

2018



School Readiness

FINDINGS FROM THE FALL ASSESSMENT IN
Sutter County

In partnership with:



Prepared by:



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We also wish to thank the following teachers and coaches for their dedication of time and effort to make this study possible:

School	Teacher Name	Schools	Coach Name
Andros Karperos School	Kelly Wibber	Andros Karperos School; Riverbend Elementary	Nance Contreras
April Lane Elementary	Helen Munoz	April Lane Elementary; Bridge Street Elementary; King Avenue Elementary	Meagan Atkinson
Barry Elementary	Cari Lewis	April Lane Elementary; Bridge Street Elementary; King Avenue Elementary	Lindsay Vantress
	Claraselle Frenger	April Lane Elementary; Bridge Street Elementary; King Avenue Elementary	Lisa Gault
Bridge Street Elementary	Jennifer Bell	Barry Elementary; Central Gaither Elementary	Debbie Cunningham
Browns Elementary	Eileen VanAssen	Butte Vista Elementary	Bakhsho Bachra
Butte Vista Elementary	Robin Hale	Lincrest Elementary	Shelly Hollow
	Suzanne Price	Tierra Buena Elementary	Hanpreet Phagura
Central Gaither Elementary	Marissa Gonzalez		
King Avenue Elementary	Dana Movoni		
Lincoln Elementary	Kathy Beck		
Lincrest Elementary	Wendy Harvey		
Park Avenue Elementary	Manjit Mander		
Riverbend Elementary	Clarence Craft		
Tierra Buena Elementary	Tawnia Cartwright		

Headline Findings

Data Highlights

School Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 39% of kindergartners were <i>Fully Ready</i> for kindergarten across all domains of readiness (<i>Self-Regulation, Social Expression, and Kindergarten Academics</i>), whereas 22% were <i>Not Ready</i> across any of these domains. ▶ Higher readiness was significantly and independently predicted by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Being older ▪ Having more than one parent/caregiver in the household ▪ Child well-being (not appearing hungry at school) ▪ Not having a special need ▪ Having a mother with higher educational attainment ▪ Reading more frequently with parent(s)
Demographic Profile of Children and Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 38% of the children were Hispanic/Latino, 34% were White, 20% were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 8% were multi-ethnic or other race/ethnicity ▶ 40% of families earned less than \$35,000 per year and 39% of mothers had no more than a high school education ▶ 15% of families were headed by a single parent; 9% of primary caregivers had lost a job in the previous year; and 9% of children had been homeless in their life
Medical and Dental Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 98% of children had medical insurance and a regular doctor ▶ 92% had a regular dentist; 15% of children reportedly had experienced a toothache
Home Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 66% of families told stories/sang songs together at least five days per week ▶ 59% of families read together at least five days per week
Pre-Kindergarten Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 75% of children had formal early childhood education experience, including licensed preschool, family child care, or Junior Kindergarten ▶ 11% of children attended Smart Start, a short-term summer pre-K program supported by SCCFC
Family Preparation for Kindergarten	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Over 70% of parents reported receiving school readiness information before the child entered kindergarten ▶ Nearly three-quarters (73%) of parents worked with the child on school skills prior to kindergarten entry ▶ 23% of children had participated in a program sponsored by SCCFC, including the Bright Futures health and developmental screening program, Family Resource Center (Family SOUP) programs, and Smart Start summer pre-K

Introduction

Purpose of the Assessment

Measuring school readiness at kindergarten entry helps communities assess how prepared children are for the transition to school, as well as determine the environmental or individual factors that contribute to readiness. It is critical to measure readiness and identify the conditions and supports that lead to higher readiness because it is a strong predictor of later academic achievement and school adjustment (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000; Welsh et al., 2010).

Funded by Sutter County Children & Families Commission (SCCFC), this report presents the results of the first-ever formal kindergarten readiness assessment conducted in the county. The goals of this study are to:

- ▶ Understand how prepared children in Sutter County are for kindergarten entry; and
- ▶ Understand the factors that influence readiness, particularly those factors that are considered “malleable,” such as participation in specific programs or services (quality preschool, parenting classes, etc.) or family practices at home, like reading with the child

SCCFC hopes to use the results to better understand how it can impact parent engagement and kindergarten readiness through program and policy, and to deepen relationships with other entities in the county who also support children’s success in school.

Sample

This study is the result of a significant collaboration between SCCFC and school districts, principals, and teachers around the county to gather data on kindergarten readiness. SCCFC began outreach efforts with superintendents and principals in the spring of 2018. Ultimately, 306 kindergarten students were assessed from 15 classes. By comparison, Sutter County had a total enrollment of just over 2000 kindergartners, meaning nearly 15% of the total kindergarten population in the county and over one-quarter of the total kindergarten population in the sampled districts were assessed.¹

¹ The 33 children in Junior Kindergarten/Transitional Kindergarten have been removed from the analyses because they are up to 12 months younger than the kindergarten sample, and therefore have a significantly different readiness profile than their peers in kindergarten.

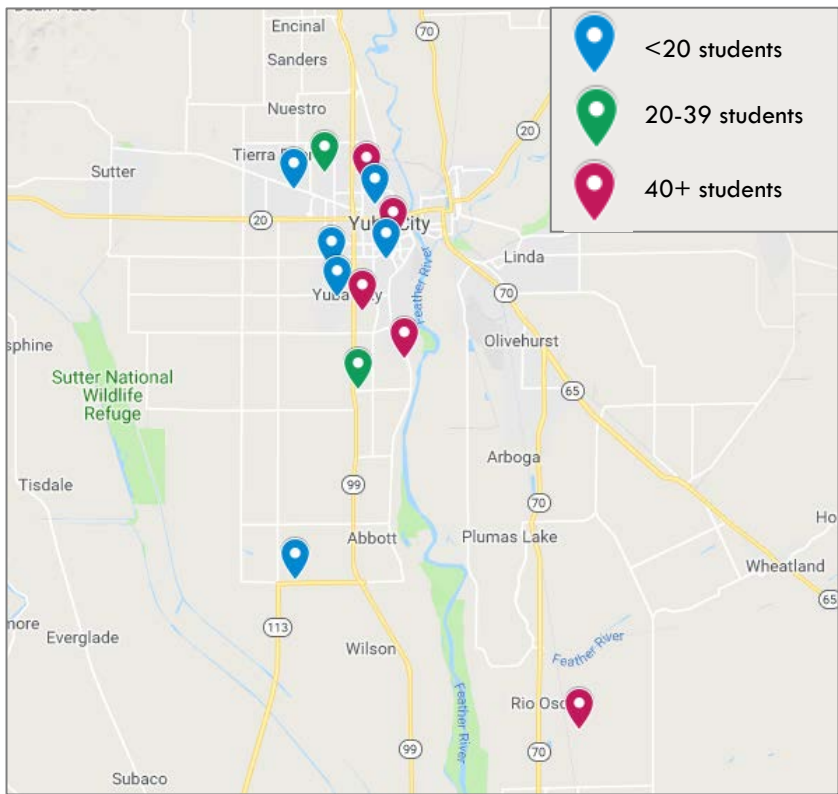
Figure 1. Number of Kindergarten Classrooms and Students Assessed in Fall 2018

School	Number of Classes Assessed, Fall 2018	Number of Students Assessed, Fall 2018
Andros Karperos	1	22
April Lane Elementary	1	18
Barry Elementary	2	43
Bridge Street Elementary	1	19
Browns Elementary	1	15
Butte Vista Elementary	2	45
Central Gaither Elementary	1	22
King Avenue Elementary	1	23
Lincoln Elementary	1	20
Lincrest Elementary	1	17
Park Avenue Elementary	1	23
Riverbend Elementary	1	18
Tierra Buena Elementary	1	21
TOTAL	15	306

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2018).

The map below displays the locations of schools around the county that participated in the Fall 2018 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. The color of the icon in the map corresponds to the number of students assessed at each school.

Figure 2. Participating Schools in Sutter County in Fall 2018



Methods Used to Assess Kindergarten Readiness

The tool used to assess kindergarten readiness in Sutter County was the Kindergarten Observation Form (KOF), a validated assessment that includes 20 skills that have been shown to statistically predict third grade academic achievement. This tool has been used in 15 other California counties as well as in other states.

Teachers completed the KOF within the first few weeks of the 2018-19 school year by rating student proficiency levels on each of 20 kindergarten readiness skills, using a scale from 1 (*Not Yet* demonstrating the skill) to 4 (*Fully Proficient* on the skill). These readiness skills comprised three *Building Blocks* – *Self-Regulation*, *Social Expression*, and *Kindergarten Academics*. A fourth area includes two items related to fine and gross motor skills, which serve as a foundation for these *Building Blocks*.

To complete the portrait of children’s readiness for kindergarten, the Parent Information Form (PIF) was also administered. This survey was completed by 230 parents (75% of the sample), and it gathered data about child demographics, family background, parenting activities, family stressors, and child care experiences.

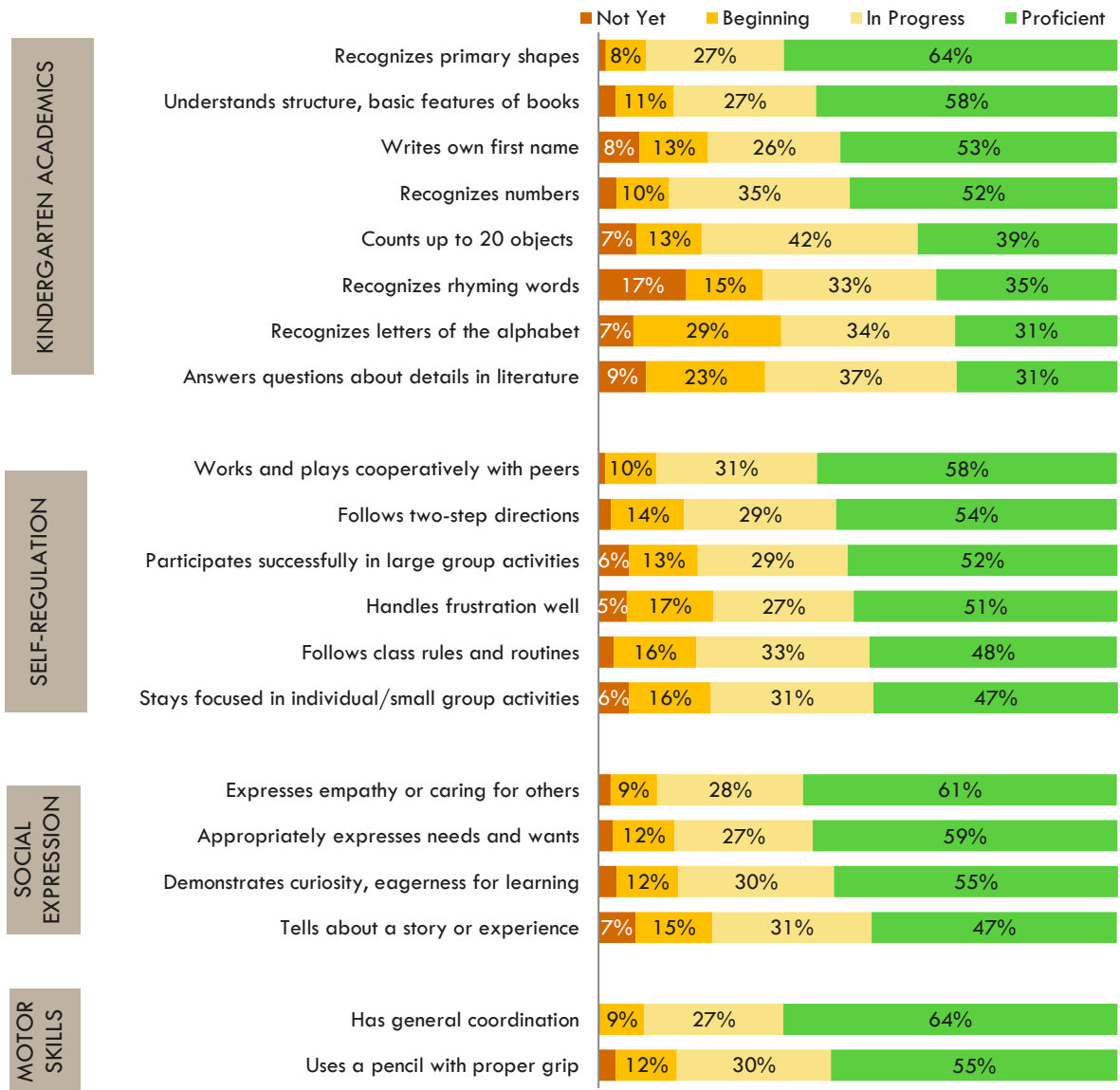


This report first presents data on the overall school readiness of kindergartners in Sutter County, as well as their performance within the three domains of readiness (*Self-Regulation*, *Social Expression*, and *Kindergarten Academics*). We then analyze the factors that are uniquely associated with school readiness outcomes, particularly focusing on factors that are amenable to intervention. Finally, we present a portrait of the sample on demographic characteristics, family environments, and prekindergarten experiences, before summarizing the results and the study’s implications.

Kindergarten Readiness

As mentioned in the previous section, teachers in the assessment rated children’s readiness on 20 school readiness skills on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*Not Yet*) to 4 (*Proficient*). The figure below illustrates the distribution of scores on each of these skills for children in Sutter County. Children were most likely to be proficient in recognizing primary shapes, demonstrating general coordination skills, and expressing empathy or caring for others, but least likely to be proficient in recognizing letters of the alphabet, being able to answer questions about a story, and recognizing words that rhyme.

Figure 3. Students’ Proficiency Levels across 20 School Readiness Skills



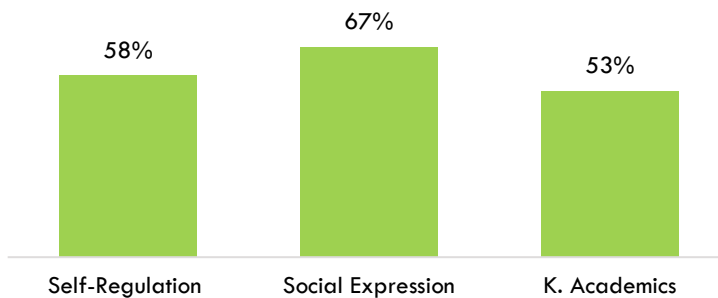
Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2018). N=256-306. Note: Scores range from 1 (Not Yet) to 4 (Proficient). Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding. Proportions of less than 5% are not labeled. Scores were omitted for students for whom language barriers were a concern.

Children’s Overall Readiness for Kindergarten

Across three large longitudinal studies involving the KOF, researchers found that an average readiness score of 3.25 out of 4.00 is the threshold above which about 70% of children will be reading at grade level by third grade; below 3.25, only about 15% of children will be proficient readers at third grade. Therefore, 3.25 is the benchmark above which children assessed on the KOF are considered “ready” for kindergarten.

To determine how ready children in Sutter County were for kindergarten, children’s scores on the readiness items within each domain were averaged. The figure below shows the percent of students who had a score of 3.25 or higher within each of the *Building Blocks*. Over a half of the students (58%) were ready in the area of *Self-Regulation*, 67% were ready in *Social Expression*, and 53% were ready in *Kindergarten Academics*.

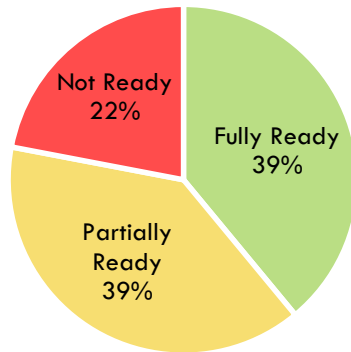
Figure 4. Percent of Children Ready for Kindergarten, by Building Block



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2018). N=289-306. Weights are applied to correct for SES, EL, and race/ethnicity.

Studies also suggest that development in multiple readiness domains is essential for later school success (Hair et al., 2006). Therefore, we analyzed the proportion of children who were ready in all three domains of the KOF. Students were considered *Fully Ready* for kindergarten if they scored at or above 3.25 out of 4.00 on all three *Building Blocks*; *Partially Ready* if they scored at or above 3.25 in one or two *Building Blocks*; and *Not Ready* if they did not have scores at or above 3.25 in any of the three *Building Blocks*. Using these criteria, **39%** of the 306 kindergarten students assessed in Sutter County were *Fully Ready* for kindergarten. Another 39% were *Partially Ready* and 22% were *Not Ready*.

Figure 5. Percent of Children Ready for Kindergarten, across Building Blocks



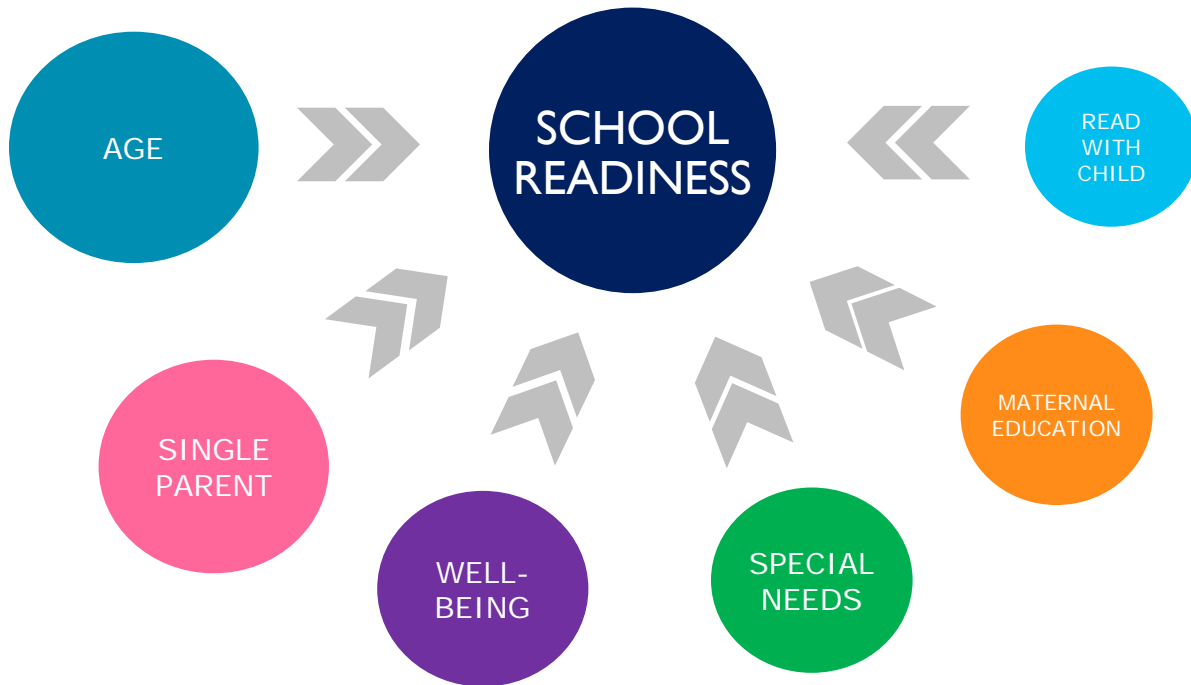
Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2018). N=291. Weights are applied to adjust for SES, EL, and race/ethnicity.

What Factors are Independently Associated with Kindergarten Readiness?

A multivariate regression model was used to determine the factors that have an *independent* association with kindergarten readiness in Sutter County, over and above the influence of other related factors. The overall continuous scores of readiness were used as the outcome. All variables correlated with readiness were first entered into the regression and then only significant variables were kept in the final model. Six factors were found to be significantly and independently associated with school readiness. The diagram below illustrates the relative strength of the associations between each factor and readiness, with larger bubbles representing stronger relationships with readiness. The strongest predictor of school readiness was age, followed by single parenthood, child well-being (i.e., coming to school hungry, according to their teachers), special needs, maternal education, and reading with the child at home.



Figure 6. Key Predictors of Overall School Readiness (in Order of Strength)



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2018), Parent Information Form (2018). N=182. Multivariate linear regression with six factors, controlling for school effects. The overall model accounted for 29% of variance ($R^2 = .29$).

AGE

The strongest predictor of kindergarten readiness was age in Sutter County. Children who were **older** were more likely to be ready for kindergarten than children who were younger.

SINGLE PARENTHOOD

The second strongest predictor of kindergarten readiness in Sutter County was **single parenthood**. Children who had more than one parent at home tended to have higher school readiness scores than children raised by a single parent.

WELL-BEING

The third strongest predictor of kindergarten readiness in Sutter County was **child well-being**. Those children who were perceived by their teachers to have health and well-being issues, particularly appearing hungry, had readiness levels that were lower than their peers without well-being concerns.

SPECIAL NEEDS

The fourth strongest predictor of readiness was the presence of **special needs**. Children without special needs had higher school readiness scores than children with special needs.

MATERNAL EDUCATION

The fifth significant predictor of kindergarten readiness was **maternal educational attainment**. Children with mothers who had completed higher levels of education had higher readiness scores.

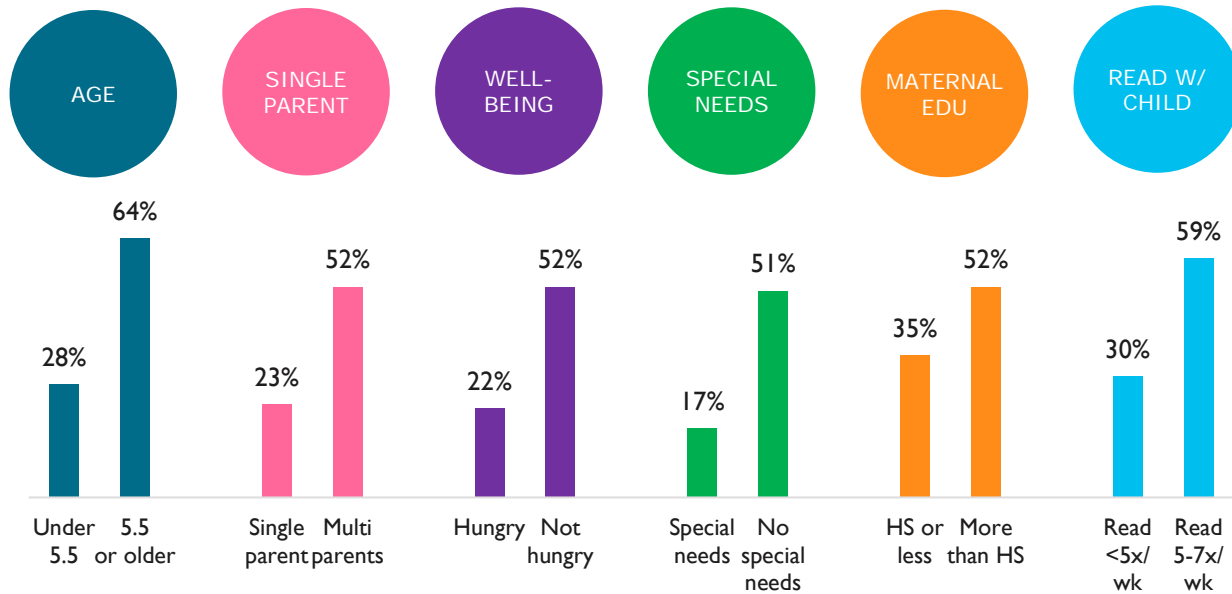
READING WITH CHILD

The final significant predictor of kindergarten readiness was **reading with the child**. Children who read with their parents frequently (i.e., at least five times a week) showed greater levels of school readiness than children who read with their family less frequently.

Readiness Levels by Key Predictors

The chart below shows how readiness levels differed on each of the significant predictors of readiness, after adjusting for all other factors. For example, 64% of children who were at least 5 ½ years old at the time of the assessment were proficient or nearly proficient across all *Building Blocks* of readiness (i.e., *Fully Ready*), whereas only 28% of younger children were proficient or nearly proficient. Likewise, over half of children who had more than one parent or caregiver in the home were *Fully Ready* for kindergarten compared to only 23% of children with a single parent.

Figure 7. Adjusted Percent of Children Fully Ready, by Significant Predictors

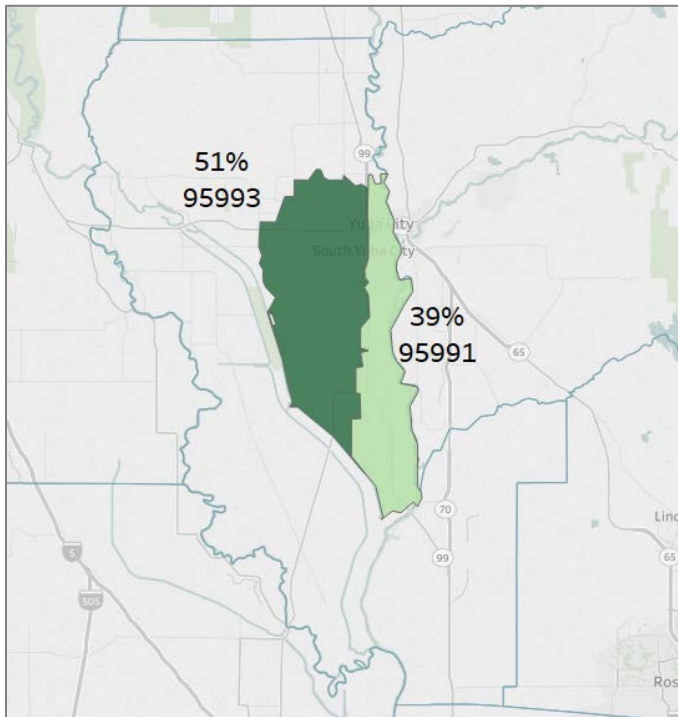


Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2018), Parent Information Form (2018). N=182. All differences are statistically significant (p<.05). Adjusted for all other significant predictors in the regression model.

Geographic Differences in Readiness

Readiness also varied by where families lived, even after controlling for other factors, such as family socioeconomic status, with higher readiness in the 95993 ZIP Code (51%, N=107), in the western part of the county, and lower readiness in the 95991 ZIP Code (39%, N=87), in the eastern part of the county. Very few families lived in other ZIP Codes.

Figure 8. Percent of Children Fully Ready, by ZIP Code



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form, Parent Information Form (2018). N=194.

Who is “Not Ready”?

Just over one in five children in Sutter County was *Not Ready* on any of the *Building Blocks* of readiness. These children are at significant risk for poor outcomes later in school. An analysis of the characteristics of these children revealed that they were more likely to have been absent frequently, to be Hispanic/Latino, to have appeared tired on at least some days according to the teacher, and to have not received a developmental screening. These findings will help inform efforts to target readiness supports to children who need the most.

Figure 9. Characteristics of Children who are *Not Ready*

Factor	Classification	All Students	Not Ready
ATTENDANCE*	Absent on at least some days	10%	17%
RACE/ETHNICITY**	Hispanic/Latino	39%	56%
HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**	Tired on at least some days	17%	32%
DEVELOPMENT**	Did not receive a developmental screening	25%	45%

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form, Parent Information Form (2018). N=288. ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Participation in Sutter County Children & Families Commission Programs

This study also sought to investigate whether there was any relationship between participation in SCCFC services and kindergarten readiness or other factors that might be related to readiness. As seen below, of the 226 students with available data, 52, or 23% of students in the Fall 2018 sample, had participated in SCCFC programs, such as Smart Start summer pre-K program or Bright Futures health and developmental program.

Figure 10. Participation in SCCFC Programs, 2018

	Number of Students
Any SCCFC program participation	52
Smart Start summer pre-K program	23
Bright Futures health and developmental program	16
Play group programs (e.g., FLIP)	16
Family Resource Center (Family SOUP)	4
Other SCCFC programs	8
No SCCFC program participation	174
TOTAL	226

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form, Parent Information Form (2018). The sum of participants of the programs is greater than 52 because children could participate in multiple programs.

Next, we examined the characteristics of children in SCCFC programs on the key predictors of readiness: age, family structure, well-being, the presence of special needs, maternal education, and reading. As shown below, children who had received SCCFC services were not significantly different on these characteristics from those who had not receive services (e.g., although fewer SCCFC participants were read to at least five times per week, the difference was not statistically significant).

Figure 11. Differences Between SCCFC Families & Non-SCCFC Families on Key Readiness Predictors

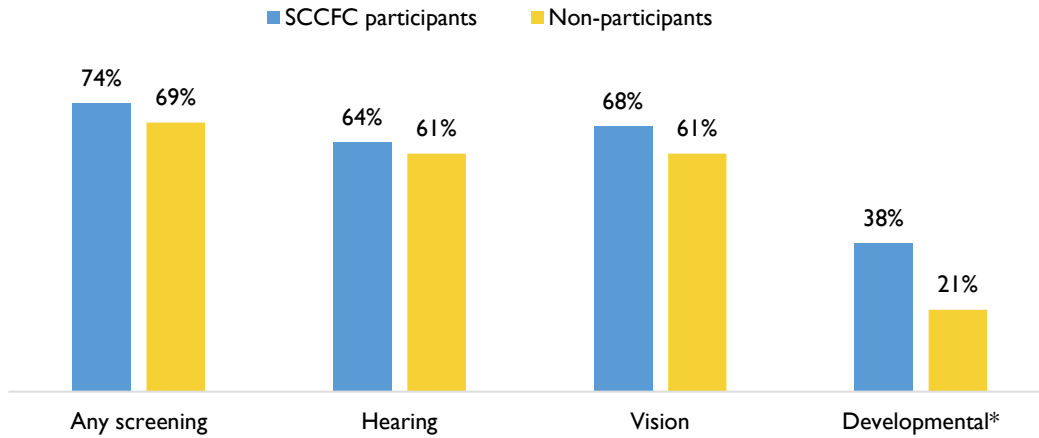
Factor	Classification	All Students [^]	SCCFC	No SCCFC
AGE	5.5 years or older	54%	52%	55%
FAMILY STRUCTURE	More than one parent	85%	83%	86%
HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	Rarely or never hungry	87%	92%	86%
DEVELOPMENT	No diagnosed special need	91%	88%	92%
MATERNAL EDUCATION	Mother has at least a high school education	62%	62%	62%
READING WITH CHILD	Parent reads with child at least 5 times/week	59%	51%	61%

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form, Parent Information Form (2018). [^]Only includes participants with valid data on SCCFC participation.

Although we did not find significant differences between SCCFC-linked children and other children in the sample on the predictors of readiness, we did find SCCFC participants were significantly more likely to

have received a developmental screening. This is an important finding considering the fact that special needs was a strong predictor of lower readiness and the well-established benefits of early intervention for children’s long-term outcomes.

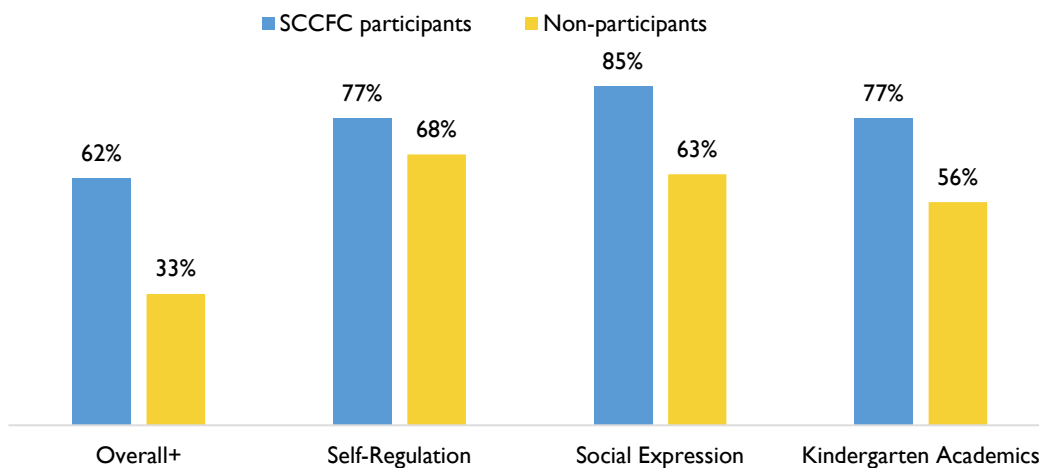
Figure 12. Screening Rates, by SCCFC Participation



Source: Parent Information Form (2018). N=215. * $p < .05$.

Overall, SCCFC participants had readiness levels similar to their peers who did not receive services. However, we found differences in readiness based on program participation within the subgroup of children who were Asian/Pacific Islander. Among Asian/Pacific Islander children, 62% of SCCFC participants were *Fully Ready* for kindergarten, while only 33% of nonparticipants were *Fully Ready*. Statistically speaking, the difference was marginally significant. The differences in readiness between SCCFC participants and nonparticipants among other racial/ethnic groups and among other subgroups of children were not significant.

Figure 13. Percent of Asian/PI Children Fully Ready, by SCCFC Participation



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2018). N=40-51. + $p < .10$.

Profile of Children and Families in Sutter County

In this section we describe the sample of participants in the 2018 Sutter County school readiness assessment on various characteristics and experiences, including demographics, family activities, family stressors, child health, and child exposure to ECE.

Demographic and Socioeconomic Profile

The table below describes the characteristics of the children included in this study. There were slightly more boys than girls in the sample, and 54% of children were at least 5 ½ years old at the time of the assessment. Age was significantly associated with school readiness in Sutter County, with younger children exhibiting lower readiness levels than their peers. The kindergarten readiness study also found that 30% of students were English Learners.

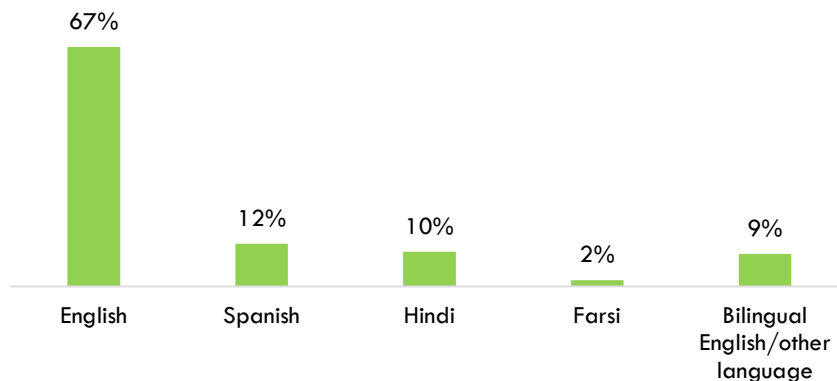
Figure 14. Characteristics of Participating Children

	Percentage
Female	49%
5.5 years and older	54%
Identified as English Learner by teacher	30%

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form, Parent Information Form (2018). N=299-305.

The majority of children (67%) spoke only English at home, while 12% spoke only Spanish. One in 10 children spoke Hindi, 2% spoke Farsi, and 9% were bilingual in English and another language.

Figure 15. Home Languages of Participating Children

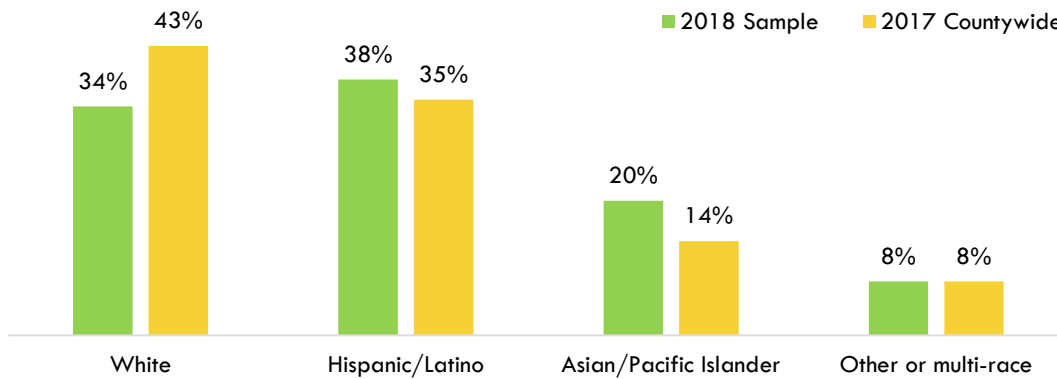


Source: Parent Information Form (2018). N=227.

About 34% of the children assessed in Fall 2018 were White, 38% were Hispanic/Latino, and 20% were Asian/Pacific Islander. Compared to the countywide demographics of kindergartners in 2017, the sample included more Hispanic/Latino and Asian/Pacific Islander children and fewer White children. It's

important to note, however, that the readiness results presented in this report were weighted to be representative of the overall county with regards to key demographic variables, including race/ethnicity.

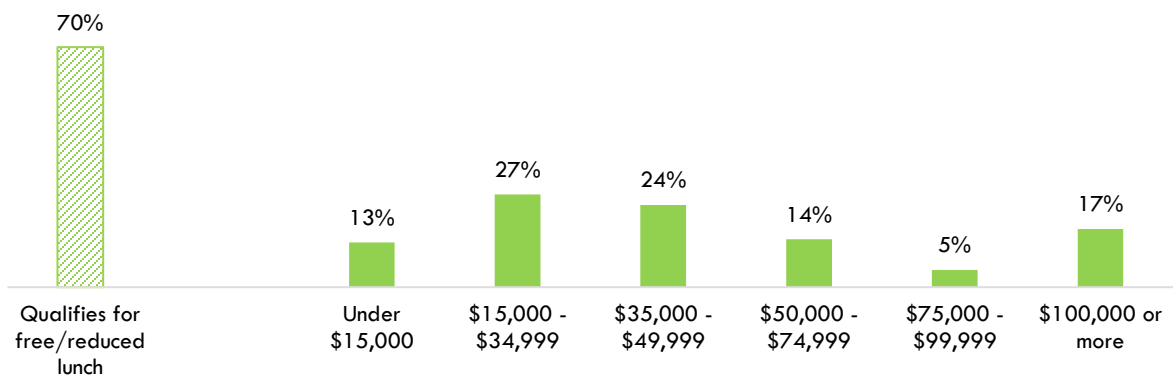
Figure 16. Ethnicity of Participating Children



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form, Parent Information Form (2018). N=304. California Department of Education DATAQUEST.

The figure below displays the income levels of families who participated in the study. About 40% of students lived in households earning less than \$35,000 annually, including 13% who came from families earning less than \$15,000 per year. Close to one quarter (24%) of families earned between \$35,000 and \$49,999, 14% earned \$50,000-\$74,999, and 22% earned at least \$75,000. In addition, 70% of families reported that their child qualifies for free or reduced lunch at school, meaning the family earns up to 185% of the federal poverty line (US Department of Agriculture, 2018).

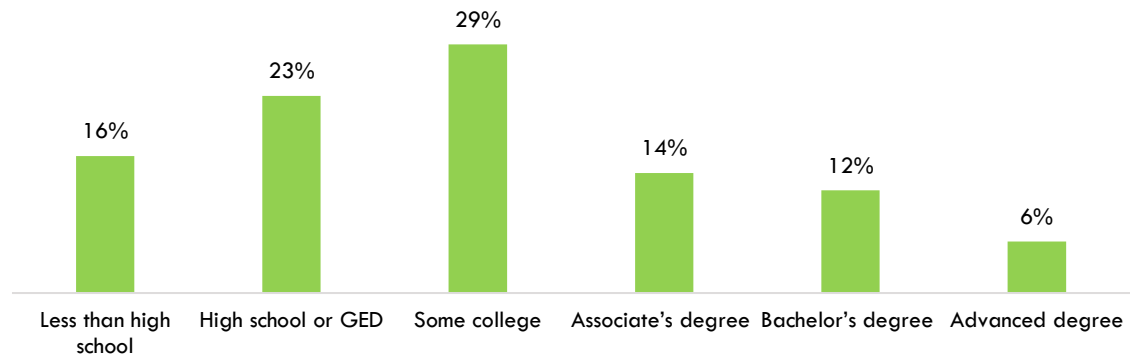
Figure 17. Household Income of Participating Families



Source: Parent Information Form (2018). N=224.

Maternal educational attainment was a significant predictor of readiness in the study. In the Fall 2018 sample, approximately 16% of mothers had less than high school, while 23% had earned a high school diploma, 29% had attended some college, and 32% had completed post-secondary education (Associate’s degree or higher).

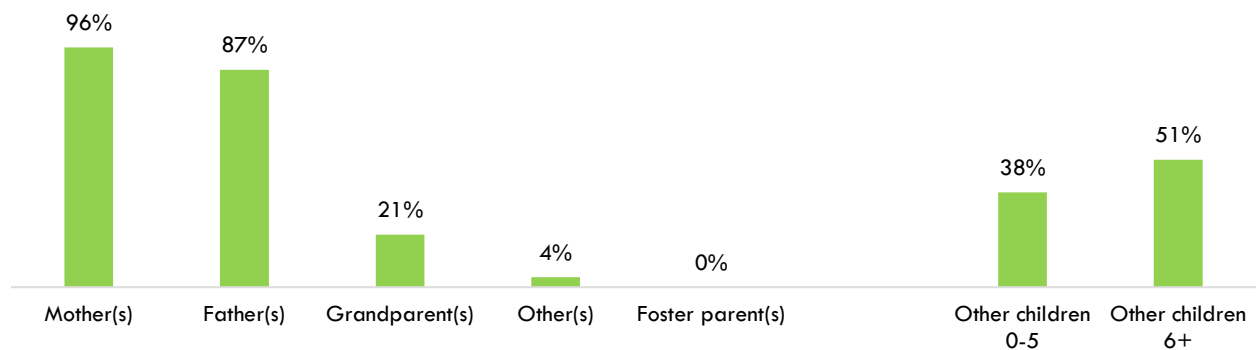
Figure 18. Highest Education Level of Students' Mothers



Source: Parent Information Form (2018). N=221. Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

One question on the PIF asked families to indicate who lived with the child in the home. Almost all students in the sample were living with their mother (96%), and 87% were living with their father. About one-fifth (21%) of the students lived with their grandparent(s). Nearly three-quarters of the students were living with sibling(s), including 38% who were living with other child(ren) aged in 0 to 5 and 51% who were living with other child(ren) aged 6 or older.

Figure 19. Family Members in the Home

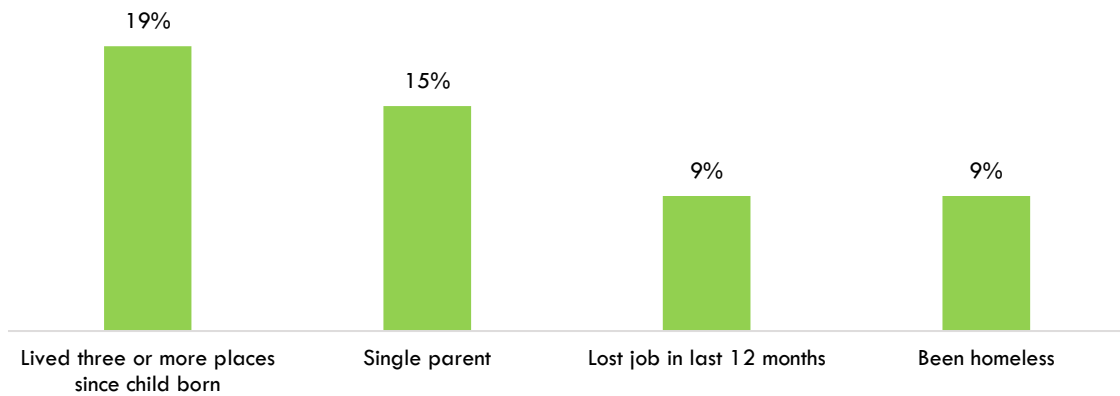


Source: Parent Information Form (2018). N=228.

Family Risk Factors

Parents reported other potential risk markers for their families as well. According to their responses, 15% of the students were being raised in single parent households, which was a significant predictor of lower readiness levels in Sutter County. In addition, 9% of parents had lost a job in the past year. Approximately one-fifth of students had lived in at least three different places since they were born, and 9% had reportedly experienced homelessness (which could have entailed sleeping in hotels, staying with family or friends, sleeping in their car, staying in a shelter, or living on the street). When they were homeless, most families reporting homelessness (86%) had stayed with their family or friends.

Figure 20. Family Risk Factors



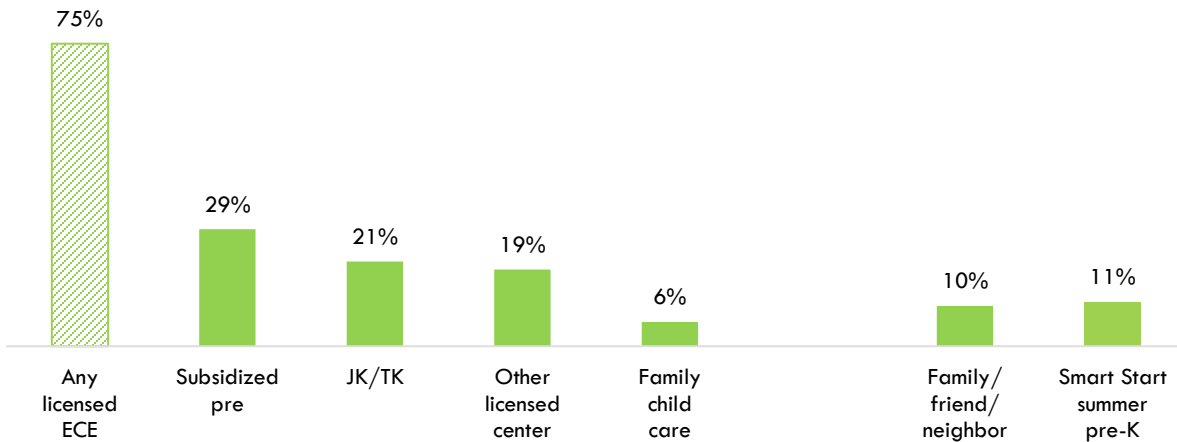
Source: Parent Information Form (2018). N=214-223.

Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education experiences (ECE) play a critical role in children’s readiness. Although it wasn’t a significant predictor of readiness in the current study, other research has consistently shown that children who receive high-quality formal ECE have higher school readiness; in particular, publicly funded preschool programs such as Head Start have reduced the readiness gaps between children from disadvantaged settings and their more affluent peers (Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005). In the Sutter County school readiness sample, 75% of the children had attended licensed ECE, including Junior Kindergarten/Transitional Kindergarten (JK/TK; 21%), free or low-cost preschool, including Head Start (29%), another type of center-based preschool (19%), and/or a licensed family child care home (6%). Additionally, 10% of children were cared for by family, friends, or neighbors, and 11% of the children had attended Smart Start, a short-term summer preschool program supported by SCCFC.



Figure 21. Early Childhood Education Experience

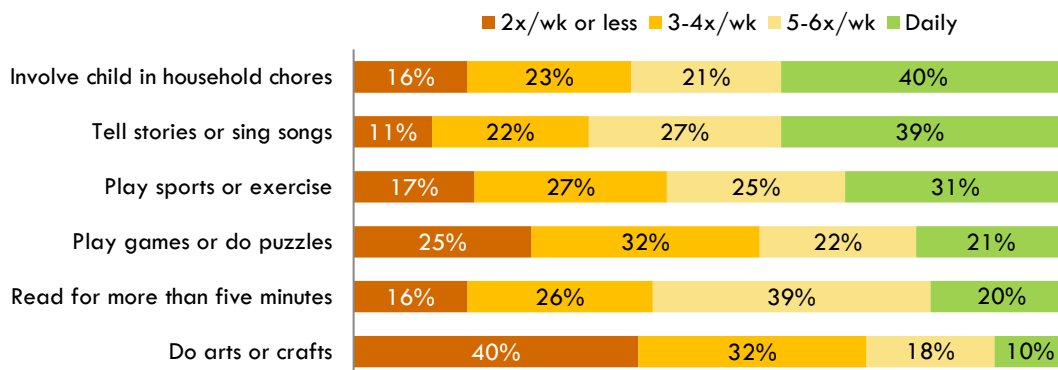


Source: Kindergarten Observation Form, Parent Information Form (2018). N=272-292. Respondents could choose multiple options.

Family Activities and Routines at Home

Family engagement with their children at home is often a significant predictor of kindergarten readiness and in the current study, reading with the child frequently was predictive of the child’s readiness. The chart below indicates the frequency with which Sutter County families engage in various activities with their children. The majority of families involved their child in household chores (61%), told stories or sang songs (66%), played sports or exercised (56%), and read with their child (59%), at least five times per week. Families tended to play games or do puzzles or do arts and crafts with their children less often.

Figure 22. Frequency of Family Activities per Week



Source: Parent Information Form (2018). N=208-215. Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Parents may also use external resources to enrich their children’s early experiences and engage with their children. The table below summarizes the use of such community resources among the sample. Almost all parents (90%) had visited parks in the last year. Around a half of the parents had attended recreational activities, camps, or sports with their child (56%), visited zoos or aquariums (51%), or visited a library with their child (46%). The least frequently used resources were museums (19%) and arts/music programs (11%).

Figure 23. Parent Use of Community Resources

	Percentage
Parks	90%
Recreational activities, camps, sports	56%
Zoos or aquariums	51%
Libraries	46%
Museums	19%
Arts/music programs	11%

Source: Parent Information Form (2018). N=223.

Children’s sleep behavior is closely related to their health and well-being, which is important for school readiness. In the fall readiness assessment sample, 80% of children went to bed by 9:00 PM.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children ages 2 to 5 have no more than one hour each day of screen time, which includes TV, computers, tablets or phones (Hill et al., 2016). About 38% of children in the sample meet the APA recommendations during weekdays, whereas only 14% are exposed to no more than one hour of screen time on the weekends.

Figure 24. Bedtime and Screen Time Routines

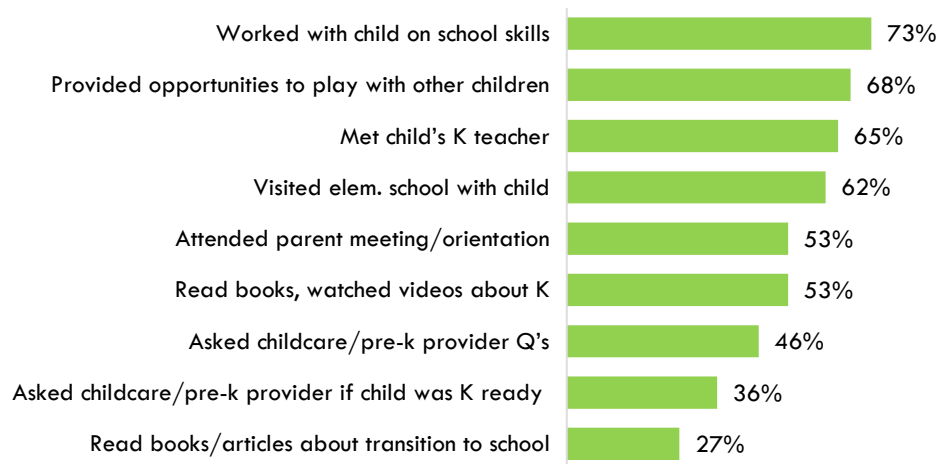
		Percentage
CHILD’S BEDTIME	Before 8:00	9%
	8:00	20%
	8:30	29%
	9:00	21%
	After 9:00	20%
CHILD’S SCREEN TIME on WEEKDAYS	1 hour or less	38%
	~2 hours	35%
	~3 hours	17%
	~4 hours	6%
	More than 4 hours	3%
CHILD’S SCREEN TIME on WEEKENDS	1 hour or less	14%
	~2 hours	31%
	~3 hours	26%
	~4 hours	17%
	More than 4 hours	13%

Source: Parent Information Form (2018). N=220-225.

Family Preparation Activities for Kindergarten

Parents also indicated the types of activities they had engaged in to promote their child’s transition to school. The most common readiness activity reported by parents was working with the child on school skills (73%) and providing opportunities for the child to play with other children (68%). A majority of parents also connected with their child’s school prior to kindergarten, including meeting their child’s kindergarten teacher (65%), visiting the school with the child (62%), or attending parent meetings or orientations (53%).

Figure 25. Parent Engagement in Kindergarten Readiness Activities



Source: Parent Information Form (2018). N=226.

Most parents said they received information about kindergarten prior to school entry. When asked what kind of information they received about kindergarten, 81% of parents said they received general information about the skills all children need for kindergarten, the same percentage who said they received information about how and when to register their child for school. Also, 76% of parents said they received specific information about how to help their child develop the skills for kindergarten, and 72% said they received specific information about how ready their child was for kindergarten.

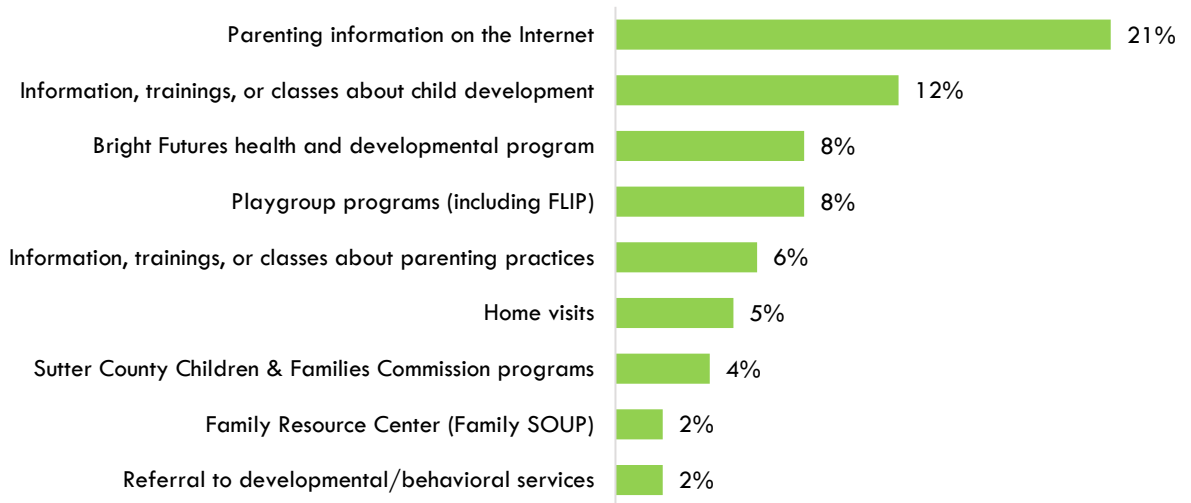
Figure 26. Information Received about Kindergarten



Source: Parent Information Form (2018). N=226.

Parents were also asked about the types of parenting services they had received, some of which are supported by SCCFC. While the greatest number of parents said they accessed parenting information on the Internet (21%), 12% of parents had participated in trainings or classes about child development and 6% of parents had participated in trainings or classes about parenting. In addition, 8% of families had participated in the Bright Futures health and developmental screening program, 2% had used the Family Resource Center (Family SOUP), and 4% had participated in other SCCFC programs. About 8% of children had participated in a playgroup program (including FLIP), 5% of families received a home visit, and 2% had received a referral to developmental or behavioral services.

Figure 27. Parenting Resources



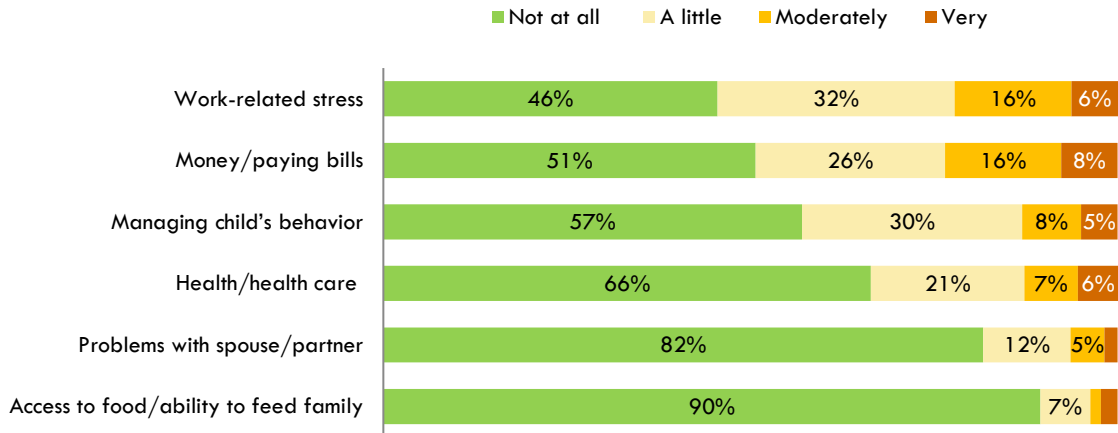
Source: Parent Information Form (2018). N=202.

Sources of Stress and Support for Families

High levels of stress may interfere with families' ability to support their children's readiness. Therefore, we asked questions about how concerned parents were about various family, work, and basic needs issues. A quarter of parents were “moderately” or “very” concerned about work (22%) and money/paying bills (24%). For 13% of the parents, managing child’s behavior was a moderate or strong concern, and 12% of parents were at least moderately concerned about health or health care. Only 7% reported that they were moderately or very concerned about problems with their spouse or partner, and 4% of the parents said they were at least moderately worried about access to food.



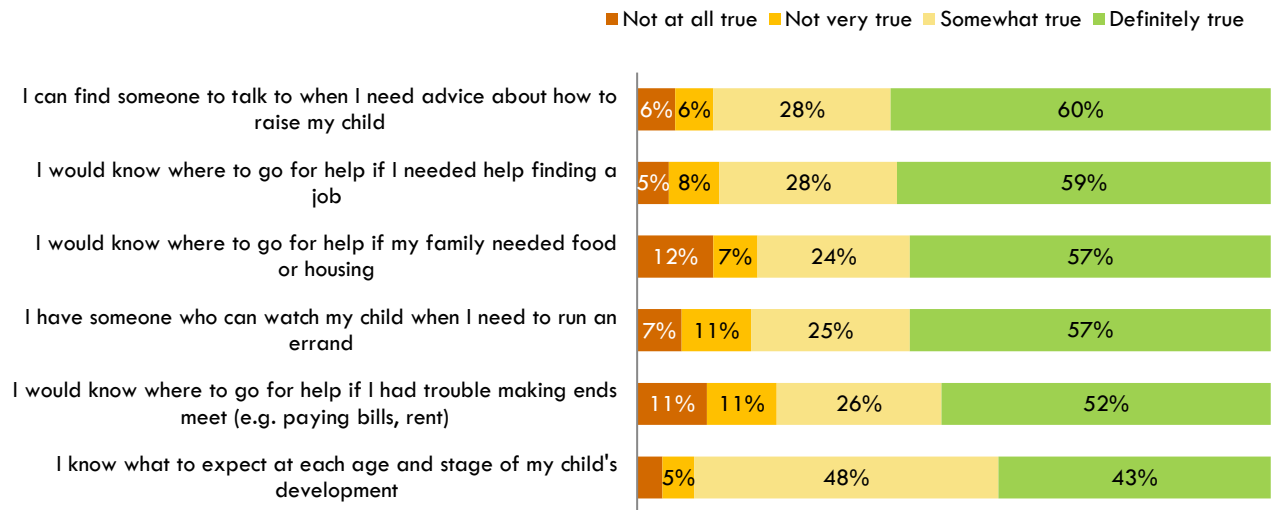
Figure 28. Parent Concern about Family, Work, and Basic Needs Issues



Source: Parent Information Form (2018). N=216-219. Percentages less than 5% not labeled.

Parents in the Sutter County school readiness sample reported relatively high levels of parenting and basic needs support. The vast majority of parents said that they have someone that they can talk to when they need advice about raising their child; that they know where to go if they needed help making ends meet, finding a job or needed food or housing; and that they have someone they could rely on to watch their child if they needed to run an errand. Also, almost all (91%) parents reported some knowledge about child development, including 43% who said they “definitely” know what to expect at each age and stage of their child’s development.

Figure 29. Parenting and Basic Needs Support



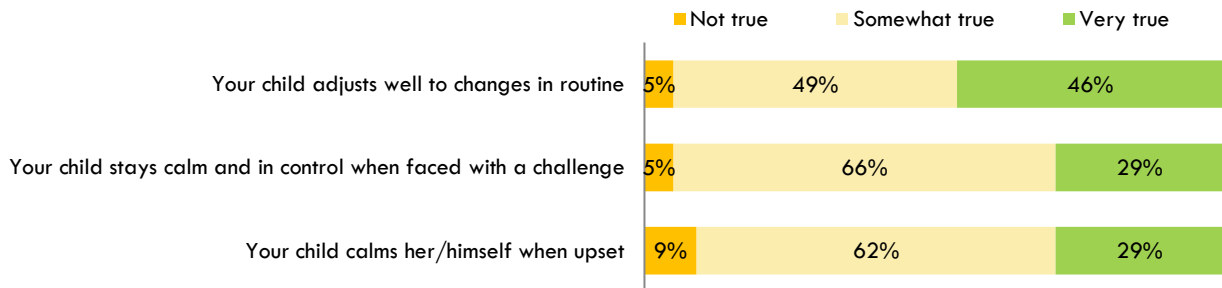
Source: Parent Information Form (2018). N=218-221. Percentages less than 5% not labeled.

Child Resiliency and Parenting Stress

Most parents responded positively to questions about their children’s resiliency. About a half of the parents (46%) said it was “very true” that their child adjusts well to changes in routine, and another 49%

said this was somewhat true of their child. Close to three in 10 (29%) marked “very true” when asked if their child tended to stay calm and in control when they were faced with a challenge or if their child calms him or herself when upset; approximately two-thirds said this was “somewhat true” of their child.

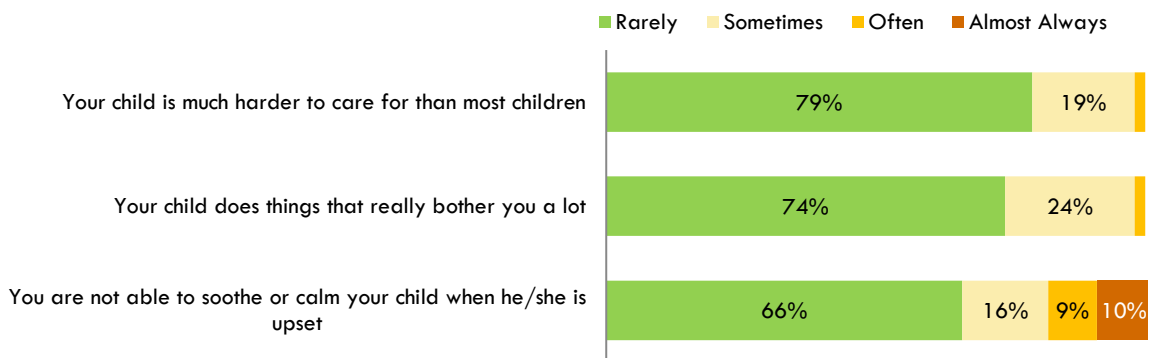
Figure 30. Child Resiliency



Source: Parent Information Form (2018). N=218-222. Percentages less than 5% not labeled.

In addition, most parents in the sample reported low levels of parenting stress. Most rarely felt that their child was much harder to care for than other children (79%), that their child did things that bothered them a lot (74%), or that they were not able to soothe or calm their child (66%).

Figure 31. Parenting Stress

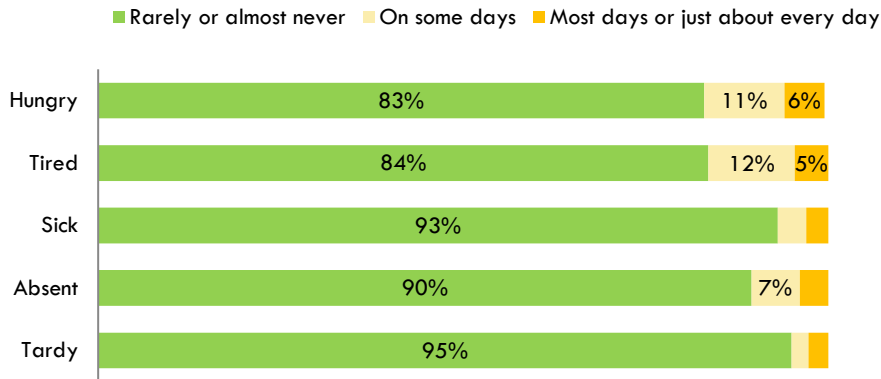


Source: Parent Information Form (2018). N=217-219. Percentages less than 5% not labeled.

Child Health and Well-Being

Child well-being is a fundamental foundation of development and kindergarten readiness. We asked teachers to indicate the frequency with which children appeared tired, hungry, or sick, in the first few days of school. Most children did not have any of these well-being concerns, but just under one in five children appeared tired or hungry on at least some days and about 7% was sick this often. Perhaps also indicative of health and well-being problems, 11% of students were absent on at least some days and 5% were at least sometimes tardy. These well-being and attendance concerns tended to cooccur. For example, children who came to school hungry were significantly more likely to be absent frequently as well.

Figure 32. Child Well-being and Attendance



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2018). N=303-306. Percentages less than 5% not labeled.

In this study, parents were asked about various aspects of their children’s health. For instance, about 7% of kindergarten students in the study had been born at a low birth weight (less than 5 lbs. 8 oz.), according to their parents. In terms of health insurance, 98% of children had some kind of health insurance, with Medi-Cal being the most common source of coverage (55%). Similarly, 98% of children had a regular doctor, while 92% had a regular dentist and 90% of children had had a dental exam in the last 12 months. About 15% had experienced oral health pain.

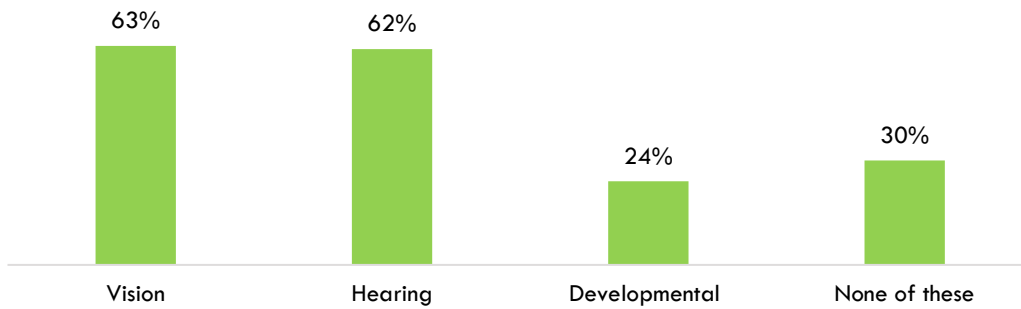
Figure 33. Child Health Background

		Percentage
BIRTH WEIGHT	Less than 5 lbs, 8 oz	7%
HEALTH INSURANCE	Medi-Cal	55%
	Insurance from parent’s employer	41%
	Covered California	2%
	None of the above	2%
PRIMARY CARE	Has a regular doctor	98%
DENTAL HISTORY	Has a regular dentist	92%
	Dental exam in last 12 months	90%
	Mouth ache or toothache	15%

Source: Parent Information Form (2018). N=211-228.

Access to a medical home is critical because it is the setting in which screenings typically occur, and health screenings are a critical precursor to early intervention. Parents in the study were asked about the kind of screenings their child may have had. As the chart below indicates, the most common types of screenings were for vision (63%) and hearing (62%) issues, whereas only 24% of parents indicated their child had had a developmental screening (as mentioned previously in this report, 38% of SCCFC participants had received a developmental screening). Thirty percent of children were reported to have had no screenings at all.

Figure 34. Health Screenings



Source: Parent Information Form (2018). N=217.

About 9% of children in the sample had a diagnosed special need according to their teacher or parent, and these children had significantly lower school readiness levels in the study than their typically developing peers. Children in the sample with special needs were most likely to have speech and language impairments, according to their parents. Among those parents who answered a question about treatment received, 77% (10 out of 13) reported that their child had received professional help.

Figure 35. Special Needs

	Frequency
Speech/language impairment	16
Visual or hearing impairment	2
Emotional/behavior disorder or disturbance	1
ADD/ADHD	1
Other	1

Source: Parent Information Form (2018). N=149. Children may have had more than one type of special need.

Summary and Implications

The 2018 Sutter County School Readiness Assessment measured the readiness levels of entering kindergarten students throughout the county, developed a profile of these children and their families, and identified the strongest predictors of school readiness. The study found that **39% of entering kindergartners were Fully Ready** across all domains of readiness (*Self-Regulation, Social Expression, and Kindergarten Academics*), 22% were *Not Ready* in any domain of readiness, and the remaining 39% were ready in one or two domains. Children were most likely to be ready in the areas of *Social Expression* (especially the ability to express empathy or caring for others) and less ready in *Kindergarten Academics* (particularly knowing the alphabet and being able to answer questions about a story).

The study also found that school readiness in Sutter County was significantly and independently predicted by being older, having more than one parent/caregiver in the household, not having a special need, child well-being (i.e., not coming to school hungry), and reading more frequently at home. Many of the significant contributors to readiness in Sutter County have been associated with better developmental outcomes in other studies. For example:

- ▶ Maternal education was a strong predictor of children’s readiness skills, likely in part because higher education provides mothers with a better economic position, skills, and knowledge, that help them offer their children enriching, stimulating early environments (Entwisle & Alexander, 1993; Lee & Burkam, 2002; Magnuson, Sexton, Davis-Keene, & Houston, 2009).
- ▶ Child health and well-being was also a significant predictor of readiness. Children’s health, which is affected by home practices, including a regular bedtime and nutritious meals, as well as access to health care services and basic needs, is foundational for learning. The results from the current study are in line with research that has found that a child’s health significantly contributes to school readiness (Currie, 2005).
- ▶ Exposure to enriching home environments, specifically reading regularly, also predicted readiness. Other studies have similarly shown that family literacy environments have a positive causal link with readiness skills (Christian, Morrison, & Bryant, 1998; Payne, Whitehurst, & Angell, 1994). Regular reading with the child may improve school readiness because this activity has recently been shown to activate parts of the brain associated with complex language, executive functioning, and socioemotional processing (Hutton et al., 2017).
- ▶ Not surprisingly, children with special needs had lower readiness levels than their peers. Additionally, children who were *Not Ready* were less likely to have received a developmental screening. These findings support the investment SCCFC has made in a Family Resource Center for families of children with special needs (Family SOUP) and in the screening program Bright Futures, which identifies young children with developmental needs so they can receive the critical early intervention services that produce positive long-term outcomes (Reichow, Barton, Boyd, & Hume, 2012). The study also found that children who had received SCCFC services were significantly more likely to have had a developmental screening than their peers.

These results highlight the importance of investing in interventions and supports that meet families’ basic needs and help them support their children’s development by providing them with enriching early experiences. Programs offered in Sutter County that address such needs include those supported by SCCFC. By investing in high-quality birth-to-five programs, SCCFC helps prepare young children for kindergarten, thereby setting them up for success later in life.

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