welfare programs that all benefit children, yet there is more to be done. The County should prioritize increasing the funding and improving the effectiveness of these and other services to ensure that all eligible children are served at the highest level of quality.
- **Expand early childhood education programs.** The County should expand its system of Head Start and State Preschool programs to meet demand and reduce waiting lists. Providing high quality early education to the children who can benefit the most is the single most important step towards closing gaps in equity, opportunity and achievement for all children.
- **Invest in early literacy programming.** Libraries play a central role in many of the activities and external resources that were shown to significantly affect children's readiness for kindergarten. County libraries should expand their outreach to young families and early literacy activities in all the communities they serve.
- **Increase investment in early mental health services.** Programs that strengthen a child's social-emotional resiliency directly improve his or her ability to thrive at school. The County should draw down all available local, state and federal funds to support an effective system of children's mental health services that emphasizes the preventive advantage of serving children and their families as early as possible.

APPENDIX A: Participation by School District

A total of 1,154 students from 55 classrooms in 46 schools from 10 school districts participated in the 2017 study. Within each district, schools were randomly selected within strata defined by poverty (i.e., participation in the Federal Lunch Program) and 3rd grade reading proficiency rates. One additional classroom at nine of the selected schools was also selected due to their close proximity to a First 5 Center and/or a Quality Matters QRIS childcare program. Teachers in the selected classrooms completed the KOF within the first few weeks of the 2017/18 school year. In addition, a total of 936 parents completed the Parent Information Form (PIF; 81% return rate).

Participating School Districts	Number of classrooms	Number of schools	Number of Children
Mt. Diablo	14	12	284
San Ramon Valley	10	10	211
West Contra Costa	9	7	170
Antioch	8	6	193
Pittsburg	5	3	100
Brentwood	4	3	93
Lafayette	2	2	41
John Swett	1	1	23
Moraga	1	1	23
Orinda	1	1	16
TOTAL	55	46	1,154

APPENDIX B: Percent of Children in Each Category who are Ready, Partially Ready, or Not Ready

Factor	Category	% Fully Ready within Category	% Partially Ready within Category	% Not Ready within Category
GENDER	Female	51%	32%	16%
	Male	35%	38%	27%
AGE	Under 5.5 years old	32%	40%	28%
	5.5 years or older	51%	32%	17%
RACE/ETHNICITY	Hispanic/Latino	25%	38%	37%
	White	54%	35%	11%
	Asian	65%	27%	8%
	Black/African American	36%	34%	30%
	Other/Multiracial	41%	39%	21%
ENGLISH LEARNER	English Learner	19%	45%	36%
	Not English Learner	50%	33%	17%
SPECIAL NEEDS	Special Needs	31%	22%	46%
	No Special Needs	43%	36%	20%
MATERNAL EDUCATION	Mother Has HS Diploma or Less	24%	39%	37%
	Mother Has Some College or More	53%	35%	13%
FAMILY INCOME	\$0–\$14,999	24%	41%	35%
	\$15,000–\$34,999	23%	42%	35%
	\$35,000–\$49,999	30%	41%	29%
	\$50,000–\$74,999	40%	38%	23%
	\$75,000–\$99,999	47%	39%	14%
	\$100,000+	62%	30%	8%
FAMILY STRUCTURE	Single Parent Household	24%	42%	34%
	Dual Parent Household	49%	35%	16%
CHILD APPEARED HUNGRY	Rarely or Almost Never	45%	35%	20%
	On Some Days	30%	38%	31%
	On Most Days	10%	33%	57%
	Just About Every Day	0%	20%	80%
CHILD APPEARED TIRED IN CLASS	Rarely or Almost Never	47%	34%	19%
	On Some Days	20%	47%	33%
	On Most Days	12%	33%	56%
	Just About Every Day	0%	14%	86%
FORMAL ECE IN PRIOR YEAR ^a	Center-Based Preschool	44%	36%	20%
	Transitional Kindergarten	65%	27%	8%
	Licensed Family Child Care Home	25%	49%	20%
	None	23%	34%	37%
ACTIVITY WITH CHILD	Visited a Library with Child	56%	33%	12%
	Did Not Visit a Library with Child	35%	39%	27%

APPENDIX B: *Continued*

Factor	Category	% Fully Ready within Category	% Partially Ready within Category	% Not Ready within Category
KINDERGARTEN PREPARATION^b	More Than 3 Types of Preparation Activities	49%	36%	16%
	3 or Fewer Types of Preparation Activities	34%	35%	31%
KINDERGARTEN INFORMATION^b	More Than 3 Types of Information on Kindergarten	47%	36%	17%
	3 or Fewer Types of Information on Kindergarten	35%	36%	29%
PARENTING SELF-EFFICACY	Above average level of parental self-efficacy to manage child behavior (>3.45)	51%	35%	15%
	Below average level of parental self-efficacy to manage child behavior (<=3.45)	35%	37%	26%

N=891-1,154. Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2017) Parenting Information Form (2017).

^aSome caregivers reported more than one ECE type in the last year.



Monday May 7, 2018

Agenda Item 8.0

Executive Director's Report

April 30, 2018

Supervisor Karen Mitchoff
Supervisor Candace Anderson
Supervisor Diane Burgis
Supervisor John Gioia
Supervisor Federal Glover
659 Pine St
Martinez, CA 94553

RE: Recreational cannabis taxation policy

To the Contra Costa Board of Supervisors:

On May 8, as the Board initiates consideration of the taxation of cannabis-related activities in the unincorporated parts of the county, **we urge you to consider using new tax dollars for prevention services to reduce drug use and abuse and related incarcerations.** In particular, evidence-based interventions in the earliest years have been shown to provide the highest returns on investment, particularly by reducing the higher costs of addiction treatment and of incarceration. For that reason, **we also urge you to consider the creation of a Contra Costa Early Childhood Development Fund, using a portion of cannabis revenues as the initial funding source.**

Every child deserves to be happy and healthy, with equal opportunities to reach their full potential. The first five years of life – starting in the prenatal period – provide the greatest window of opportunity to build a strong foundation for lifelong health and wellbeing. During this critical period of development, a healthy brain forms 700 new neural connections every second, reaching 90% of the size of an adult's brain by age five. Responsive, nurturing caregiving in safe, engaging environments fosters healthy brain development, laying a strong foundation for children to develop the social, emotional, cognitive and physical skills needed to thrive in school and throughout life.

However, not all children begin life with the same strong foundation. Exposure to chronic stressors (poverty and discrimination) or adverse childhood experiences (abuse and neglect, parental mental illness and substance abuse, or family violence) can disrupt healthy brain development, creating lifelong negative impacts on learning, behavior and health. As the number of adverse experiences in a child's life increases, so does the risk for developmental delays, behavioral problems, low educational attainment, lower wages in adulthood, and poor health outcomes later in life, such as heart disease, diabetes, addiction and depression. The cumulative effects of adversity, stress and trauma are even greater for children who lack nurturing relationships with their parents and primary caregivers.

Scientists and economists agree that investing in high-quality early childhood development programs – such as early care and education, developmental and behavioral health services, and parenting and family support – produces the greatest benefits to children, families and society. New research from Nobel Laureate James Heckman and colleagues shows that **investments in high quality early childhood development programs for disadvantaged children can deliver a 13% annual return on investment** by improving life outcomes related to health, education, employment, and social behaviors, which in turn

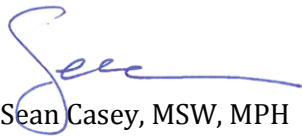
decreases the costs to taxpayers for government-funded treatment and remediation services.ⁱ Similarly, benefit-cost analyses from the Washington State Institute for Public Policy show investing in evidence-based parenting programs yields as much as \$8 for every \$1 spent.ⁱⁱ Heckman states, “The highest rate of return... comes from investing as early as possible. Starting at age three or four is too little too late, as it fails to recognize that skills beget skills in a complementary and dynamic way. Efforts should focus on the first years [of childhood] for the greatest efficiency and effectiveness.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The discussion of recreational cannabis taxation, offers a new opportunity for this Board to consider how public dollars can be responsibly spent on programs known to have outcomes in the short and long terms. County general funds tend to be restricted for purposes that fulfill state and federal mandates, many of which are intended to treat or remediate problems that are deeply entrenched in families and communities. First 5’s Prop 10 funding for the programs that work is declining precipitously, and by 2020 we will be unable to fund many of the programs that county residents have grown to rely on.

We recommend that the Board pursue the establishment of an Early Childhood Development Fund, using a portion of cannabis-related tax revenue. By establishing such a fund, the Board would be making a clear statement that Contra Costa County prioritizes children’s needs and is committed to reducing the number of youth who end up in our jails and prisons. The Board could follow the example set by several neighboring California counties that have established Early Childhood Development Funds, which will strengthen countywide systems of early childhood development services by emphasizing prevention, innovation, accountability, and measurable results.^{iv}

First 5 stands ready to work with you to develop plans for responsible investment of new tax dollars resulting from cannabis sales in our county. I look forward to a rich discussion of how to ensure that new county revenue is dedicated to the priorities you all hold as community members and leaders.

Sincerely,



Sean Casey, MSW, MPH
Executive Director

First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission

Cc: David Twa, County Administrator
Ruben Hernandez, Current Planning, Principal Planner
Anna Roth, Director of Health Services
Kathy Gallagher, Director of Employment and Human Services

ⁱ García, Jorge Luis, James J. Heckman, Duncan Ermini Leaf, and María José Prados. “The Life-cycle Benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program.” (2016)

ⁱⁱ Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Benefit-Cost Results, <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/BenefitCost>

ⁱⁱⁱ Heckman, J. 2014. Invest in Early Childhood Development: Reduce Deficits, Strengthen the Economy. www.heckmanequation.org

^{iv} Examples of counties that have established, or are in the process of establishing, Children’s Funds with cannabis taxation funds include San Joaquin, Santa Cruz, Humboldt and Yolo Counties.