

School Readiness Assessment of Graduating Head Start Students

Santa Clara County Head Start



RESEARCH STUDY FUNDED BY:



Santa Clara County
Office of Education



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Summary of Key Findings

In Spring 2010, the Santa Clara County Office of Education partnered with Applied Survey Research to assess the school readiness of 1135 preschool students graduating from Santa Clara Head Start. The table below summarizes the key findings from this project.

Research Question	Conclusion	Data Highlights
1. Are graduating Head Start students ready for school?	YES Overall readiness score: 3.59	For each individual readiness skill, children were scored on a scale from <i>Not yet</i> (1) to <i>Proficient</i> (4). Average scores for each <i>Basic Building Block</i> range from 1 to 4. The scores for overall readiness – as well as three of the <i>Basic Building Blocks</i> – are between the <i>In progress</i> (3) and <i>Proficient</i> (4) levels. Scores were highest in the <i>Self-Care & Motor Skills</i> area (3.83) and lowest for <i>Kindergarten Academics</i> (3.48).
2. What factors are associated with enhanced school readiness?	Child health & family involvement in kindergarten preparation and shared reading time were related to greater school readiness of Head Start graduates	When children were healthy, well-fed, well-rested, and had better attendance rates they had higher levels of readiness. Children who were read to and whose families engaged in more kindergarten preparation/transition activities were also more school-ready.

The following research questions were addressed through a comparison with data from a 2008 Santa Clara County assessment of kindergarten readiness

Research Question	Conclusion	Data Highlights
3. How do the school readiness levels of Head Start graduates compare to the readiness levels of Santa Clara students who entered kindergarten in 2008?	The readiness levels of Head Start graduates were <u>higher</u> than the readiness levels of the students who entered kindergarten in 2008	After accounting for demographic differences (income, ethnicity, primary language) between the two samples, the overall readiness scores of Head Start graduates were significantly greater than the readiness scores of incoming kindergarteners in Santa Clara County (3.68 compared to 3.22, respectively).

Research Question	Conclusion	Data Highlights
<p>4. How do Head Start and Kindergarten teachers' expectations compare regarding the skill proficiency children need in order to transition successfully to kindergarten?</p>	<p>Head Start teachers have <u>higher</u> expectations than Kindergarten teachers regarding the skill proficiency children need to transition successfully to kindergarten</p>	<p>Head Start teachers believed children needed significantly higher levels of proficiency at kindergarten entry than did Kindergarten teachers.</p> <p>Differences in expectations were particularly pronounced in the area of <i>Kindergarten Academic</i> skills where Kindergarten teachers believed these skills needed to be “in progress” (3) and Head Start teachers believed that children needed to be nearing proficiency in this area (3.60).</p>
<p>5. How do Head Start graduates' readiness skills align with Head Start and Kindergarten teacher expectations?</p>	<p>The majority of children are <u>meeting</u> or <u>exceeding</u> Head Start and Kindergarten teachers' readiness expectations</p>	<p>59% meet/exceed Head Start teacher expectations for proficiency at kindergarten entry; 86% meet/exceed the expectations held by Kindergarten teachers in the 2008 Santa Clara school readiness assessment.</p>

Executive Summary

Background

“Head Start is a national program that promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to enrolled children and families” (Administration for Children & Families, 2010, p 1). Head Start serves over 900,000 low-income children and families nationally, and over 2,150 children and families locally in Santa Clara County, with the goal of supporting children’s development and enhancing readiness for kindergarten. All Head Start programs are required to monitor children’s progress toward these goals. In Santa Clara County, Head Start is administered through the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE).

To examine the effectiveness of Head Start services in preparing children for school, SCCOE contracted Applied Survey Research (ASR) to design and implement a county-wide school readiness assessment of children graduating from Head Start programs.

In addition to assessing how prepared their Head Start graduates were for Kindergarten, SCCOE was interested in using the assessment process as an opportunity for teacher professional development and parent education around school readiness. SCCOE’s professional development goals for teachers included enhancing teachers’ understanding of the skills (and levels of skills) children need for kindergarten success and increasing their ability to utilize assessment and reflection to inform their classroom practice and communication with parents.

To support these outcomes, teachers received training and coaching from Applied Survey Research and SCCOE on how to effectively assess children, interpret their findings, and appropriately use and share the data with parents. Teachers then discussed child assessment findings with parents during parent-teacher conferences and used the information as a tool for improving parents’ knowledge of school readiness and their children’s skill levels. To reach all eligible children, teachers, and families, a universal sampling strategy was selected in which all of the preschool children graduating from SCCOE-directed Head Start programs in Spring/Summer 2010 (n=1154) and their teachers and families were targeted for inclusion in the project.

SCCOE had originally intended to follow Head Start graduates from this sample into kindergarten in order to assess the children’s readiness at the time of kindergarten entry in comparison to their peers. This additional stage of the research did not occur, so county-wide data from previous years were drawn upon to help provide context for the results. School readiness assessment data has been collected several times in Santa Clara County. In 2004 the Partnership for School Readiness (a county-wide collaborative of which SCCOE is a part) contracted with Applied Survey Research to launch benchmark assessments of school readiness in Santa Clara County. Readiness assessments were conducted with random samples of Santa Clara County children in 2004 (n=700), 2005(n=762), and 2006 (n=714), and once again in 2008 (n=705) to describe the readiness levels of children in the county and identify where interventions may enhance the likelihood of school success. The availability of this representative benchmark data makes comparisons possible between the school readiness outcomes of Head Start students and students in the benchmark sample.

Research Questions

ASR outlines the results from the Santa Clara County Head Start School Readiness Assessment to answer five primary research questions:

1. *How ready for kindergarten are students when they exit Santa Clara County Head Start?*
2. *What factors are associated with enhanced school readiness?*

Using the 2008 Santa Clara County School Readiness Assessment data as a source of comparison,

3. *How do the readiness levels of 2010 Head Start graduates compare to the readiness levels of Santa Clara County kindergarteners in 2008?*
4. *How do Head Start teachers' and kindergarten teachers' expectations for school readiness compare?*
5. *How do students' readiness skills align with Head Start and kindergarten teacher expectations?*

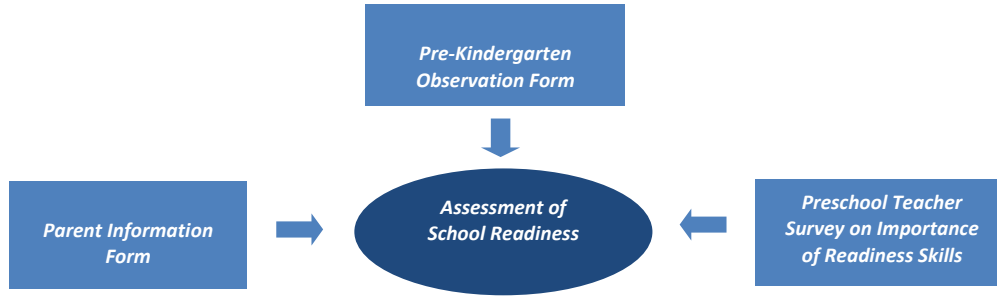
Overview of Assessment Methods

The Santa Clara County Head Start school readiness assessment was conducted with children exiting Head Start in Spring/Summer 2010. A universal sample of all children graduating Head Start pre-kindergarten programs (n=1154) and their teachers (n=59) were targeted for inclusion in the study. All 59 teachers were trained on the three assessment forms described below, and all but one teacher completed the assessments. These teachers served as the expert observers, assessing the proficiency of each of their students across 24 readiness skills.

The readiness assessment consisted of the three survey instruments listed below.

- The **Pre-Kindergarten Observation Form (KOF), 2010** is designed to measure school readiness skills across four domains: *Self-Care & Motor Skills*, *Self-Regulation*, *Social Expression*, and *Kindergarten Academics*. The form has strong content validity, strong construct validity, shows strong results on tests for concurrent validity (with tools such as the Brigance K-1 Screens, the Work Sampling System, and the California Reading and Literature Project literacy assessment), has consistent known groups validity, has strong predictive validity (highly correlated with the 3rd grade California Standards Tests in reading and math) and a high degree of internal consistency.
- The **Parent Information Form (PIF), 2010** collects background information on childcare, kindergarten transition activities, activities in the home, demographic information, and parental supports and well-being.
- The **Preschool Teacher Survey on Importance of Readiness Skills, 2010** is a self-administered teacher survey. It collects opinions about children's transition into kindergarten as measured by the skills in the P-KOF. It gathers teachers' opinions on the importance of the skills assessed in the P-KOF, the ease of impact on the skills in the classroom, and which skills they spend most of their time on. This instrument also collects information about classroom activities and curricula.

Figure A. Sources of Information to Assess the Readiness of Graduating Head Start Students

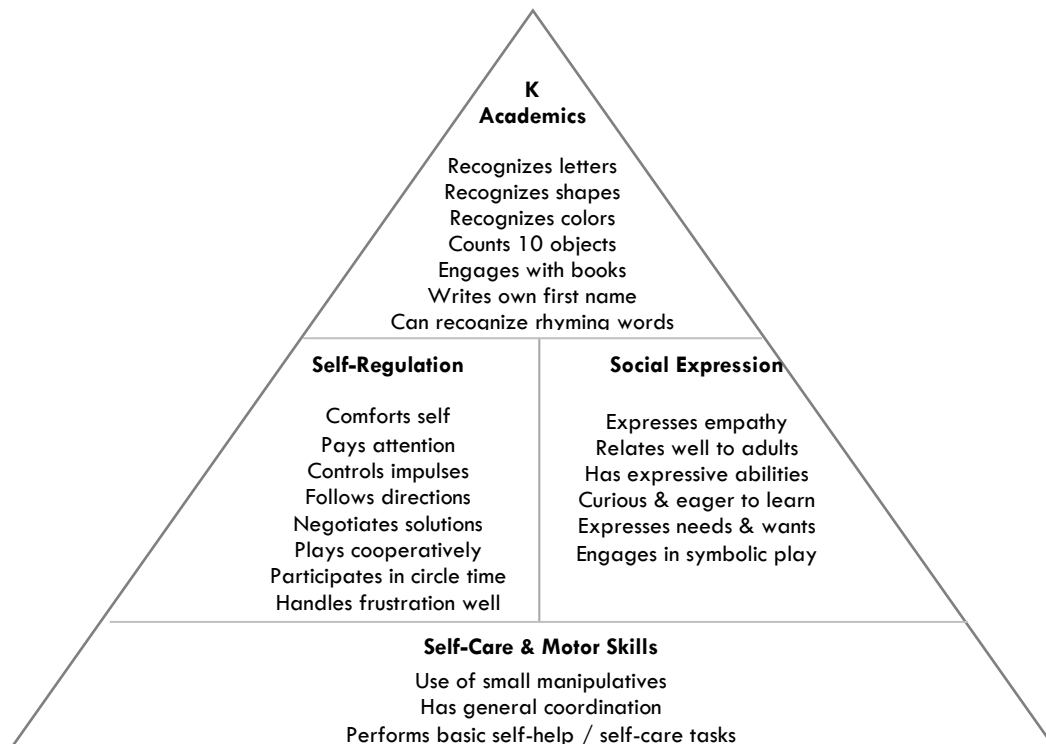


The Pre-Kindergarten Observation Form (P-KOF) was the primary source of information regarding children’s levels of readiness. The P-KOF assesses children’s readiness in regards to 24 skills that sort reliably into four “building blocks” of readiness:

1. *Self-Care & Motor Skills;*
2. *Social Expression;*
3. *Self-Regulation;* and
4. *Kindergarten Academics*

The figure below displays the 24 individual skills on which children were assessed, as well as how the skills sort into the four *Basic Building Blocks*.

Figure B. Basic Building Blocks of Readiness



Sample

Response Rates

The following figure presents a summary of the number of classrooms, children, parents, and teachers assessed. Nearly all (99.8%; $N=1135$) of the graduating Head Start students across 58 Head Start classrooms were assessed with the *P-KOF*. SCCOE required the teachers to administer the *P-KOF* to all graduating students. The few students who were not assessed had either moved or dropped out of their programs at the time of the assessment.

Most parents completed and returned a *Parent Information Form* as requested ($N=1078$). Parents were asked to complete the *Parent Information Form* as a component of parent-teacher conferences. Parent response rates varied across classrooms, ranging from 0% (in one classroom) to 100% (in 38 classrooms). The overall response rate was 95%.

Fifty-five of 58 teachers completed the *Preschool Teacher Survey on Importance of Readiness Skills*.

Figure C. Completion Metrics for Santa Clara County Head Start

	Total
Number of classrooms	58
Number of children assessed (P-KOF)	1135
Number of parents surveyed (PIF)	1078
Parent response rate	95%
Number of teachers surveyed (<i>Pre-Kindergarten Teacher Survey on Importance of Readiness Skills</i>)	55

Source: *Pre-Kindergarten Observation Form 2010*, $n=1127$.

Child Characteristics

Children ranged in age from 4.52 to 5.52 years with an average age of 5 years. The majority of children were Latino and had family incomes below \$31,999 per year.

Figure D. Key Child Demographic Characteristics

Child Dimension	Percent of 2010 Head Start students
Sex (% girls)	48%
Age	
Between 4.5 and less than 5	50%
Between 5 and less than 5.5	48%
5.5 and older	2%
Ethnicity	
Hispanic/Latino	62%
Asian	28%
Caucasian	4%
African American	2%
Pacific Islander	<1%
Multi-ethnic	4%
Other / don't know	<1%
Primary language (teacher report)	
English	21%
Spanish	50%
Vietnamese	23%
Other languages	6%
Percent English Learners	77%
Primary language development	
Delayed	8%
On track	46%
Advanced	42%
Cannot determine	3%
Annual family income	
\$0-\$15,999	46%
\$16,000-\$31,999	39%
\$32,000-\$52,999	10%
\$53,000-\$84,999	4%
\$85,000+	1%

Sources: Pre-Kindergarten Observation Form (2010), N=1068, and Parent Information Form (2010), N=718.

Family characteristics

Nearly two-thirds of students had mothers whose education levels did not exceed high school and English was the primary language spoken at home for only about one in five students. Half of the children lived in a single-parent household, and 35% had a parent who had lost a job in the past year.

Figure E. Characteristics of Families of Head Start Students

Family Dimension	Percent of 2010 Head Start families
Mothers' education is at high school level or below	66%
English is not the primary language spoken at home	81%
Foreign-born parent	79%
Single parent	50%
Job loss in the past year	35%
Mother was teenager at birth of child	9%
Family lived at three or more addresses since child was born	28%

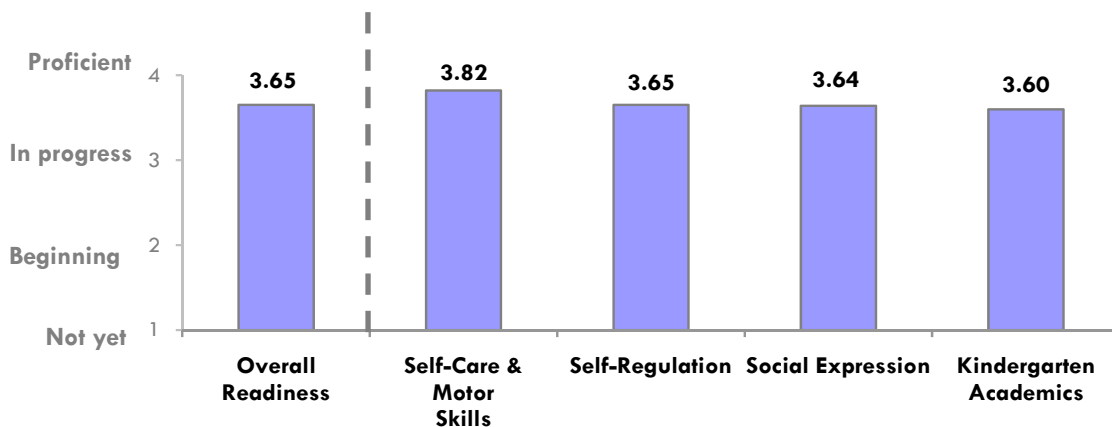
Source: Parent Information Form (2010), N=966.

What are Head Start Teachers' Expectations Regarding School Readiness?

Part of the teacher-completed *Preschool Teacher Survey of the Importance of Readiness Skills* included having teachers provide their opinion about the level at which children should be performing on each of the 24 skills to ensure a smooth transition into kindergarten.

The figure that follows displays average scores for teachers' expected levels of proficiency for students when they enter kindergarten. Teachers expect the highest proficiency in *Self-Care & Motor Skills*, and they expect the lowest proficiency on children's *Kindergarten Academics* skills

Figure F. Head Start Teachers' Expectations for Proficiency on the Basic Building Blocks of Readiness



Source: *Preschool Teacher Survey of the Importance of Readiness Skills* (2010). Note: Means are based on 55 teachers.

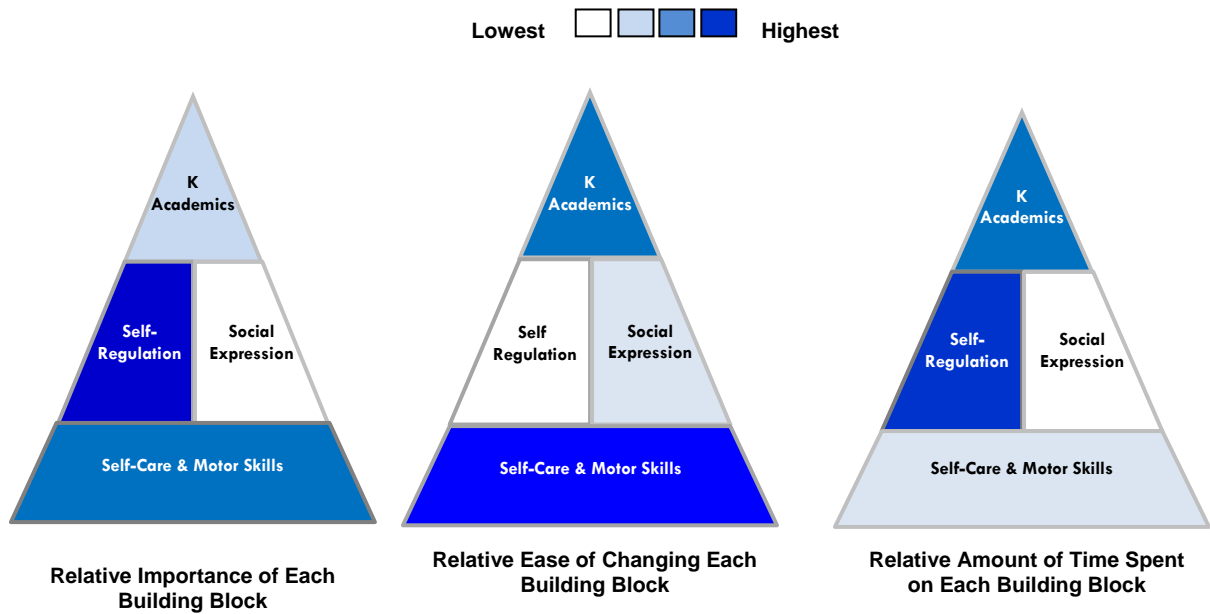
Teachers also reported:

- Which five readiness skills they considered to be most important to ensure a smooth transition into kindergarten;
- Which five readiness skills were easiest to impact during the course of the school year; and
- On which five skills they spent most of their time during the school year.

The *Basic Building Blocks* pyramids shown in the following figure are shaded to indicate teachers' differing priorities. Darker shading is used to highlight dimensions on which teachers placed a higher priority, whereas lighter shading is used to show dimensions on which teachers placed less of a priority. The story told by these pyramids is largely consistent with previous teacher reports from past school readiness assessments conducted by ASR. Specifically,

- When thinking about which readiness skills are most important to kindergarten entry, teachers placed the highest importance on *Self-Regulation* skills, followed by *Self-Care & Motor Skills*.
- Impacting children's proficiency in *Self-Regulation* during the preschool year, however, was a difficult task in teachers' eyes – at least within their current curricula. Skills in the *Self-Care & Motor Skills* cluster were seen by teachers as the most amenable to change over the course of the academic year, followed by skills related to *Kindergarten Academics* and *Social Expression* skills.
- Teachers reported spending more classroom time on *Self-Regulation* than they did on skills in any of the other *Basic Building Blocks*. *Kindergarten Academics* was the next most time-consuming set of skills, followed by *Self-Care & Motor Skills*, and finally *Social Expression Skills*.

Figure G. Head Start Teacher Priorities for Skill Importance, Ease-of-Changing, and Amount of Time Spent



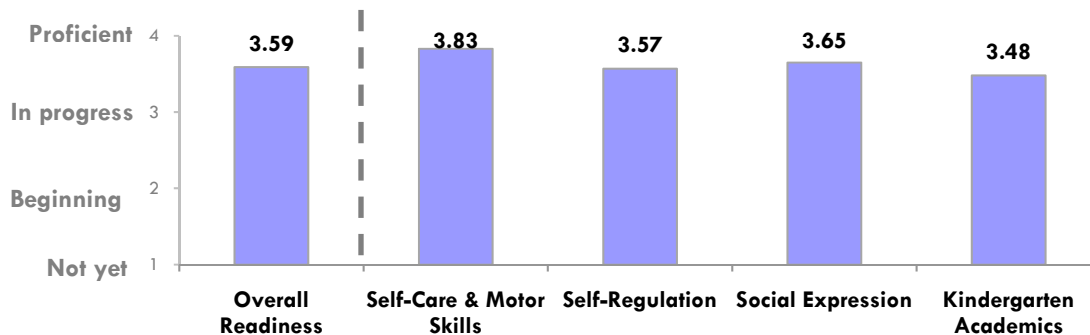
Source: *Preschool Teacher Survey on Importance of Readiness Skills (2010)*. N=52.

And so, in sum, teachers feel self-regulation skills are the most important, yet hardest to change and thus, where they spend the most classroom time.

Are Head Start Graduates Ready for School?

The chart that follows shows children’s readiness levels across the *Basic Building Blocks*. Overall, children scored between the “In progress” and “Proficient” levels on the four building blocks. Children tended to score highest on *Self-Care & Motor Skills* (average score = 3.83) and to have the greatest room to grow in *Kindergarten Academics* (average score = 3.48).

Figure H. Head Start Students’ Proficiency across Four Basic Building Blocks of Readiness



Source: Pre-Kindergarten Observation Form (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 1128-1131 students.

Students’ average readiness scores were above teachers’ average expectations on most skill dimensions, but they were exiting Head Start somewhat less prepared in *Self-Regulation* and *Kindergarten Academics* skills than their teachers would like. In fact, about one in four students (25%) exited Head Start significantly below their teacher’s desired levels of proficiency on their *Self-Regulation* and *Kindergarten Academic* skills. When examining children’s readiness in the context of longitudinal research that linked scores within the *Self-Regulation* and *Kindergarten Academics* domains to third-grade academic outcomes, two-thirds of the children appeared to be on-track to be highly successful in third grade while 14% had scores in these domains that were predictive of later academic risk.

What Factors are Associated with Enhanced Student School Readiness?

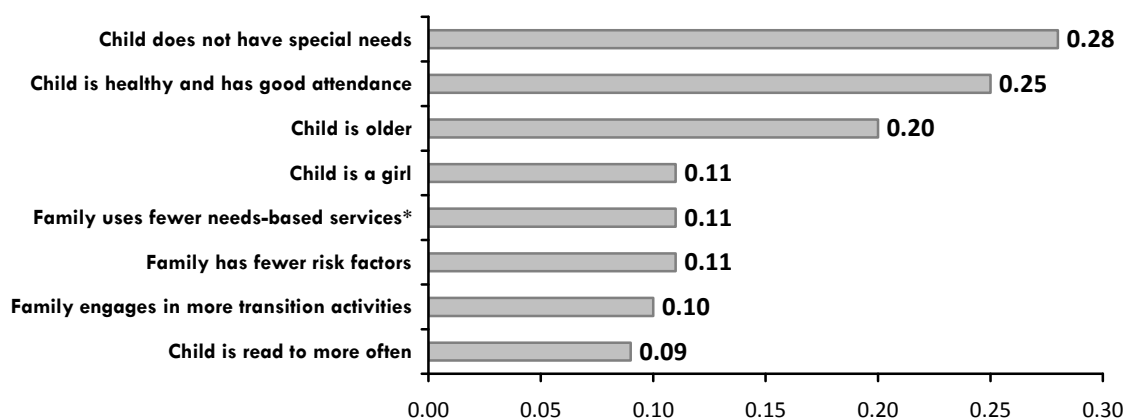
A set of regression analyses was conducted to examine what factors were associated with greater school readiness. These analyses allowed us to take into account all important measured variables simultaneously, so that the relationship between readiness and particular family, student, and school-level factors could be examined after “ironing out” the influence of other, related factors.

Regression results indicated that eight factors explained 31 percent of children’s readiness scores.

- The strongest predictor of readiness was whether or not a child had special needs. This predictor was closely followed by child health/school attendance. When children came to school well-rested, well-fed, and healthy, they had higher readiness scores.
- The next strongest predictors of readiness were basic child-level factors, including being older and being a girl.

- Children whose families had fewer risk factors (being born to a teen mother, having a single parent, having a parent who lost a job in the last year, and having moved frequently since birth) were more ready for school.
- Possibly serving as an indicator of family risk/need, families who had required fewer needs-based services such as WIC and home-visits, had children with better readiness outcomes.
- Children from families who had engaged in more transition and kindergarten preparation activities were more prepared for school.
- Children who were read to more frequently had higher readiness levels than children who were not read to frequently.

Figure I. Child and Family Factors Related to Readiness



Source: Pre-Kindergarten Observation Form and Parent Information Form (2010).

Note: Values for each factor listed above represent standardized beta coefficients that were significant at $p < .01$ level. For a full listing of all variables entered into the model, see text. The overall regression model was highly significant, $F = 32.54$, $p < .001$, explaining 31% of the variance in kindergarten readiness ($R^2 = .32$; Adj. $R^2 = .31$).

*In this low-income family population, the use of certain supports such as home-visiting services, WIC, and help from extended family and neighbors were found to be indicators, or correlates, of higher levels of family stress and need.

The figure above shows the factors that were associated with children’s overall readiness scores. To see how each individual *Basic Building Block* readiness dimension was related to the different factors, ASR performed a regression analysis on each skill dimension. The following figure shows which factors emerged as significant predictors of each *Basic Building Block*, and it displays how much of the readiness dimensions were explained by the predictors (as indicated by the adjusted R^2 statistics at the top of the table). Child health/school attendance was a strong predictor across all building blocks, particularly in children’s social expression and self-care and motor skills. Though not emerging as strong predictors in the overall model above, mothers’ education levels and children’s English Learner status were predictors of children’s readiness in the areas of *Self-Care & Motor Skills*, *Self-Regulation*, and *Kindergarten Academics*.

Figure J. Relative Strength of Factors Associated with Each Basic Building Block

Factors	Overall Readiness	Self-Care & Motor Skills	Self-Regulation	Social Expression	Kindergarten Academics
Adjusted R^2	.31	.21	.23	.24	.26
Child does not have special needs	.28	.26	.20	.30	.26
Child is healthy and has good attendance	.25	.26	.23	.20	.22
Child is older	.21	.20	.16	.16	.22
Child is a girl	.11	--	.12	.09	--
Family uses fewer needs based services	.11	--	--	.07	.15
Family has fewer risk factors	.11	--	.11	--	.13
Family engages in more transition activities	.10	--	.07	.12	--
Child is read to more frequently	.09	--	--	.10	.11
Child is an English Learner	--	.13	.03	--	--
Mother has higher education level	--	--	--	--	.09

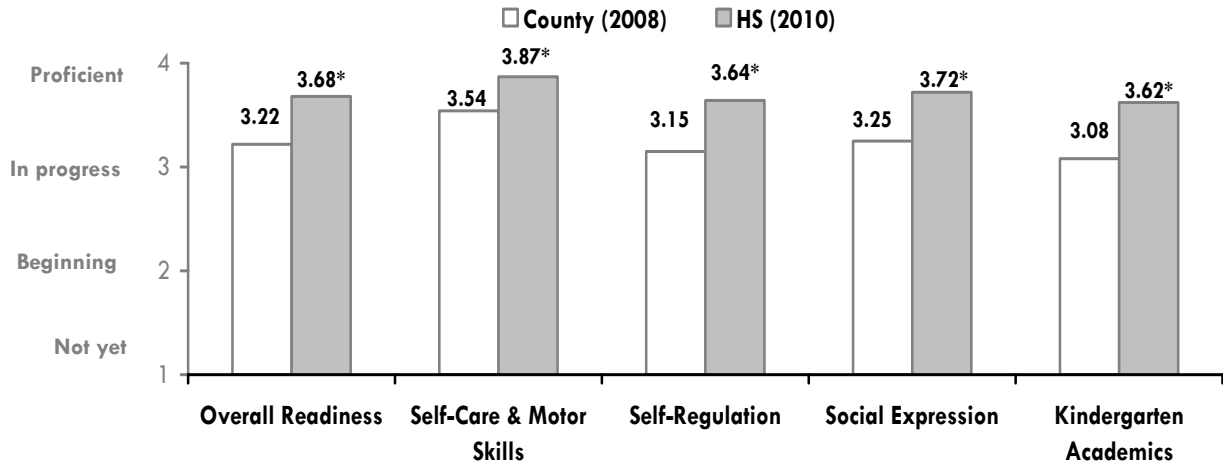
Source: Pre-Kindergarten Observation Form (2010) and Parent Information Form (2010).

How do the School Readiness Levels of Head Start Graduates Compare to the Readiness Levels of Santa Clara Students Who Entered Kindergarten in 2008?

Another way to examine the readiness of students in this sample is to compare their levels of readiness as they exit Head Start with the average levels of readiness seen among entering kindergartners across the county. Applied Survey Research was commissioned by the Partnership for School Readiness to assess the readiness of incoming kindergartners in Santa Clara County in 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2008. Data from the Fall 2008 assessment is used as a source of comparison. It should be noted that children’s school readiness at the end of a preschool program in Spring may look slightly more advanced than their readiness scores in Fall partly due to the 3-4 month unstructured break that many children experience. Therefore, the reader should keep in mind that this section compares data across different years as well as different assessment points in time (Spring versus Fall).

In 2008, a sample of 705 incoming kindergartners was randomly selected for participation in a school readiness assessment. This sample closely mirrored, and was further weighted to align with, the demographic characteristics of the county as a whole. For purposes of comparison, statistical controls were used to account for sample demographic differences in ethnicity, annual income, and primary language. The figure below displays a comparison between the adjusted mean readiness scores of Head Start graduates and Santa Clara County incoming kindergartners in 2008.

Figure K. Comparison of Head Start Students' Readiness Levels to County Averages for Incoming Kindergarteners After Adjusting for Demographic Differences



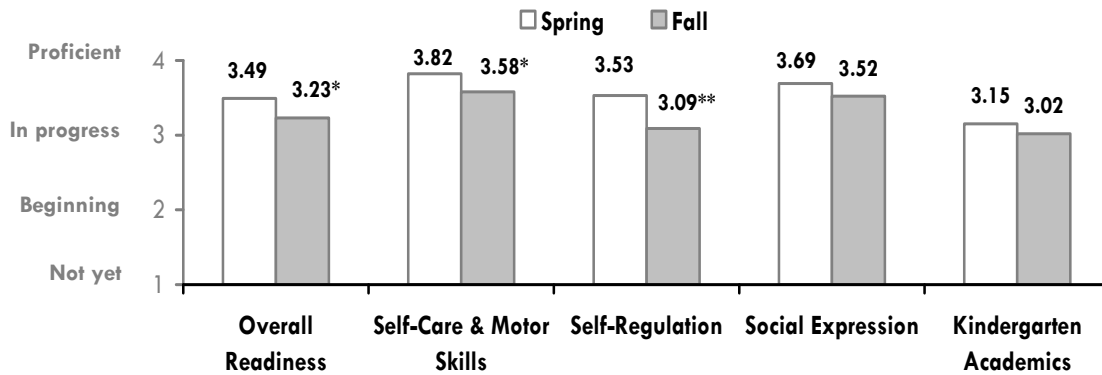
Source: Pre-Kindergarten Observation Form (2010), N=1128-1131; Kindergarten Observation Form (2008), N=710-718. Adjusted means after controlling for child age, language, Latino ethnic background, and income. All mean differences were significant at a $p < .001$ level.

After controlling for demographic differences, Head Start graduates presented higher readiness scores than incoming kindergarten students across all dimensions of readiness. Again, it should be noted that Spring readiness scores of Head Start children may be higher than those of entering kindergarteners in the Fall because of the unstructured summer break. Such a drop in readiness was also seen among 28 children in this project who were assessed again at kindergarten entry through Gilroy Unified School District and in Applied Survey Research’s studies of Los Angeles Universal Preschool.

Gilroy Unified School District: Fall 2010 Follow-up Kindergarten Readiness Assessment

Kindergarten entry data was available for 28 of the Head Start children in this project through a Fall 2010 school readiness assessment conducted by Gilroy Unified School District (GUSD). These children’s Spring and Fall readiness scores are displayed in Figure L.

Figure L. Head Start Children’s Spring and Fall 2010 Readiness Scores (GUSD data)



Source: Gilroy Unified School District 2010 school readiness assessment—Pre-Kindergarten Observation Form and Kindergarten Observation Form (2010). N=28.*=difference significant at $p<.05$ level. **=difference significant at $p<.01$ level.

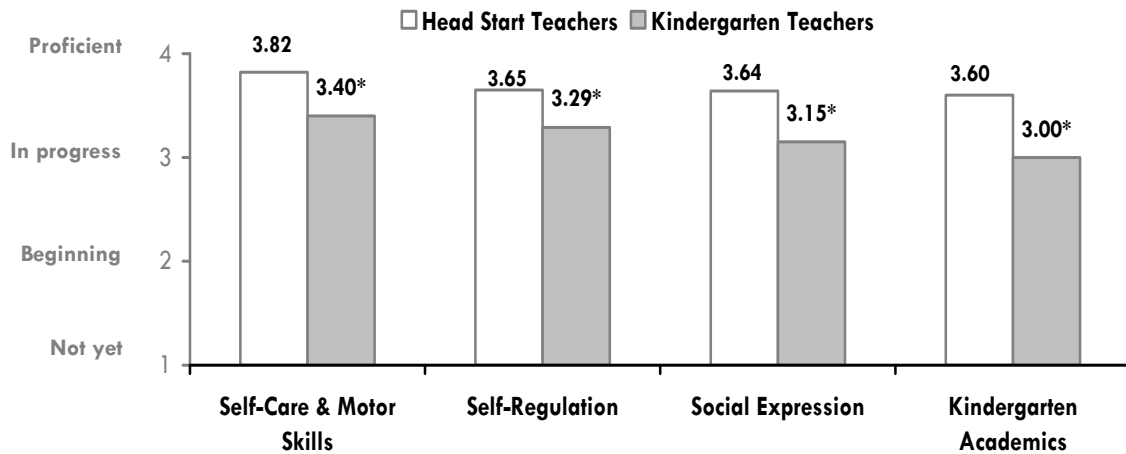
Though declines in readiness were observed from Spring to Fall for these 28 children, correlations between teachers’ ratings from Spring and Fall indicated that the readiness assessments were being implemented reliably. Correlations between teachers’ Spring and Fall ratings were statistically significant ($r=.56, p<.01$), indicating that Head Start and Kindergarten teachers consistently identified the same patterns of readiness in the same children although these children’s scores decreased after the summer break.

How do Head Start teachers’ and Kindergarten teachers’ expectations compare?

To gain a better understanding of the readiness skills that Head Start preschool teachers and Santa Clara County kindergarten teachers believe are most needed as children transition to kindergarten, teachers’ responses to the following survey topics were compared: 1) the levels of proficiency teachers believe children must have on each readiness skill at kindergarten entry to be “school ready”, 2) the readiness indicators that teachers feel are most important for kindergarten entry, 3) the skills teachers feel are easiest to impact, and 4) the skills on which teachers spend the most classroom time. The kindergarten teacher sample was representative of teachers working across all socioeconomic and neighborhood lines in Santa Clara County.

Head Start preschool teachers’ expectations for children’s readiness were significantly higher than the expectations held by Santa Clara County kindergarten teachers across all dimensions of readiness assessed. As can be seen in the figure below, differences between teacher expectations were most pronounced in the areas of kindergarten academics and social expression. Teacher expectations were most similar in the area of self-regulation.

Figure M. Comparison of Head Start and Kindergarten Teacher Expectations for Proficiency at Kindergarten Entry by Building Block



Source: Kindergarten Teacher Survey on Importance of Readiness Skills (2008) N=38-40 teachers; Preschool Teacher Survey on Importance of Readiness Skills, 2010, N=54-55 teachers. Asterisks denote significant mean differences at the $p < .05$ (*) and $p < .01$ (**) levels.

Although Head Start teachers' expectations for proficiency are significantly higher, the two groups of teachers follow a similar trend in expecting the greatest levels of proficiency in self-care & motor skills followed by self regulation, social expression, and finally kindergarten academics.

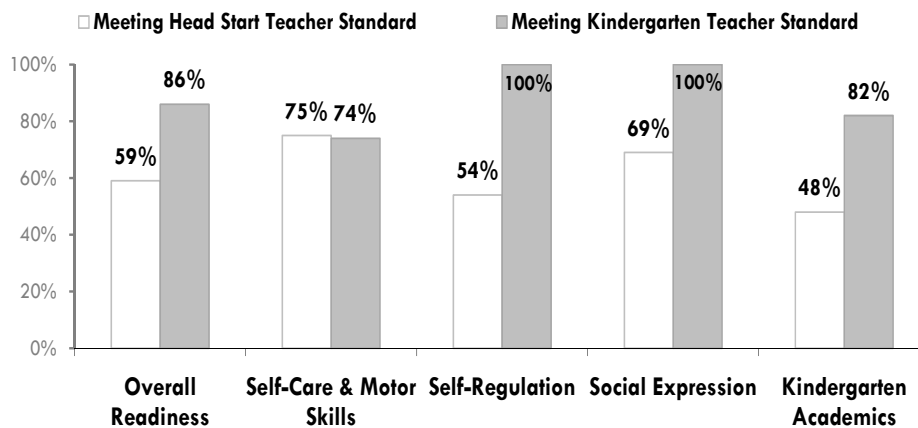
While Head Start teachers believe children need higher levels of proficiency to have a successful transition to elementary school, the two sets of teachers shared some common beliefs about the importance, malleability, and classroom time associated with the different building blocks of readiness.

- When thinking about which readiness skills were most important to kindergarten entry, Head Start teachers and Kindergarten teachers placed a greater emphasis on children's abilities to perform basic self care tasks and regulate their emotions than on children's knowledge of kindergarten academics.
- While self-regulation skills were viewed as key to successfully transitioning to kindergarten, these skills were viewed as being the most difficult to impact by both Head Start and preschool teachers. Skills in the Kindergarten Academics cluster were seen by Kindergarten teachers as the most amenable to change over the course of the academic year while Head Start teachers viewed Care and Motor Skills as being the easiest skills to impact.
- Kindergarten teachers and Head Start teachers all reported spending more classroom time on Self-Regulation Skills than they did on skills in any of the other Basic Building Blocks. Kindergarten Academics was the next most time-consuming set of skills. Preschool teachers spent more time working on Self-Care and Motor Skills with children than did Kindergarten teachers.

How do Students' Readiness Skills Align with Head Start and Kindergarten Teacher Expectations?

Head Start teachers held higher expectations regarding the skill levels of incoming kindergarten students than did Kindergarten teachers surveys in 2008. Therefore, a greater percentage of students in the Head Start sample met or exceeded Kindergarten teacher expectations than Head Start teacher expectations.

Figure N. Comparison of the Percentage of Head Start Graduates Meeting or Exceeding Head Start and Kindergarten Teacher Expectations for Proficiency



Source: Source: Kindergarten Teacher Survey on Importance of Readiness Skills (2008) N=36 teachers; Preschool Teacher Survey on Importance of Readiness Skills, 2010, N=53 teachers. Pre-Kindergarten Observation Form (2010), N=1128-1131.

Conclusions

This study used child, family, and teacher data to describe the school readiness levels of 1135 students who graduated from Santa Clara County Head Start in the Spring/Summer of 2010. Findings suggest the graduates from Head Start have many readiness strengths upon program completion, particularly in the areas of *Self Care and Motor Skills* and *Social Expression*. On average children were at the “In Progress” or “Proficient” level across readiness skills with the greatest room for growth needed in the area of *Kindergarten Academics*. Since these children were not followed into elementary school, it is unknown what these children’s readiness skills looked like at kindergarten entry. However, using county-wide school readiness assessment data from 2008 as a benchmark, Head Start graduates in this sample were significantly more ready for school at Spring/Summer exit than were incoming kindergarten students in the fall of 2008, even after controlling for demographic factors.

Results also highlighted several child and family factors that accounted for variation in children’s readiness skills. These factors can provide some potential avenues for action for Head Start, Santa Clara County Office of Education, and other community stake-holders invested in improving children’s readiness for school:

- ***Enhancing Children’s Health and Well-Being:*** One of the strongest predictors of readiness in this sample was whether children were healthy, well-rested, and well-fed and attended school on a regular basis. Continuing to enhance school-based child and family services around nutrition and health care may help improve children’s overall health and attendance rates.
- ***Kindergarten Preparation Activities:*** Families who engaged in more kindergarten preparation activities with their children (i.e., learning about the transition to kindergarten, working on school skills with children, talking to teachers, visiting elementary schools, etc.) had children who were better prepared for kindergarten. Collaborative efforts between early childhood education settings and elementary schools to provide more opportunities for families to participate in kindergarten preparation and transition activities may enhance children’s readiness for school.
- ***Reading Together with Children:*** Families who read with their children more often had children who were better prepared for school. Communicating with families about the importance of reading and providing adult literacy support and resources such as book bags for families to take home are some ways that schools might help enhance readiness.