School Readiness Assessment Model™
The ASR

2019 SCHOOL READINESS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE FALL ASSESSMENT IN

YUBA COUNTY

In partnership with

FIRST 5 YUBA COUNTY
Children and Families Commission

Prepared by

ASR

Introduction

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.

This report presents the results of the first-ever formal kindergarten readiness assessment conducted in Yuba County, which was sponsored by First 5 Yuba County. In the fall of 2019, 102 kindergarten students were assessed from 7 classes in 4 schools in the county.

Figure 1.   Number of Kindergarten Classrooms and Students Assessed in Fall 2019

School	Number of Classes Assessed	Number of Students Assessed
Camptonville	1	7
Lone Tree	4	66
Wheatland Charter	1	20
YES Charter	1	9
TOTAL	7	102

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2019). Note: 17 TK students were not included in the analyses.

The tool used to assess kindergarten readiness was the Kindergarten Observation Form (KOF), a validated assessment that includes 20 skills that have been shown to statistically predict third grade academic achievement. Teachers completed the KOF within the first few weeks of the 2019-20 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 gathered data about child demographics, family background, parenting activities, family stressors, and child care experiences.

K ACADEMICS

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

SELF-REGULATION

Stays focused
Follows rules
Follows directions
Plays cooperatively
Participation in circle time
Handles frustration well

SOCIAL EXPRESSION

Eager to learn
Expresses empathy
Expresses needs and wants
Tells about a story/experience

MOTOR SKILLS ITEMS

Uses pencil with proper grip
General coordination

Kindergarten Readiness

Students were considered Fully Ready for kindergarten in all areas if they scored at or above 3.25 out of 4 on the three Building Blocks – that is, if they were proficient or nearing proficiency in Self-Regulation, Social Expression, and Kindergarten Academics. Students were considered Partially Ready if they were proficient or nearly proficient in one or two Building Blocks. Children were considered Not Ready if they were still progressing in all three areas. Using these criteria, **64% of the kindergarten students assessed in Yuba County were Fully Ready for kindergarten**. Another 24% were Partially Ready, and 12% were Not Ready.

Figure 2.   Percent of Children Ready for Kindergarten, Across Building Blocks

64% Fully Ready

24% Partially Ready

12% Not Ready

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2019). N=102.

What Factors are Independently Associated with Kindergarten Readiness?

A stepwise regression model was used to determine the factors that have an *independent* association with kindergarten readiness in Yuba County, over and above the influence of other related factors. Children's overall readiness scores were used as the outcome. Three factors were found to be significantly and independently associated with school readiness: well-being (i.e., not coming to school hungry, according to their teachers), not having a special need, and being older.

Figure 3.   Key Predictors of Overall School Readiness (in Order of Strength)
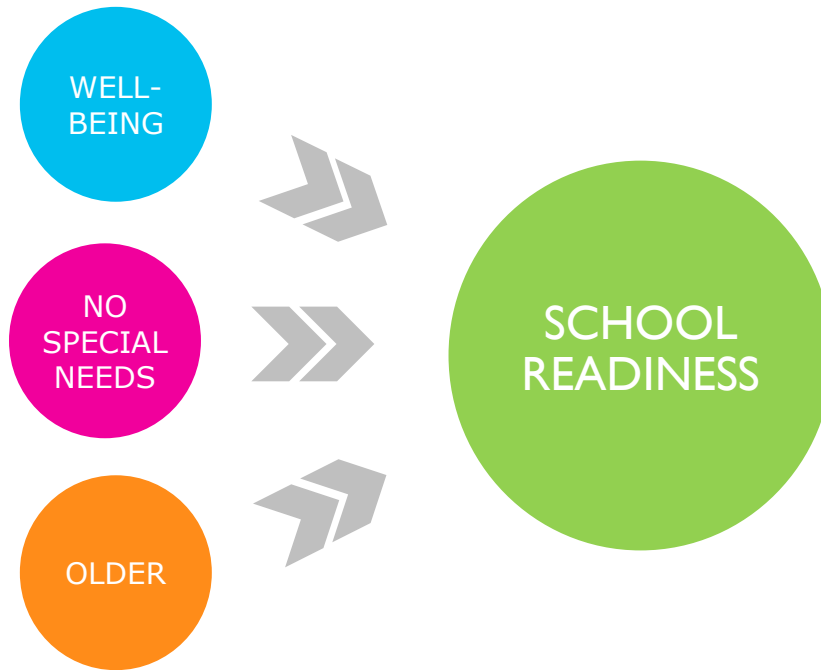
Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2019), Parent Information Form (2019). N=102. The overall model accounted for 38% of variance ($R^2 = .38$) with three factors.

WELL-BEING   The strongest predictor of kindergarten readiness 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.

NO SPECIAL NEEDS   The second strongest predictor of readiness was the presence of **special needs**. Children who were typically developing had higher school readiness scores than children with special needs.

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

Although the following variables did not account for variability in school readiness above and beyond these three main predictors, four additional characteristics and experiences were strongly linked to school readiness:

- Less weekend **screen time** (e.g., watching TV, playing video games, and using a phone or tablet);

- Receiving more **kindergarten readiness information** (e.g., information about how to help their child prepare for kindergarten);

- Lower levels of **stress** reported by caregivers (i.e., concerns about health, money, work, food, and relationships); and

- Higher levels of **resilience** (i.e., parent perception regarding the child's ability to adjust to changes in routine and remain calm when challenged).

Effect of Malleable Assets

Although some of the significant predictors of readiness were demographic in nature, the study found that readiness was also associated with characteristics and experiences that are amenable to change. More specifically, readiness was linked to child well-being, child resilience, parents having received more kindergarten readiness information, less screen time, and less caregiver stress. The chart below illustrates the cumulative effect of these five malleable factors on readiness, demonstrating that children with a greater number of assets were significantly more likely to be *Fully Ready* for kindergarten.

Figure 4.   Percent Fully Ready, by Number of Malleable Assets

- Well-Being
- Less Screen Time
- Kinder Information
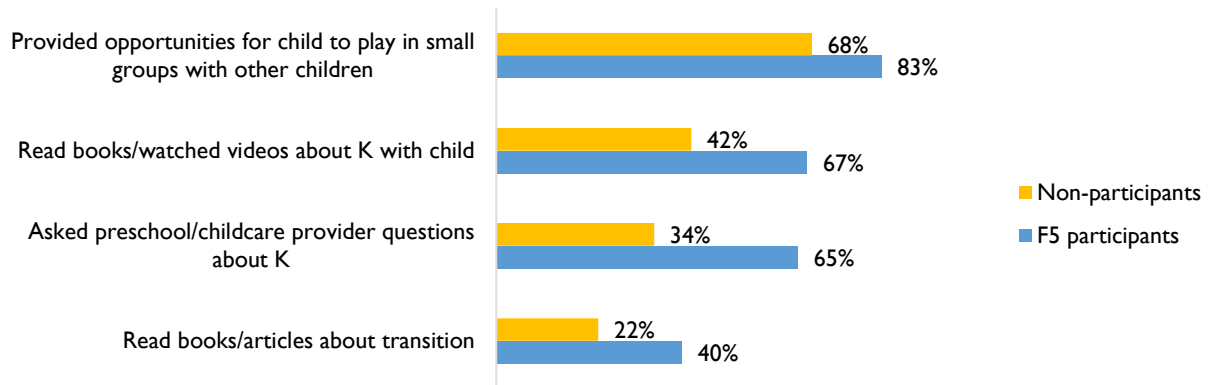- Less Stress
- High Resilience

% Ready for K
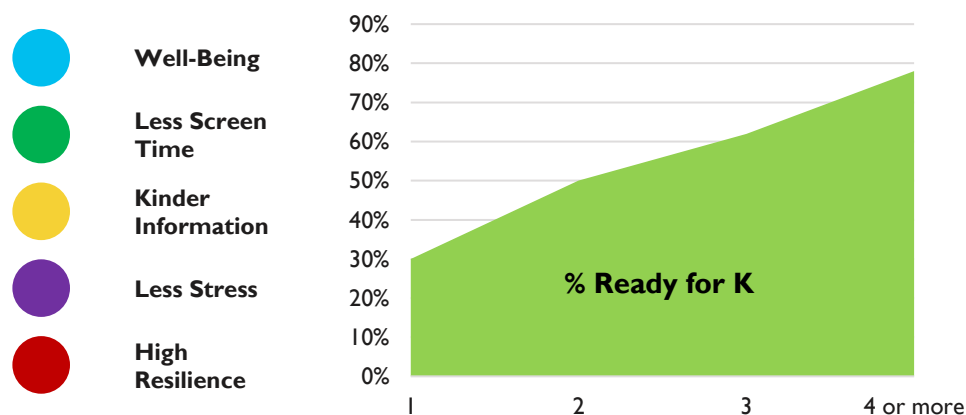
Source: Kindergarten Observation Form (2019), Parent Information Form (2019). N=86. Relationship between assets and readiness statistically significant at p<.05.

First 5 Yuba Participation and Kindergarten Preparation

Approximately half of children in the sample had received services from one or more programs funded by First 5 Yuba. **Families who had received a First 5 service were significantly more engaged, supported, and prepared for kindergarten, compared to families who did not participate in any First 5 program.** For example, First 5 families were more likely to read and play sports or exercise with their children on a regular basis compared to other families. They also engaged in more kindergarten preparation activities, as shown in the chart below.

Figure 5.   Percent of Families Engaging in Kindergarten Preparation Activities, by F5 Participation

Provided opportunities for child to play in small groups with other children
- 68%
- 83%

Read books/watched videos about K with child
- 42%
- 67%

Asked preschool/childcare provider questions about K
- 34%
- 65%

Read books/articles about transition
- 22%
- 40%

■ Non-participants
■ F5 participants

Source: Parent Information Form (2019). N=110 (includes families with children in transitional kindergarten or kindergarten to optimize sample size). Statistically significant at p<.05.

Summary and Implications

The 2019 Yuba County School Readiness Assessment measured the readiness levels of entering kindergarten students, developed a profile of these children and their families, and identified the strongest predictors of school readiness. The study found that **64% of entering kindergartners were** *Fully Ready* across all domains of readiness (*Self-Regulation, Social Expression,* and *Kindergarten Academics*), 12% were *Not Ready* in any domain of readiness, and the remaining 24% were ready in one or two domains.

The results highlight the importance of investment in programs and policies that boost school readiness. For example, the study found that readiness was associated with characteristics and experiences that can be modified with interventions, including child well-being (especially hunger), child resilience, receiving kindergarten readiness information, less screen time, and less caregiver stress. Recommendations to address these factors include:

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	❯	Provide families education on how they can improve their child's health through nutrition and physical activity
	❯	Connect eligible families to CalFresh and WIC for nutrition support
SCREEN TIME	❯	Educate families on the benefits of replacing screen time with healthy and enriching activities like reading and active play
	❯	Identify and address barriers to minimizing screen time, including lack of time and stress levels among parents
KINDERGARTEN READINESS INFORMATION	❯	Ensure parents receive information about the kindergarten transition, including how to register and how to help their child develop kindergarten readiness skills
	❯	Encourage early childhood providers to support families in their care by providing information and resources about what to expect and how to prepare for the transition to kindergarten
STRESS	❯	Connect families to basic needs, employment, and income supports to reduce stress around making ends meet
	❯	Provide mental health and social supports to alleviate parenting and relationship stress
RESILIENCE	❯	Expand access to early developmental screenings and screenings for adverse childhood experiences
	❯	Train providers serving young children and their families on social-emotional learning and trauma-informed care

In addition to identifying factors linked to readiness, the study showed that **families who had been connected to a First 5 Yuba-funded service demonstrated significantly higher engagement** in family

activities and kindergarten preparation relative to other families. Together with its partners across the county, First 5 Yuba is providing a crucial support for families to help them prepare children 0-5 for kindergarten and beyond. The brain grows faster in the first five years of life than at any other time, and thus investing in proven and successful programs for young children comes with a high rate of return, significantly improving an array of health, education, and economic outcomes well into adulthood.