

# Are Children in Monterey County Ready for School?

Findings from the 2006  
Kindergarten Readiness Assessment

Prepared for:

*First 5 Monterey County*

Prepared by:



April 2007

Pre-Publication Final Draft

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>A QUICK LOOK AT THE KEY FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
What Is School Readiness and Why Is It Important? .....	1
Overview of the 2006 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment .....	2
Characteristics of Survey Participants.....	4
Organization of This Report .....	5
<b>CHAPTER 1: HOW READY FOR SCHOOL ARE INCOMING KINDERGARTENERS? .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Social and Emotional Well-Being.....	6
Communication Skills.....	7
Approaches to Learning .....	8
Cognition and General Knowledge .....	9
Comparison to the 2004 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment.....	10
Summary .....	11
<b>CHAPTER 2: WHAT ARE TEACHERS’ EXPECTATIONS FOR CHILDREN’S READINESS?.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Kindergarten Teachers’ Expectations of MDRDP Results.....	12
Kindergarten Teacher Perspectives on the Importance of MDRDP Domains.....	13
<b>CHAPTER 3: WHAT ARE FAMILIES DOING TO SUPPORT SCHOOL READINESS? .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Parent-Child Interactions .....	14
Early Care and Education Environments .....	14
Kindergarten Transition.....	16
Parents’ Access to Information and Supports .....	16
<b>CHAPTER 4: WHAT FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO READINESS FOR KINDERGARTEN? .....</b>	<b>17</b>
Factors Associated with Social and Emotional Well-Being.....	17
Factors Associated with Communication Skills.....	18
Factors Associated with Approaches to Learning .....	19
Factors Associated with Cognition and General Knowledge .....	19
Summary .....	20
<b>CHAPTER 5: WHAT ARE SCHOOLS DOING TO SUPPORT KINDERGARTEN READINESS? .....</b>	<b>22</b>
Findings from Interviews with Principals .....	22
Findings from Surveys with Kindergarten Teachers .....	25
<b>CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>27</b>

Recommendations for *First 5 Monterey County* Commission .....27  
Recommendations for Schools.....28  
Recommendations for Parents and Families .....29  
**APPENDIX A. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....30**

# Are Children in Monterey County Ready for School? A Quick Look at the Key Findings

---

## What Factors Contribute to Kindergarten Readiness?

- PARENTS' HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION,
- EASE OF TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN,
- PRESCHOOL ATTENDANCE,
- READING BOOKS OR TELLING STORIES,
- PRACTICING KINDERGARTEN SKILLS, AND
- CHILD'S AGE.

## What Does the Kindergarten Population in Monterey County Look Like?

- 1,518 kindergarteners, 1,347 parents and 74 kindergarten teachers across Monterey County representing low, medium and high API schools participated in the 2006 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment.
- A majority of the families who participated in the study were Latino (72 percent), followed by White (18 percent), multi-racial (12 percent), Asian and Pacific Islander (5 percent) and African American (4 percent). While Latinos represented 72 percent of families with incoming kindergarteners countywide, they comprise 83 percent of families in low API schools.
- Forty percent of parents of kindergarteners countywide reported having a high school education or higher. Nearly half of parents (49 percent) with children in low API schools had less than a high school education. In contrast, only nine percent of the parents of children in high API schools reported having less than a high school education.
- The majority of household incomes of kindergarteners in the county were below \$30,000 per year. Based on the 2005 Federal Poverty Level guidelines for a family of four, nearly half (46.5 percent) were living at or below 100% of the poverty level (\$20,000).

## How Ready for School Are Incoming Kindergarteners?

- Participating kindergarten teachers completed a child observation checklist (MDRDP), which is organized according to four developmental dimensions: (1) social and emotional well-being; (2) communication skills; (3) approaches to learning; and (4) cognitive and general knowledge.
- The largest proportion of incoming kindergarteners fully or almost mastered the “approaches to learning” dimension (32 percent). The least number of incoming kindergarteners had fully or almost mastered the “cognition and general knowledge” dimension (14 percent).
- A comparison across API schools shows that more kindergarteners had fully or almost mastered the four dimensions in high and medium API schools compared to low API schools.

- Comparing findings from the 2004 KRA to the 2006 KRA, First 5 Monterey County School Readiness target schools demonstrated positive trends by making noteworthy gains in all four developmental dimensions.

## **How Ready Are Schools for Incoming Kindergarteners?**

- Teachers overwhelmingly ranked social and emotional skills as the most important skill for children to master overall – above cognitive and general knowledge, communication and approaches to learning.
- Findings from surveys with teachers reveal an ethnically diverse kindergarten teacher workforce, specifically among those working in low API schools. A majority of teachers (70 percent) report speaking Spanish, and 73 percent of teachers in low API schools report that Spanish is the primary language of their classrooms.
- The majority of teachers expressed a need for training in kindergarten transition and special needs.
- Kinder Round Up was the most frequently identified kindergarten transition activity offered by schools. Other transitional activities included: Kinder Camps; informational mailings; and hosting informational sessions and information nights for parents.
- Most principals articulated a need for deeper levels of collaboration with early care educators and programs to facilitate a continuum of quality experiences for young children.
- Most principals reported that their schools were ready to address language, cultural and special needs of incoming kindergarteners.

## **What Are Families Doing to Support School Readiness?**

- The two most commonly reported activities that parents performed with their child during the year prior to kindergarten were “practice self-help skills” (83 percent) and “watch television or videos” (81 percent). Although “reading books” was the second least reported activity (43 percent), it turned out to be one of the single most important family activities to be associated with school readiness.
- According to parents, 63 percent of children spent time prior to kindergarten in a preschool, Head Start or childcare center followed by 30 percent at someone else’s home under someone else’s care. When examined across API subgroups, a higher proportion of children attending high API schools spent their time at a center-based preschool, Head Start childcare center (78 percent) compared to all surveyed children (63 percent). Additionally, families with lower levels of education and/or whose primary language is Spanish spend a significant amount of time in the home-based care environment.
- The majority of parents (75 percent or more) countywide, and across all API levels reported that their child did not have a difficult transition to kindergarten. Parents who had more than a high school education were even more likely to report that their child did not have a difficult transition to kindergarten.

## Introduction

---

Entering kindergarten is an important milestone in the lives of young children and their parents, and one that is often filled with anticipation, nervousness and excitement. Parents want the best for their children and hope the transition is a smooth one. They may be asking themselves questions like: *What does my child need in order to be fully prepared to succeed in school and later in life? What skills are important to have when entering kindergarten? What can I do as a parent to help my child get ready?* Kindergarten teachers and school officials also hope young children are prepared and ready for school, and are concerned with many of the same things. They may be asking themselves: *What can I do to support parents of young children entering kindergarten? How can I make sure my school is ready to receive these young children?*

In recognition of the importance of these concerns, *First 5 Monterey County* commissioned Harder+Company Community Research, a California-based consulting firm that provides research and planning services to nonprofits, local government and philanthropy, to conduct an assessment of kindergarten readiness in Monterey County. This report presents key findings from this assessment.<sup>1</sup> It provides a snapshot of the developmental competencies of the County's young children who entered kindergarten in 2006; highlights characteristics and factors associated with increased school readiness among children in Monterey County; and provides information on what parents, kindergarten teachers and principals are doing to support and prepare young children for school.

### WHAT IS SCHOOL READINESS AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Over the past thirty years, there has been increasing recognition of the importance of school readiness among young children. What children know and can do when they start school provides an important foundation for their educational and life success. In 1995, the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) developed a widely used definition of school readiness that encompasses not only children's readiness for school, but also schools' readiness for children as well as family and community supports that contribute to children's readiness. The NEGP also conceptualized five dimensions of development that are critical to a child's readiness for school: (1) physical well-being and motor development; (2) social and emotional development; (3) approaches to learning; (4) language development; and (5) cognition and general knowledge.

Significant investments have been made in school readiness. First 5 California's School Readiness Initiative engages families, community members, and educators in the important work of preparing children, birth through age five, for elementary school. On a local level, *First 5 Monterey County* has invested in the School Readiness Collaborative which focuses on providing a variety of services aimed at helping children in the County's lowest performing schools enter school healthy and ready to learn. The Collaborative involves 14 agencies, three of which are Family Resource Centers and serve as hubs for other Collaborative partners. In addition to providing direct services such as health services and screenings, early literacy for children and their caregivers, parenting education

---

<sup>1</sup> For the full set of findings, please refer to the *Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Data Book*, available at [www.First5Monterey.org](http://www.First5Monterey.org).

classes, and child advocacy, the School Readiness Collaborative works to strengthen networks between partners and elementary and early care and education programs. In doing so, it seeks to increase the visibility of issues surrounding the readiness of children to begin school and the readiness of schools to receive them. In addition to supporting the School Readiness Collaborative, *First 5 Monterey County* supports a number of other programs which also help families develop school readiness competencies.

## OVERVIEW OF THE 2006 KINDERGARTEN READINESS ASSESSMENT

In 2004, *First 5 Monterey County* commissioned the first individualized local assessment of kindergarten readiness. This study included 866 kindergartners from 14 schools in Monterey County with a low rating on the Academic Performance Index (API), a measure which reflects the standing of a school based on the results of statewide testing. These 14 schools collectively represent the primary areas of focus for local School Readiness Collaborative efforts. In 2006, *First 5 Monterey County* expanded the scope of the previous study in order to obtain a representative sample of incoming kindergartners countywide. New data collection elements were also included in the 2006 study in order to obtain further information on families of entering kindergartners and school environments. As a result, the 2006 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment includes data on 1,518 children, 1,347 families, 74 kindergarten teachers, and 12 principals from 26 schools.<sup>2</sup>

### How Were Kindergartners Sampled?

A stratified random sample<sup>3</sup> was used to sample kindergartners from public elementary schools countywide. The sampling stratifications were based primarily on *First 5 Monterey County* regions (i.e., North, South, Salinas and Peninsula) and API rankings (i.e., low, medium and high). Stratifications also included gender and ethnicity based on 2005 enrollment data reported to the California Department of Education. Once the sampling plan was determined, Monterey County public elementary schools within each API category and regional strata were randomly selected to be included in the sample, then classrooms within schools until the desired sample size was reached. This sampling strategy was chosen and executed so that findings are generalizable to the county kindergarten population, county regions, API ranking stratifications, gender, and ethnicity.

### What Data Were Collected and How?

All schools randomly selected through the sampling process were invited to participate in the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. *First 5 Monterey County* and Harder+Company received agreements from all schools included in this report. Parents had the opportunity to decline participation of their children in the study. All participating kindergarten teachers were given trainings on the data collection process and instruments to be administered. Four instruments were used to collect data for this study, as described below.

---

<sup>2</sup> The sample includes ten of the fourteen schools who participated in the 2004 KRA.

<sup>3</sup> Stratified random sample is based on proportions of the entire population (e.g. incoming kindergartners) in each of the subgroups (e.g., region, academic performance index ranking, gender, and ethnicity). The design then selects a sample size from each group. Stratified sampling improves the precision of estimates by including an adequate number of respondents in each subgroup and protects against non-responses.

- **Teacher-Completed Child Observation Checklist.** Teachers completed an observation checklist, known as the Modified Desired Results Developmental Profile (MDRDP), for each kindergarten student in their classroom between 30 and 60 days after the start of school in 2006. The MDRDP is an abbreviated version of an observation tool (the DRDP) developed by the California Department of Education that collects information about the developmental competencies of children in four areas: (1) social and emotional well-being; (2) communication skills; (3) approaches to learning; and (4) cognitive and general knowledge<sup>4</sup>. Teachers completed MDRDPs for a total of 1,518 children, representing 27 percent of the County’s kindergartners. In addition, teachers who participated in the study completed MDRDPs for children in their classrooms. High API schools had a response rate of 91 percent, medium API schools at 82 percent and low API schools at 90 percent.
- **Family Survey.** Family and home environment, including early education experiences, can significantly influence children’s readiness for and success in school. In order to examine these factors, a survey was distributed to all parents/caregivers of children in participating classrooms and schools. Components of the survey included household demographics, parent and child activities, kindergarten transition activities, health status, and parent access to services and resources. Kindergarten teachers distributed the survey in both English and Spanish within the first two weeks of school. A total of 1,347 parents completed and returned the survey.
- **Teacher Survey.** Kindergarten teachers play a vital role in shaping the worlds of kindergartners. All participating kindergarten teachers were asked to complete a survey at the start of school. The purpose of this survey was to collect information on teacher and classroom characteristics, school and community resources, and teachers’ expectations of their kindergartners. A total of 74 kindergarten teachers completed surveys out of 81 teachers who received them, representing a response rate of 91 percent.
- **Principal Interview.** Telephone interviews were conducted with a sample of principals from the 26 participating schools in order to understand what activities are being undertaken by Monterey County schools to promote the successful transition of incoming kindergartners and what principals view as successful and ideal methods for promoting successful transitions for incoming kindergartners. A total of 12 principals participated in interviews.

### How Were the Data Analyzed?

All data were collected during the Fall of 2006. Survey data were entered into the statistical software database Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Multiple analysis techniques were utilized to comprehensively examine the survey data, including frequencies, cross-tabulations, averages and medians. In addition, a total of 1,203 MDRDP and family surveys were matched (child to parent) and merged into one database in order to compare children’s school readiness with family

---

<sup>4</sup> For more information on the development of the MDRDP, please visit the First 5 California website at [www.cffc.ca.gov](http://www.cffc.ca.gov).

educational activities and other family factors, using chi-squares, correlations and multiple regression. Qualitative interview data from opened-ended survey responses were analyzed using content analysis, a technique whereby common themes are identified and described.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Families who participated in the study represented a variety of backgrounds and experiences. However, there were often differences across low, medium and high API schools. Key characteristics of study participants, as well as differences by API category, are provided below:

- A majority of families who participated in the study were Latino (72 percent), followed by White (18 percent), multi-racial (12 percent), Asian and Pacific Islander (5 percent), and African American (4 percent).<sup>5</sup> Latino families appear to be over-represented in low API schools compared to medium and high API schools. While they represent 72 percent of families with incoming kindergarteners countywide, they comprise 83 percent of families in low API schools.
- Forty percent of parents of kindergarteners countywide reported having a high school education or higher level degree. Nearly half of parents (49 percent) with children in low API schools had less than a high school education. In contrast, only nine percent of the parents of children in high API schools reported having less than a high school education.
- The majority of families reported having health coverage for their children. Only six percent of families reported not having health insurance which was relatively consistent across low, medium and high API schools. This is on par with the proportion of children 0-5 statewide in 2005 (6 percent) who are uninsured.<sup>6</sup> (CHIS)
- The most common source of health insurance for children is Medi-Cal (34 percent), followed by insurance provided by employers (30 percent), and Healthy Families (21 percent).
- A majority of parents (95 percent) report that their children receive regular care from a medical doctor/nurse/clinic, which is slightly lower than the proportion statewide (98 percent).<sup>7</sup>
- Forty-four percent of parents rated their child's overall health as "excellent." Children in high and medium API schools (54 percent) and children whose parents had more than a high school education (54 percent) were more likely to receive 'excellent' ratings than children who attend low API schools (41 percent) or whose parents have less than a high school education (39 percent).
- White (49 percent) and Latino (35 percent) teachers constituted the majority of survey respondents. There was a more ethnically diverse spread among teachers at low API schools compared to teachers in higher API schools. Over 61 percent were teachers of color, compared to only 10 percent of teachers in high API schools.

---

<sup>5</sup> Figures total more than 100 percent since families had the option of checking all that apply.

<sup>6</sup> UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, California Department of Health Services, Public Health Institute. 2005 California Health Interview Survey. Available at <http://www.chis.ucla.edu>. Accessed March 26, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 5

- When asked if they spoke a language other than English, 70 percent of all surveyed teachers responded “Yes.” Spanish was the most frequently reported secondary language, which was reported by 92 percent of those who reported another language. Seventy-three (73) percent of teachers in low API schools reported that Spanish is the primary language of the classroom, compared to teachers in medium and high API schools (18 percent and 11 percent, respectively).

## **ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT**

This report presents findings from all of the data collection activities described above. Chapter 1 presents findings from the MDRDP regarding children’s developmental competencies at kindergarten entry. The next chapter compares data from the previous section to teachers’ expectations regarding children’s developmental competencies. Chapter 3 provides information on what families are doing to support children’s readiness for school. This is followed by Chapter 4, which explores factors that contribute to children’s readiness for kindergarten in Monterey County. Chapter 5 presents information on what teachers and principals are doing to support children’s readiness for school in Monterey County. The final chapter summarizes key findings and presents recommendations for improving school readiness in Monterey County.

## Chapter 1: How Ready for School Are Incoming Kindergarteners?

---

This section presents findings from the teacher-completed child observation checklist known as the MDRDP. As mentioned previously, the MDRDP is an abbreviated version of an observation tool (the DRDP) developed by the California Department of Education. It collects information about the developmental competencies of children that are important to school readiness. Specifically, teachers are asked to rate individual children's level of mastery of specific skills using one of the following four response choices:

- *Not yet* – The child never exhibits the behavior.
- *Emerging* – The child is just beginning to exhibit the behavior.
- *Almost mastered* – The child exhibits the behavior on an increasingly regular basis but has not yet fully mastered it.
- *Fully mastered* – The child typically and regularly exhibits the behavior.

The MDRDP is organized according to four domains: (1) social and emotional well-being (9 items); (2) communication skills (6 items); (3) approaches to learning (3 items); and (4) cognitive and general knowledge (12 items). The findings presented in this chapter are organized according to those domains. For each domain, a table is provided that lists the proportion of children who have fully or almost mastered specific items countywide and for each API category (i.e., low, medium or high). For comparison purposes, the final column in each table lists the average score from the statewide Kindergarten Entry Profile Study (KEP).<sup>8</sup> The KEP, which was commissioned by First 5 California and conducted by SRI International, is representative of kindergarten children attending schools with low academic achievement scores throughout California in 2004.

### SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Positive early social and emotional experiences lay the necessary foundation for the healthy development of later behaviors and thought processes<sup>9</sup>. This may include feelings of inclusion and self-worth, and the ability to get assistance with difficulties. Additionally, some studies have shown that children best acquire school readiness concepts when they feel socially and emotionally secure. The social and emotional well-being dimension examines the following themes: interaction with adults, interaction with peers, and self-regulation. Key findings pertinent to this domain include the following:

- Slightly more than one-fifth (22 percent) of kindergarteners in Monterey County schools almost or fully mastered all nine items in the social and emotional well-being dimension.
- Between 46 to 60 percent of children countywide almost or fully mastered any one of the nine items in the social and emotional well-being dimension.

---

<sup>8</sup> California Children and Families Commission. First 5 School Readiness Initiative Evaluation: Kindergarten Entry Profiles. Overview and Preliminary Statewide Results Fall 2004. Sacramento, CA. March 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Squires, Jane. The importance of early identification of social and emotional difficulties in preschool children. Center for International Rehabilitation. Eugene, OR. January 2003.

- Nineteen percent of children in low API schools almost or fully mastered all items within the social and emotional well-being dimension, compared to 37 percent of children in low-performing schools statewide.

**Exhibit 1: Percentage of Children Who Almost or Fully Mastered Items within the Social and Emotional Well-Being Dimension**

Social and Emotional Well-Being	Percentage Fully or Almost Mastered				
	Countywide n=1,518	High API n=185	Medium API n=268	Low API n=1,065	Statewide KEP
Seeks adult help when appropriate (e.g., asks adult for assistance to open bottle of paint)	60	71	67	56	66
Seeks adult help after trying to resolve conflict or problem on his or her own	48	59	57	44	55
Negotiates with peers to resolve social conflicts with adult guidance	46	56	50	43	53
Expresses empathy or caring for others	53	66	52	51	58
Participates in cooperative group efforts	58	70	65	54	63
Exhibits impulse control and self-regulating	53	60	56	51	60
Follows rules when participating in routine activities	60	65	68	56	67
Comforts self and controls the expression of emotion with adult guidance	58	65	62	56	66
Understands and follows rules in different settings	57	68	64	53	66
<b>Percentage of Children who Fully or Almost Mastered All Items</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>37</b>

## COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The communication dimension assesses how children acquire and utilize language skills with their peers and other adults in the school setting. It examines the developmental skills of language comprehension and language expression. Key findings in this domain include the following:

- Twenty-four percent of children in Monterey County fully or almost mastered all six items that comprise the communication skills domain according to teacher ratings.
- Between 37 and 56 percent of children countywide almost or fully mastered any of the six individual items of the communication skills dimension.
- In general, the proportion of children from low API schools who fully or almost mastered items in the communications skills domain was substantially lower than that of medium and high API schools.

**Exhibit 2. Percentage of Children Who Almost or Fully Mastered  
Items within the Communicative Skills Dimension**

<b>Communicative Skills</b>	<b>Percentage Fully or Almost Mastered</b>				
	<b>Countywide n=1,518</b>	<b>High API n=185</b>	<b>Medium API n=268</b>	<b>Low API n=1,065</b>	<b>Statewide KEP</b>
Follows two-step requests that are sequential, but not necessarily related	56	73	71	49	67
Understands increasing number of specialized words	37	51	57	29	48
Understands complex, multi-step requests	39	53	55	32	51
Engages in conversations that develop a thought or idea	45	58	59	39	49
Participates in songs, rhymes, games, and stories that play with sounds of language	54	65	58	52	57
Tells about own experiences in a logical sequence	42	57	58	36	48
<b>Percentage of Children who Fully or Almost Mastered All Items</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>33</b>

## **APPROACHES TO LEARNING**

The extent to which children observe and are curious with their surroundings, exhibit eagerness to participate in new learning activities, and demonstrate patience and perseverance with new tasks represent a set of learning styles that enables children to be ready for school. Interest in learning and cognitive competence are the developmental skills examined in the Approaches to Learning dimension. Key findings pertinent to this domain include the following:

- Almost one-third (32 percent) of children countywide almost or fully mastered all items within the approaches to learning dimension.
- Between 38 to 58 percent of children countywide almost or fully mastered one of the three items of the approaches to learning dimension.
- Twenty-eight percent of children in low API schools almost or fully mastered all items within this dimension, compared to 39 percent of children in low-performing schools statewide.

**Exhibit 3. Percentage of Children Who Almost or Fully Mastered Items within the Approaches to Learning Dimension**

Approaches to Learning	Percentage Fully or Almost Mastered				
	Countywide n=1,518	High API n=185	Medium API n=268	Low API n=1,065	Statewide KEP
Observes and examines natural phenomena through senses	38	45	53	34	46
Shows willingness to take risks in learning new skills	56	66	67	52	59
Stays with or repeats a task	58	65	71	53	59
<b>Percentage of Children who Fully or Almost Mastered All Items</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>39</b>

## COGNITION AND GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

It is important for developmentally appropriate cognitive and general knowledge skills to be integrated with the social and emotional, communication and approaches to learning skills. The cognition and general knowledge dimension includes the following developmental skills: measure, order, and time; number concepts; reading skills; interest in books and other written materials; and writing. Key findings pertinent to this domain include the following:

- Countywide, compared to other dimensions, the lowest proportion of children who fully or almost mastered all twelve items comprise the cognition and general knowledge dimension (14 percent).
- Between 29 to 59 percent of children countywide almost or fully mastered any one of the twelve items in the Cognition and General Knowledge dimension.
- Ten percent of children in low API schools in Monterey County almost or fully mastered all items within this dimension, compared to 25 percent of children in low-performing schools statewide.

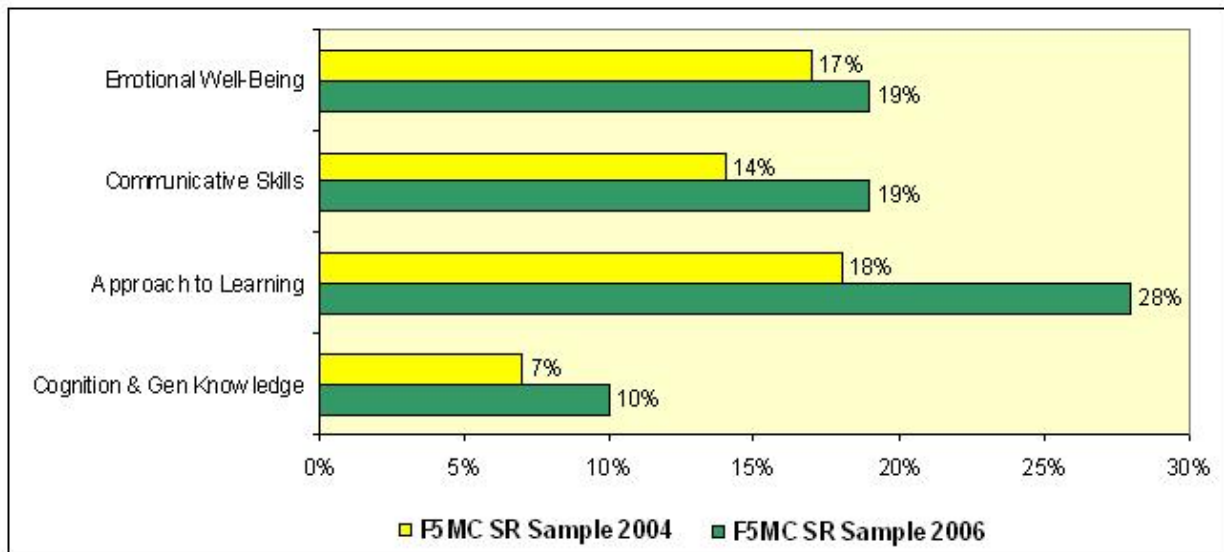
**Exhibit 4. Percentage of Children Who Almost or Fully Mastered Items  
within the Cognition and General Knowledge Dimension**

Cognition and General Knowledge	Percentage Fully or Almost Mastered				
	Countywide n=1,518	High API n=185	Medium API n=268	Low API n=1,065	Statewide KEP
Orders objects from smallest to largest	46	54	68	40	56
Understands that numbers represent quantity	49	57	67	43	59
Understands numbers and simple operations, and uses math manipulatives, games, toys, coins in daily activities	29	39	46	23	40
Understands that letters make up words	49	52	67	43	60
Recognizes print in the environment	41	53	54	36	54
Makes three or more letter-sound correspondences	43	53	50	40	53
Pretends to read books	57	65	65	53	64
Engages in discussion about books	43	48	52	39	49
Draws a picture related to a story and talks about his or her drawing	49	60	59	45	56
Uses pretend writing during play activities	43	55	56	38	54
Writes three or more letters or numbers	59	63	71	55	69
Uses pictures and letters to express thoughts and ideas	47	52	57	43	56
<b>Percentage of Children who Fully or Almost Mastered All Items</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>25</b>

## COMPARISON TO THE 2004 KINDERGARTEN READINESS ASSESSMENT

As mentioned previously, *First 5 Monterey County* also commissioned an assessment of Kindergarten Readiness in 2004 that focused on 14 schools with low API scores that represent the focus for local School Readiness Collaborative efforts. Ten of those schools elected to participate again in this 2006 study. Although the proportion of children who fully or almost mastered each dimension of the MDRDP in Monterey County’s low API schools are far below kindergarteners in low-performing schools statewide, a comparison of the data from the 2004 and 2006 Monterey County studies reveals that these schools have made noteworthy improvements since that time. As the following exhibit illustrates, there was a gain of ten percentage points in the approaches to learning domain, a gain of five percentage points in the communication skills domain, a gain of three percentage points in the cognition and general knowledge domain, and a gain of two percentage points in the social and emotional well-being domain.

**Exhibit 5. Percentage of Students in Ten School Readiness Target Schools Who Almost or Fully Mastered All Items**



## SUMMARY

The following exhibit summarizes the proportion of children who fully or almost mastered all items in each of the four dimensions of the MDRDP. Countywide, the largest proportion of children fully or almost mastered the “approaches to learning” dimension (32 percent). The least number of children had fully or almost mastered the “cognition and general knowledge” dimension (14 percent). A comparison across API schools shows that more students had fully or almost mastered the four dimensions in high and medium API schools compared to low API schools. It is also worth noting that countywide the percentage of children who almost or fully mastered all items in each dimension are lower than the KEP which represents low achieving schools statewide.

**Exhibit 6: Summary of MDRDP Dimension Scores**

Dimension	Percentage Fully or Almost Mastered				
	Countywide n=1,518	High API n=185	Medium API n=268	Low API n=1,065	Statewide KEP
Social and Emotional Well-Being	22	25	27	19	37
Communication skills	24	38	37	19	33
Approaches to Learning Dimension	32	41	42	28	39
Cognition and General Knowledge	14	28	20	10	25

## Chapter 2: What Are Teachers' Expectations for Children's Readiness?

Children's success is partially influenced by teachers' expectations of their academic, personal, and social achievements. Asking teachers their expectations of incoming kindergartners allows them to identify what they have in common with others in the County, helps parents, teachers and schools advocate for school readiness programs, and is a first step in looking at whether or not there is a need for articulation between early care and education providers and kindergarten teachers.

This section presents findings from surveys with kindergarten teachers regarding their expectations of children's readiness for school based on the MDRDP, as well as their perspectives on the importance of the developmental domains represented by the MDRDP. As teachers are a great influence on children's learning, these sections of the Teacher Survey provide insight into the context in which children are learning. A total of 74 kindergarten teachers completed surveys, representing 91 percent of kindergarten teachers who participated in the study.

### KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS' EXPECTATIONS OF MDRDP RESULTS

Overall, teachers expected a lower proportion of children to almost or fully master all MDRDP items in each domain compared to the actual proportion of those who did, based on teacher ratings (Exhibit 7). In other words, actual teacher ratings were higher than their expected ratings. This was true across all dimensions. Teachers expected 16 percent of kindergartners to almost or fully master all items in the social and emotional well-being dimension, yet 22 percent of kindergartners were rated to have almost or fully mastered these items. They also expected 20 percent of students to almost or fully master all approaches to learning items, while 32 percent were rated as such. As the following table illustrates, teachers' expectations around kindergartners' communicative skills and cognition and general knowledge were substantially lower than their expectations for students' social and emotional well-being and approaches to learning.

**Exhibit 7: Expected and Actual Percent of Almost or Fully Mastered All MDRDP Items**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Expected Percent<sup>a</sup> (n=74)</b>	<b>Actual Percent<sup>b</sup> (n=1,518)</b>
Social and Emotional Well-Being	16	22
Communicative Skills	3	24
Approaches to Learning	20	32
Cognition and General Knowledge	3	14

a. Expected = % of teachers who expect entering kindergartners to almost/fully master all items

b. Actual = % of kindergartners who almost/fully mastered all items

The mean number of items almost or fully mastered in each dimension was also calculated for comparison purposes. As the following exhibit illustrates, teachers' expectations and kindergartners' scores differed most in the cognition and general knowledge dimension. In general, the expectations of teachers in low API schools were more concordant with results from the analysis of MDRDP data.

**Exhibit 8. Mean Number of Items Almost or Fully Mastered by API Levels**

Dimension	High API		Medium API		Low API	
	Exp	Act	Exp	Act	Exp	Act
Social and Emotional Well-Being (out of a total of 9)	4.5	5.9	4.9	5.5	5.4	4.8
Communicative Skills (out of a total of 6)	1.5	3.5	1.9	3.6	2.1	2.4
Approaches to Learning (out of a total of 3)	.8	1.8	1.4	1.9	1.4	1.4
Cognition and General Knowledge (out of a total of 12)	2.7	6.5	3.2	6.8	4.4	4.9

### **KINDERGARTEN TEACHER PERSPECTIVES ON THE IMPORTANCE OF MDRDP DOMAINS**

Teachers were asked to prioritize the four developmental dimensions that form the basis of the MDRDP by the following areas: 1) Most important skill upon kindergarten entry; 2) Most important skill to accomplish during kindergarten; 3) Easiest to impact; and 4) Focus on the most in the classroom. As shown in Exhibit 9, teachers overwhelmingly ranked social and emotional skills as the most important skill for children to master overall. Teachers also focused on these skills the most in the classroom but agreed that social and emotional well-being was the second hardest developmental dimension to impact. They ranked approaches to learning as the easiest to impact.

**Exhibit 9: Developmental Dimension Priorities (n=74)**

Rank	Important upon Kindergarten Entry	Important at Kindergarten Exit	Easiest to Impact	Focus on the Most
1	Social & emotional skills	Social & emotional skills	Approaches to learning	Social & emotional skills
2	Communicative skills	Communicative skills	Cognition/General knowledge	Cognition/General knowledge
3	Approaches to learning	Approaches to learning	Social & emotional skills	Communicative skills
4	Cognition/General knowledge	Cognition/General knowledge	Communicative skills	Approaches to learning

## Chapter 3: What Are Families Doing to Support School Readiness?

---

Family and home environment, including home educational activities and children’s experiences in early childhood education, can have an important influence on children’s readiness for and success in school. This section presents findings regarding what families are doing to support their children’s school readiness based on data from a survey of 1,347 parents/caregivers of children who participated in this study. Kindergarten teachers distributed the survey in both English and Spanish within the first two weeks of school.

### PARENT-CHILD INTERACTIONS

Parents are often encouraged to do a variety of developmentally appropriate home educational activities, such as playing games, practicing daily routines, singing songs, and reading stories or books. Parents were asked to identify how often they performed various activities with their child during the year prior to entering kindergarten. As illustrated in Exhibit 10, the two most commonly reported activities were “practice self-help skills” (83 percent) and “watch television or videos” (81 percent).

**Exhibit 10: Frequency of Parent/Child Pre-K Activities**

Did the following activities with their child...	Everyday (%)	Weekly (%)	Monthly (%)	Not at all (%)
Practice self-help skills (n=1,341)	83	12	2	2
Watch television or videos (n=1,347)	81	17	2	0
Play active games (n=1,337)	76	22	2	0
Play with other children of the same age (n=1,337)	74	22	2	2
Practice daily routines of getting ready for school (n=1,306)	67	18	5	10
Sing songs (n=1,282)	64	26	6	4
Practice kindergarten skills (n=1,347)	63	29	5	3
Practice counting (n=1,314)	57	36	5	1
Read stories/books (n=1,329)	43	44	9	4
Participate in an organized play group (n=1,300)	38	32	9	21

Interestingly, although “reading books” was the second least reported activity, it turned out to be one of the single most important activities to be associated with school readiness, as will be discussed in the next chapter of this report. Countywide, watching television or videos is the most common activity done with a child on a weekly or everyday basis (98 percent), yet it had no associations with school readiness.

### EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION ENVIRONMENTS

Parents were asked where the child spent time during the day in the year prior to entering kindergarten in order to understand about the variety of non-familial environments that children

were spending time in. There is a relationship between school readiness and the quality of early care and education environments. Although the parent survey did not include questions about quality, it was crucial to find out where children spent a good portion of each day, and whether these settings were related to the children’s MDRDP ratings.

According to parents, children spent most of their time prior to kindergarten at home with their parents or relatives (89 percent), followed by being at preschool or a child care center (63 percent) and at someone else’s home under someone else’s care (30 percent). As the following exhibit illustrates, among those who reported that their child spent time at someone else’s home under someone else’s care, a majority (63 percent) reported that Spanish was the primary language spoken. This may suggest that more Latino families participate in family or home-based care rather than center-based care prior to starting school, and this is consistent with the literature regarding the child care experiences of Latino children<sup>10</sup>.

**Exhibit 11: Time Spent Prior to Kindergarten**

Time Spent Prior to Kindergarten	Total Percent	Primary Language Used At Place of Care (%)		
		English	Spanish	Other
At home with his/her parent or other relatives (n=1,272)	89	50	65	4
Preschool, Head Start or childcare center (n=1,180)	63	74	46	<1
At someone else’s home under someone else’s care (n=1,046)	30	41	63	3

When children’s time spent prior to kindergarten was examined across API subgroups, the data showed that a higher proportion of children attending high API schools spent their time at a preschool, Head Start or center-based childcare center (78 percent) compared to all surveyed children (63 percent). There was a higher proportion of children who attend low API schools (33 percent) among those who spent time at someone else’s home.

**Exhibit 12: Time Spent Prior to Kindergarten by School API Level**

Time Spent Prior to Kindergarten	County (%)	Low API (%)	Med API (%)	High API (%)
At home with his/her parent or other relatives	89	90	89	81
Preschool, Head Start or childcare center	63	60	64	78
At someone else’s home under someone else’s care	30	33	27	18
In a family childcare home	18	19	18	16
Full-day center based child care	14	14	12	16
Other	21	18	39	26

<sup>10</sup> NICDH Early Child Care Research Network. (2004). Multiple pathways to early academic achievement. *Harvard Educational Review*, 1-29.

## **KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION**

Kindergarten transition activities are defined as interactions between the family and child's school, as well as interactions between the parent and the child. Parents were asked about involvement in kindergarten transition activities before the child entered kindergarten. Activities included meeting with a kindergarten teacher, participating in school-wide activities, touring the school, and having the child's skills and development assessed by someone in the school, among others. Although the majority of parents reported participating in some sort of kindergarten transition activity, none were significantly associated with the mastery of skills among the four dimensions on the MDRDP.

Separate from kindergarten transition activities, parents were asked to rate their child's transition to kindergarten. The majority of parents (75 percent or more) at the county level, and across low, medium, and high API levels reported that their child did not have a difficult transition to kindergarten. Parents who had more than a high school education, however, were less likely to report that their child had a difficult transition to Kindergarten (19 percent) compared to those who did not complete high school (28 percent).

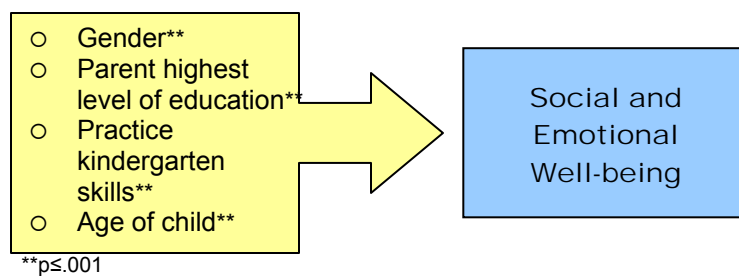
## **PARENTS' ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND SUPPORTS**

In order to discover how to effectively reach parents and families with information, resources, and tools regarding school readiness, parents were asked how they currently access information about child health and family services. Most parents reported that they receive this information through Women, Infants and Children (WIC) clinics (45 percent), health clinics (45 percent), and from family/friends (31 percent). WIC clinics and health clinics were the most common source of information about child health and family services by parents whose children attended low API schools, spoke Spanish as their primary language, or had less than a high school education. Family and friends, on the other hand, were the most common source of information for parents whose children attended high API schools, spoke English as their primary language (or English and another language equally), or had more than a high school education.

## Chapter 4: What Factors Contribute to Readiness for Kindergarten?

What key factors from a child's early experiences or home educational activities are associated with their readiness for school? Are there differences in levels of children's kindergarten readiness according to parent's highest education level, preschool attendance or ease of transition to school related to kindergarten readiness in Monterey County? What should we know about children and their families in order to help them make the transition to kindergarten successfully? This section describes findings from an exploration of relationships between different child characteristics or early educational and care experiences and kindergarten readiness. Specifically, it examines the strength of association between items reported on the family survey and the developmental competencies of children as measured through the MDRDP.<sup>11</sup> Only findings that were strongly significant (i.e., those most likely to be the result of a real relationship between specific factors as opposed to chance) are included in this section.<sup>12</sup>

### FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING



There were four factors that were independently and strongly associated with the mastery of skills within the social and emotional well-being dimension: gender, parent's highest level of education, practicing kindergarten skills, and age of children.

- **Gender (p≤.001):** Girls were more likely to be rated as having mastered social and emotional skills than boys by their teachers.
- **Parent's highest level of education (p≤.001):** Children whose parents had more than a high school education were more likely to be rated as having mastered social and emotional skills.
- **Practicing kindergarten skills (p≤.001):** Children who practiced kindergarten skills (e.g., putting on shoes, holding a pencil, cutting with scissors, counting, and learning colors and shapes) with their parents weekly or every day were more likely to be rated as having mastered social and emotional skills.
- **Age of child (p≤.001):** Children who were five and a half or older were more likely to be rated as having mastered social and emotional skills.

<sup>11</sup> It is important to note that just because a particular factor is strongly associated with kindergarten readiness, this does not mean that it causes kindergarten readiness. It is difficult to draw causal interpretations from observed correlations when working with non-experimental data, such as that collected in this study.

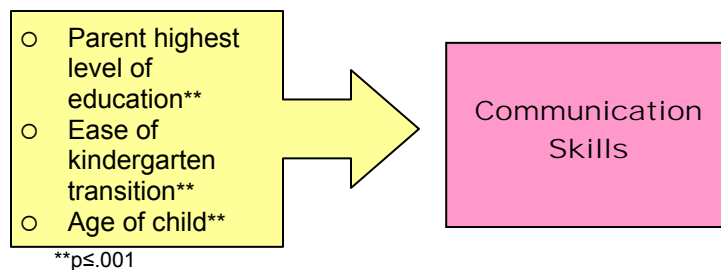
<sup>12</sup> All findings included in this section were significant at the "p≤.001 level". In other words, there is less than a 0.1 percent probability that findings reported in this section were due to chance alone.

A statistical technique known as logistic regression was used in order to examine multiple factors at once and how they contributed to children's social and emotional well-being as measured through the MDRDP. This analysis also showed that the above factors are strong predictors of positive social and emotional skills ratings regardless of other influences. Gender was the strongest factor in this regard, followed by parent education.

The rating of kindergarten transition (i.e., whether the child's transition to kindergarten was difficult or not) was also associated with the mastery of social and emotional skills, however not independently. It was tangentially associated with parent education. Children were more likely to be rated as having mastered a higher percentage of social and emotional skills if their parents reported having an education of *high school or more* and reported *not having a difficult transition to kindergarten*.

## FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Three key factors were strongly associated with the mastery of communication skills: parent's highest level of education, kindergarten transition rating and age of child.



- **Parent's highest level of education (p≤.001):** Children whose parents had more than a high school education were more likely to be rated as having mastered communication skills.
- **Ease of kindergarten transition (p≤.001):** Parents who reported their child as not having a difficult transition to kindergarten were more likely to be rated as having mastered communication skills.
- **Age of child (p≤.001):** Children who were five and a half or older were more likely to be rated as having mastered social and emotional skills.

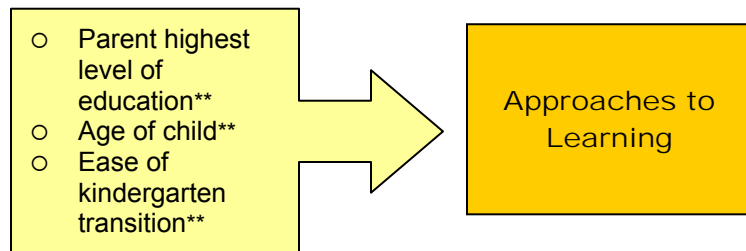
A logistic regression analysis also showed that the above factors are strong predictors of positive communication skills ratings, with parent education as the strongest predictor.

There were other important factors associated with the mastery of communication skills, but not independently. They interacted with other key factors:

- **Preschool attendance:** Children were more likely to be rated as having mastered a higher percentage of communication skills if their parents reported having *more than a high school education* and they *attended preschool*; or if their parents reported *English as their primary language* (or English and another language equally) and *attended preschool*.

- **Read books or tell stories:** Children were more likely to master a higher percentage of communication skills according to teacher ratings if their parents reported having *more than a high school education* and *did any reading to their child at all*. Children were even more likely to master a high percentage of communication skills according to teacher ratings if their parents read to their child on a weekly basis or more frequently.

## FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH APPROACHES TO LEARNING



\*\*p≤.001

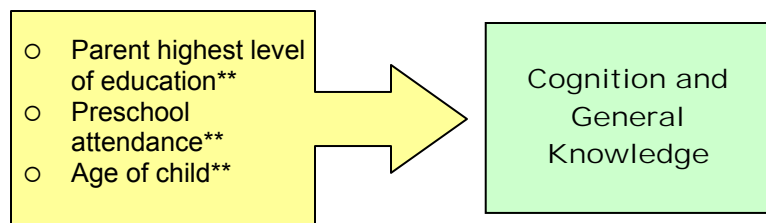
The three independent factors that were associated with communication skills ratings were also strongly associated with positive approaches to learning. The logistic regression analysis also showed that parents' highest level of education was the strongest predictor of positive ratings. In

addition to the three key factors above, the following factors are associated with the mastery of learning approach skills, however, not independently. They interacted with other key factors:

- **Preschool attendance:** Children were more likely to be rated as having mastered a higher percentage of learning approach skills if their parents reported having *more than a high school education* and they *attended preschool*. Also, children were less likely to be rated as having mastered learning approach skills if their parents reported speaking *a language other than English as their primary language* and they *did not attend preschool*.
- **Read books or tell stories:** Children were more likely to master a higher percentage of learning approach skills according to teacher ratings if their parents reported having *more than a high school education* and *did any reading to their child*; or if their parents reported *English as their primary language* (or English and another language equally) and *did any reading to their child*. Finally, children of parents who reported *reading to their child on a weekly basis or more* were even more likely to master a higher percentage of learning approach skills according to teacher ratings.

## FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH COGNITION AND GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

There were three factors that were strongly associated with the mastery of cognitive skills: parent's highest level of education, preschool attendance, and age of children.



\*\*p≤.001

- **Parent’s highest level of education (p≤.001):** Children whose parents had more than a high school education were more likely to master the cognition and general knowledge dimension according to teacher ratings.
- **Preschool attendance (p≤.001):** Children who attended preschool, Head Start or center-based child care were more likely to be rated as having mastered the cognition and general knowledge dimension.
- **Age of child (p≤.001):** Children older than five and a half were more likely to master this dimension, according to teacher ratings.

A logistic regression analysis further showed that the above factors are strong predictors of positive ratings in the cognition and general knowledge dimension, with parent education being the strongest predictor.

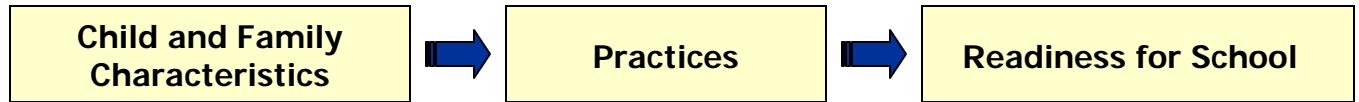
There were other notable factors that, along with the primary key factors, were significantly associated with the mastery of cognitive skills, but not independently. They interacted with other key factors:

- **Ease of kindergarten transition:** Children were more likely to master a higher percentage of cognition skills according to teacher ratings if their parents reported *having an education of high school or more* and reported that their *child did not have a difficult transition to kindergarten*; or if their parents reported *English as their primary language* (or English and another language equally) and reported that their *child did not have a difficult transition to kindergarten*.
- **Read books or tell stories:** Children were more likely to be rated as having mastered a higher percentage of cognition skills if their parents reported having *more than a high school education* and *read to their child on a weekly basis or more*.
- **Practice kindergarten skills:** Children were more likely to be rated as having mastered a higher percentage of cognition skills if the parent reported having *more than a high school education* and *practiced kindergarten skills with their child on a weekly basis or more* prior to entering kindergarten; or if their parent reported speaking *English as their primary language* (or English and another language equally) and *practiced kindergarten skills with their child on a weekly basis or more*.

## KEY FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH SCHOOL READINESS

The key factors that are associated with children’s readiness for kindergarten in Monterey County are **parents’ highest level of education, age, gender, ease of kindergarten transition, preschool attendance, practicing kindergarten skills and reading books or telling stories**. In fact all of these factors are also strongly related to each other. Parents with more than a high school education are more likely to read books or tell stories to their child (p<.01); send their child to preschool (p<.001); and report that their child had an easy transition to kindergarten (p<.01). In addition, children who attend preschool are more likely to have an easy transition to kindergarten (p<.001) and participate in kindergarten transition activities (p<.01). It should also be noted that regardless of primary

language spoken at home or ethnicity, reading, preschool attendance and ease of transition to kindergarten were still found to be significant factors associated with school readiness.



- Parent's highest level of education
- Child's age
- Gender

- Preschool attendance
- Reading books or telling stories
- Practicing kindergarten skills

- Social and emotional well-being
- Communication skills
- Approaches to learning
- Cognitive and general knowledge

## **Chapter 5: What Are Schools Doing to Support Kindergarten Readiness?**

Schools, and specifically school staff play, a vital role in shaping the worlds of kindergarteners. Consequently, data collection was conducted with both principals and teachers at schools participating in this study, as described below:

- **Principal surveys:** Interviews were conducted with a sample of principals from participating schools. These interviews explored what activities are being undertaken to promote the successful transition of incoming kindergarteners; what school administrators view as successful and ideal methods for promoting successful transitions for incoming kindergarteners; and how *First 5 Monterey County* can work with schools to develop and implement effective kindergarten transition activities. A total of 12 principals participated in interviews.
- **Teacher surveys:** All participating kindergarten teachers were asked to complete a survey at the start of school that collected information on teacher and classroom characteristics as well as knowledge and use of school and community resources. A total of 74 kindergarten teachers completed surveys.

This section first presents findings from the principal interviews, followed by findings from surveys of kindergarten teachers.

### **FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH PRINCIPALS**

Interviews conducted with principals focused on transition activities currently implemented by schools to promote successful kindergarten transition, the level of collaboration between early care and education programs and schools, and the overall impact of the transition activities. Participants were also asked to describe how their schools accommodate the language, cultural and special needs of incoming kindergarteners, and were asked to provide recommendations for how *First 5 Monterey County* can support the readiness efforts of their elementary schools. Twelve principals participated in the interviews; therefore, the results are not representative of principals or schools in Monterey County.

#### **Kindergarten Transition Activities**

Kinder Round Up<sup>13</sup> was the most frequently identified kindergarten transition activity offered by schools for kindergarteners and their families by principals. Other transitional activities offered by schools included Kinder Camps for incoming students, informational mailings to parents, informational sessions for parents on the first day of class, and hosting information nights where parents can learn about how to become involved in their child's school.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Kinder Round Up is an early registration event that provides incoming kindergarteners and their families with the opportunity to interact with kindergarten teachers, visit classrooms, and obtain relevant information to prepare children for kindergarten.

<sup>14</sup> Kinder Camps ranged from one week to eight weeks, and focused on what children could expect once they started school.

Principals were also asked to indicate whether their school provided specific kindergarten transition activities in the last year<sup>15</sup>. Findings indicate that all respondents provided information to parents on how to contact teachers or school administrators to discuss any questions or concerns they might have regarding their child's entry to kindergarten. Few respondents reported offering workshops for parents on helping children prepare for kindergarten (n=4), kindergarten information night for parents/caregivers prior to the start of school (n=4), summer kinder camp or program (n=2), and home visits to families (n=1).

### **Collaboration with Early Care and Education Programs**

Principals were asked to describe their level of collaboration with early care and education programs and schools. Although a couple of participants voiced having good collaboration with district-supported preschools, most respondents articulated a need for deeper levels of collaboration with early care educators and programs. As one respondent remarked, "We need to have stronger communication [to ensure] that all children [are] enrolling in the spring and not the first week of school."

Principals were also asked to specifically identify activities they had conducted in the past year to promote collaboration with early care educators and programs. Findings show that half of principals (n=6) reported inviting children from preschool programs or other early care and education programs to visit kindergarten schools or classrooms. Less than a third reported that their staff discuss expectations for transition with preschool teachers (n=3) and visit early care programs or classes (n=2). In addition, none of the respondents reported including early care educators in school workshops or trainings.

### **Impact of Activities Implemented to Create a Smooth Transition for Kindergarteners**

Several participants noted that the activities implemented at the schools such as Kinder Round Up and Kinder Camp play an instrumental role in improving the transition to kindergarten for incoming students. According to principals interviewed transitional kindergarten activities:

- Increase parental awareness of what is expected of their child and explains ways in which they can promote a smoother transition for their child (Exhibit 15);
- Help parents and incoming students feel comfortable in their new environment and help form partnerships with other parents;
- Increase the teachers' understanding of where children are developmentally when they start kindergarten; and
- Increase communication and collaboration between kindergarten teachers and early care educators.

---

<sup>15</sup> The inclusion of the specific activities identified in Exhibit 13 was strongly influenced by the National Education Goal's Panel's (NEGP) 1998 report entitled *Ready Schools*, which outlines best practices that schools can use to facilitate a smooth transition for incoming kindergarteners.

Furthermore, nearly all principals (n=11) reported that their school is somewhat or significantly better able to address the special needs of students as a result of the transition activities they implement (Exhibit 15).

**Exhibit 15: Observed Impacts as a Result of Implementing Kindergarten Transition Activities**

<b>Changes Observed As A Result of Transitional Activities Implemented (n=12)</b>	<b>Not at all (%)</b>	<b>Somewhat (%)</b>	<b>Significantly (%)</b>
Parents are more aware of what is expected of their child and ways they can promote a smoother transition *	8 (n=1)	33 (n=4)	<b>58 (n=7)</b>
Teachers are able to gain a better understanding of where children are developmentally upon entrance to kindergarten	16 (n=2)	<b>42 (n=5)</b>	<b>42 (n=5)</b>
The school is better able to address special needs more effectively	8 (n=1)	<b>50 (n=6)</b>	42 (n=5)
Shared resources or communication with pre-kindergarten providers have caused an alignment with curriculum**	<b>64 (n=7)</b>	18 (n=2)	18 (n=2)

\*Percents do not total to 100 due to rounding.

\*\*One respondent reported not knowing.

### Language, Cultural, and Special Needs of Incoming Kindergarteners

As Exhibit 16 illustrates, principals identified a variety of strategies employed by their school to accommodate language, cultural, and special needs of incoming kindergarteners.

**Exhibit 16: Schools' Readiness to Address Language, Cultural and Special Needs**

<b>Activities conducted to address students' needs (n=11)</b>	<b>Sometimes (%)</b>	<b>Always (%)</b>
Are language needs taken into account when assessing the developmental characteristics of children?*	--	<b>100 (n=11)</b>
Does your school promote inclusion settings for children with special needs?*	9 (n=1)	<b>91 (n=10)</b>
Do you have teachers/aides who can ensure children's language needs are met?*	27 (n=3)	<b>73 (n=8)</b>
Do your teachers have the professional development and support needed to meet the needs of every child in their classrooms, including those with special needs?*	44 (n=5)	<b>55 (n=6)</b>

\*One respondent did not answer this question.

### Principal Recommendations

At the conclusion of the interview, participants were asked to provide feedback on how *First 5 Monterey County* could work with schools and districts to improve transitional activities for incoming kindergarteners and create greater linkages with early care educators and programs. Principals recommended practical tools and strategies to improve the readiness of schools to receive incoming kindergarteners:

- Develop educational tools for parents to help in the transition from early care and education environments to kindergarten.

- Facilitate communication and collaboration between early care educators and kindergarten teachers.
- Facilitate articulation between early care educators and kindergarten. Help convey the expectations of kindergarten to early care educators.
- Create a resources guide specifically targeted to parents of young children and kindergarteners. Resource guide could list a range of resources including perhaps, preschools, family therapists, or libraries.
- Establish Kinder Round Up programs across all schools.

## **FINDINGS FROM SURVEYS WITH KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS**

Overall, findings from surveys with teachers reveal an ethnically diverse kindergarten teacher workforce, specifically among those working in low API schools. A majority of teachers (70 percent) report speaking Spanish, and 73 percent of teachers in low API schools report that Spanish is the primary language of their classrooms. Teachers in low API schools were more likely to be familiar with the *First 5 Monterey County* School Readiness Initiative and its programs compared with those in low and medium API schools. When asked to identify training needs from a list of options provided, more than half of teachers selected kindergarten transition and special needs training.

### **Teacher and Classroom Experience**

The survey included several questions related to prior teaching experience and credentials in order to get a better snapshot of the quality of the kindergarten classrooms. Over 90 percent of surveyed teachers reported having a full teaching credential at the time of the survey. A large majority of teachers (88 percent) also indicated that they have taught other grades, and nearly a third (32 percent) reported having taught preschool in the past. Compared to low API kindergarten teachers, a greater proportion of teachers in high API schools reported experience teaching preschool (40 percent versus 29 percent). On the other hand, teachers in low API schools had the most years of experience teaching kindergarten. The median years of kindergarten teaching experience of teachers in low API schools was 7.1 years compared 3.2 years and 3.6 years for teachers in medium and high API schools, respectively. Overall, respondents had an average of 9.2 years of experience teaching kindergarten.

### **Knowledge of School and Community Resources**

Teachers were asked to identify school and community resources available to them, in order to explore their familiarity with services provided through the *First 5 Monterey County* School Readiness Collaborative. As expected, more teachers in low API schools (42 percent) were familiar with the *First 5 Monterey County* School Readiness Initiative compared to 32 percent of all survey respondents. The Children’s Oral Health Program had, by far, the highest rate (51 percent) of recognition among all teachers, followed by Alisal Community Health Family Resource Center (29 percent), and the Monterey County Health Department Public Health Nursing program (21 percent). When teachers were asked if they knew of resources to refer families to when presented with interest or a concern, only one-third of teachers indicated that they knew of pediatric

mental/behavioral health resources. A slightly smaller proportion (29 percent) reported knowing about where to refer families for developmental assessments.

### **Teacher Training Experiences and Needs**

Teachers were also asked about their training experiences and needs, with the goal of identifying training priorities. When asked about their training experiences and needs, the majority of teachers (81 percent) reported having received English Language Learner training, but only 14 percent reported participating in any kindergarten-transition training. When asked to identify their training needs, 65 percent of teachers selected kindergarten transition, followed by Special Needs (55 percent).

## Chapter 6: Recommendations

---

The 2006 *First 5 Monterey County* Kindergarten Readiness Assessment provides a rich source of information and a baseline of community indicators to continuously monitor changes over time in the area of early learning opportunities and school readiness. One of the key purposes in conducting this study is to be able to make practical recommendations for the *First 5 Monterey County* commission, for school personnel, and for parents and families. The following key recommendations are not listed in any particular priority order.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR *FIRST 5 MONTEREY COUNTY* COMMISSION

- **Increase parent/family access to information on child and family services by increasing collaboration with Women, Infant and Children (WIC) clinics, and health clinics.** Families are primarily accessing information on child health and family services through WIC and health clinics. *First 5 Monterey County* and the funded Family Resource Centers should partner with local WIC and health clinics to disseminate information on topics such as parent support resources, early literacy programs and preschool enrollment.
- **Emphasize the need for more kindergarten transition and special needs trainings for early educators.** Findings from teacher surveys show that kindergarten transition and special needs training are the top two requested trainings. *First 5 Monterey County* should work with local schools to encourage and support more training opportunities that seek to ensure a seamless transition to school.
- **Provide kindergarten teachers with more information on where to refer parents for pediatric mental/behavioral health resources and for developmental assessments.** Kindergarten teachers see their students on a regular basis over the course of nearly one year; therefore it is important for teachers to have easy and immediate access to referral resources for their students' families, particularly for pediatric behavioral health and developmental assessments. This is also consistent with teachers' prioritization of more special needs training described above. A list of reliable resources and referrals can be included in the trainings. Additionally since families are accessing child and family resources through WIC and health clinics, teachers may also refer families to those sources for more information.
- **Work with schools to help facilitate better communication and a continuum of experiences for young children transitioning from early care programs to kindergarten.** Findings from interviews with principals showed that school administrators welcome the support of a convener to facilitate improved communication between early care educators and schools, and would likewise welcome efforts to develop articulation between early learning experiences and kindergarten entry.
- **Make it easier for children of parents with lower levels of education to enter preschool.** Although this study cannot tell us why children of parents with lower levels of education are less likely to go to preschool, the data resoundingly point to the benefits of preschool and its

connection to higher developmental competency levels. Children who go to preschool are also more likely to be exposed to kindergarten transition activities ( $p < .01$ ), including having their child's development assessed ( $p < .01$ ). Efforts should be made to make parents with lower education levels aware of the benefits of quality preschool, provide them with culturally and linguistically appropriate information for preschool enrollment, work with preschools to make them welcoming places for families with less education, and ensure preschool slots are available to them at affordable rates. It is important to emphasize that *First 5 Monterey County* can not address this issues alone. Increased access to quality preschool for parents with lower levels of education necessitates a broad community effort involving parents, schools, teachers and *First 5 Monterey County*.

- **Focus on improving the quality of family- and home-based early care environments, also known as FFN (Family, Friends and Neighbors).** Findings from surveys with families show that children of families with lower levels of education and/or families whose primary language is Spanish spend a significant amount of time in the FFN early care environment. Therefore, there should be continued focus on continuing to improve its quality through professional development opportunities, and setting aside funds and defining specific goals through Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards (CARES) for FFN.
- **Promote early literacy.** Another clear finding from this study is the benefit of reading books prior to kindergarten. Data showed that reading to a child at least weekly was associated with higher developmental competency levels. Successful early literacy programs through the public libraries and book distribution programs should be widely promoted to the School Readiness target communities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

- **Work with early care educators (pre-K) to provide better communication and a continuum of experiences for young children.** Findings from interviews with principals showed that school administrators welcome the support of a convener to facilitate improved communication between early care educators and schools, and would likewise welcome efforts to develop articulation between early learning experiences and kindergarten entry.
- **Institutionalize effective kindergarten transition activities and training for teachers.** Findings from interviews with principals and surveys of teachers showed that in most cases, although school administrators and teachers realize the importance of kindergarten transition activities for school readiness, those activities are often optional. A low percentage of teachers participated in kindergarten transition training and it was the most requested type of training.
- **Provide the opportunity for teachers to take part in Special Needs training.** In addition to kindergarten transition training, the majority of teachers expressed a need for special needs training. Other data that supported this need was the very low percentage of teachers who knew where to refer parents for pediatric mental and behavior health resources and developmental assessments. Teachers should have easy access to such vital resources through a family advocate at the school or school district, Family Resource Centers, or other resources.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES

- **Any reading is good, more reading is better.** As described above, the data clearly demonstrate the benefits of reading prior to kindergarten. All parents should be encouraged to read books and tell stories to their children. Parents should also be told how and where they can access developmentally and culturally appropriate books, including libraries.
- **Practice kindergarten skills with your child.** Another key finding that was associated with kindergarten readiness was practicing kindergarten skills with children such as writing one's name, putting on shoes, counting, holding a pencil, and recognizing colors. Children whose parents practiced such skills before kindergarten were more likely to have higher MDRDP ratings.
- **Advocate to enroll your child in a quality preschool or early education program.** Parents should be encouraged to enroll their child in quality preschool programs. Currently, for every four Monterey County children eligible for preschool there is one licensed center-based slot available to them. In addition, income eligibility requirements and place of residence within the County are also potential barriers to enrolling in a quality preschool program. Parents, however, should be encouraged to place their child on the Central Eligibility List (CEL), which can help their child enroll in a quality preschool. For **any early education program** parents should be encouraged to ask questions about licensure and the quality of the learning environment.

## Appendix A. Acknowledgements

---

Harder+Company Community Research would like to thank the many individuals, schools, and districts who assisted in the design, implementation, and analysis of the 2006 *First 5 Monterey County* Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. The success of this study was dependent on the participation of over 1,000 children and their parents, kindergarten teachers, teacher assistants and aides, school administrators, district officials, *First 5 Monterey County* staff, and members of the *First 5 Monterey County* Evaluation Advisory Committee.

Harder+Company would like to thank the district officials who recognized the value of this study for the county and public schools, and encouraged their elementary schools to participate. We would also like to thank school administrators for acknowledging the importance of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, and for empowering kindergarten teachers by providing them the opportunity to participate in the study.

### **Alisal Union School District**

- Assistant Superintendent Dr. Esperanza Zendejas
- Principal Angelica Carrillo, Alisal Community School
- Principal Ernesto Vela, César E. Chavéz Elementary School
- Principal Trine Rodríguez, Fremont Elementary School
- Principal Mary Magaña, Dr. Oscar F. Loya Elementary School
- Principal Roberto Rodriguez, Jesse G. Sanchez Elementary School

### **Bradley Union School District**

- Superintendent/Principal Catherine Reimer, Bradley School

### **Greenfield Union School District**

- Superintendent Tom Guajardo
- Principal Raúl Herrera, Greenfield Elementary School
- Principal Clamentina Martínez, Oak Avenue Elementary School

### **Monterey Peninsula Unified School District**

- Superintendent Dr. Marilyn K. Shepherd
- Principal Donna Kiernan, Highland Elementary School
- Principal Mary White, J.C. Crumpton Elementary School
- Principal Daniel Lee, Olson Elementary School
- Principal Antonio Panganiban, Del Rey Woods Elementary School
- Principal Hal Nelson, Foothill Elementary School
- Principal Patrick Gaffney, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. School

### **North Monterey County Unified School District**

- Assistant Superintendent Linda Mann
- Principal Julie High, Echo Valley Elementary School
- Principal Kathleen Biermann, Elkhorn Elementary School

- Principal George Dutro, Prunedale Elementary School

**Pajaro Valley Unified School District**

- Assistant Superintendent Hilda Noguera
- Principal Guillermo Ramos, Hall Elementary School
- Assistant Principal Rosemary Hernandez, Ohlone Elementary School

**Salinas City Elementary School District**

- Superintendent Donna Alonzo Vaughan
- Principal Anne Crawford, University Park Elementary School
- Principal Dianne Middaugh, Mission Park Elementary School
- Principal Estela Chavez, Henry F. Kammann Elementary School
- Principal Ernesto González, Loma Vista Elementary School

**San Antonio Union School District**

- Superintendent/Principal Linda Irving, San Antonio School

**Santa Rita Union School District**

- Superintendent Jim Fontana
- Principal Susan Fisher, McKinnon Elementary School

**Soledad Unified School District**

- Superintendent Jorge Guzman
- Principal Terri Lambert, Gabilan Elementary School

We are grateful to the following kindergarten teachers who participated in this study, despite multiple and competing demands. They administered over 1,500 surveys to incoming kindergarteners in Monterey County and encouraged nearly 1,400 parents to complete family surveys. Their professionalism and flexibility, as well as their commitment to educating Monterey County's youth, made it possible to collect a diverse sample representative of the County's four regions.

### **Alisal Union School District**

#### Alisal Community School

- Leslie Sender
- Helen García
- José Ibarra
- Clementina Pantoja
- Rosa Arias

#### Dr. Oscar F. Loya Elementary School

- Rosa Mederos
- Kathy Greer
- Ms. Yamasaki

#### César E. Chavéz Elementary School

- Nadia Santiago
- Tina Gutierrez

#### Jesse G. Sanchez Elementary School

- Yolanda Lundquist
- Sonia Fuentes
- Albert Beeler

#### Fremont Elementary School

- Sandra Torres
- Stacy Steele
- Teresa Garcia de Angel
- Rita Gutierrez
- Aniceto Cortes
- Diana Sigala

### **Bradley Union School District**

#### Bradley School

- Laura Eras

**Greenfield Union School District**

Oak Avenue Elementary School

- Norma Virgen
- Lupe Garcia
- Diane McCoy
- María Segobia
- Carol Bisht

Greenfield Elementary School

- Ruby Serrano
- Ileen McCaig
- Cheryl Hill

**Monterey Peninsula Unified School District**

Highland Elementary School

- Kelly Becker
- Sarah Hudson
- Ofelia Pastor
- Jennifer DeAnda

Foothill Elementary School

- Pam Lee
- Mrs. McCormick
- Brian Neal
- Karen Kessler

J.C. Crumpton Elementary School

- Carol Casion
- Frances Richardson
- Jolene Lange

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. School

- Janet Belardo
- Guada Pérez

Olson Elementary School

- Maryann Tope
- Marie Olivares
- Leela Marcum

Del Rey Woods Elementary School

- Sarah Kenar

**North Monterey County Unified School District**

Echo Valley Elementary School

- Amanda Williams
- Barbara Diseth
- Hayley Forbes

Prunedale Elementary School

- Audrey Varner
- Sarah Turner
- Michael Richardson

Elkhorn Elementary School

- Ramona Guerrero
- Ann Hestand
- Nancy Ciglar

### **Pajaro Valley Unified School District**

#### Hall Elementary School

- Luz Elena Rodriguez
- Joan Culbertson
- Margalete Ezekiel
- Lorenzo Barranco
- Cristin Martinez

#### Ohlone Elementary School

- Sonia Quintero
- Terri Ketchi
- Erica Nichols
- Ellen Samuel

### **Salinas City Elementary School District**

#### Henry F. Kammann Elementary School

- Robbie Sonniksen
- Margery Ura
- Becky McDill
- Sherry Villaneda
- Joy Ellis

#### Loma Vista Elementary School

- Ms. Taguiran
- Candice Johnson
- Darryl Cornell
- Jennine Howell

#### Mission Park Elementary School

- Janice Murphy
- Terese Boronda
- Sharon Bates

#### University Park Elementary School

- Carol Silviera
- Ms. R. Breschini

### **San Antonio Union School District**

#### San Antonio School

- Kaley Craig

### **Santa Rita Union School District**

#### McKinnon Elementary School

- Liney Ramirez
- Julia Cagle
- Laura Huffman

### **Soledad Unified School District**

#### Gabilan Elementary School

- Rosalinda Silva
- Mary Sotelo
- Marie Bravo

Harder+Company would especially like to thank *First 5 Monterey County* staff and members of the *First 5 Monterey County* Evaluation Advisory Committee for their expert guidance and support every step of the way throughout this study. A list of *First 5 Monterey County* staff and Evaluation Advisory Committee members is provided below.

***First 5 Monterey County Commissioners***

- Simón Salinas, *Supervisor*, Board of Supervisors District 3, Chair
- Elliott Robinson, *Director*, Monterey County Department of Social and Employment Services, Vice-Chair
- Noemy Burnside, North Monterey County Unified School District, Secretary
- Robert L. Black, *Pediatrician*
- Len Foster, *Director of Health*, Monterey County Health Department
- Jeanne Hori-Garcia, *Early Childhood Educator*, Hartnell Community College
- Xóchitl Pasaye, Sr. *Community Organizer*, LUPE (La Unión del Pueblo Entero)

***First 5 Monterey County Staff***

- Francine Rodd, *Executive Director*
- Beth Reeves-Fortney, *Senior Program Officer*
- David Dobrowski, *Evaluation Officer*
- Amanda Santiago, *Program Support*
- Joanna Steinbruner, *Administrative Manager*
- Ana González-Romo, *Program Officer*
- Jose Montenegro, *Community Partnership Manager*
- Manuela Kolpin, *Finance/Operations*

***First 5 Monterey County Evaluation Advisory Committee Members***

- Len Foster, *Director of Health*, Monterey County Health Department
- Krista Hanni, *Internal Evaluator*, Monterey County Health Department
- Robert L. Black, *Pediatrician*
- Xóchitl Pasaye, Sr. *Community Organizer*, LUPE (La Unión del Pueblo Entero)
- Larry Imwalle, *Research Coordinator*, ACTION Council of Monterey County
- Debi Diaz, *Program Director*, Children's Oral Health Program

Importantly, we would like to extend our appreciation to the parents of incoming kindergarteners in Monterey County who completed the family survey. Their contribution gives voice to families with young children entering school throughout Monterey County; their important and valuable feedback is reflected in this report.