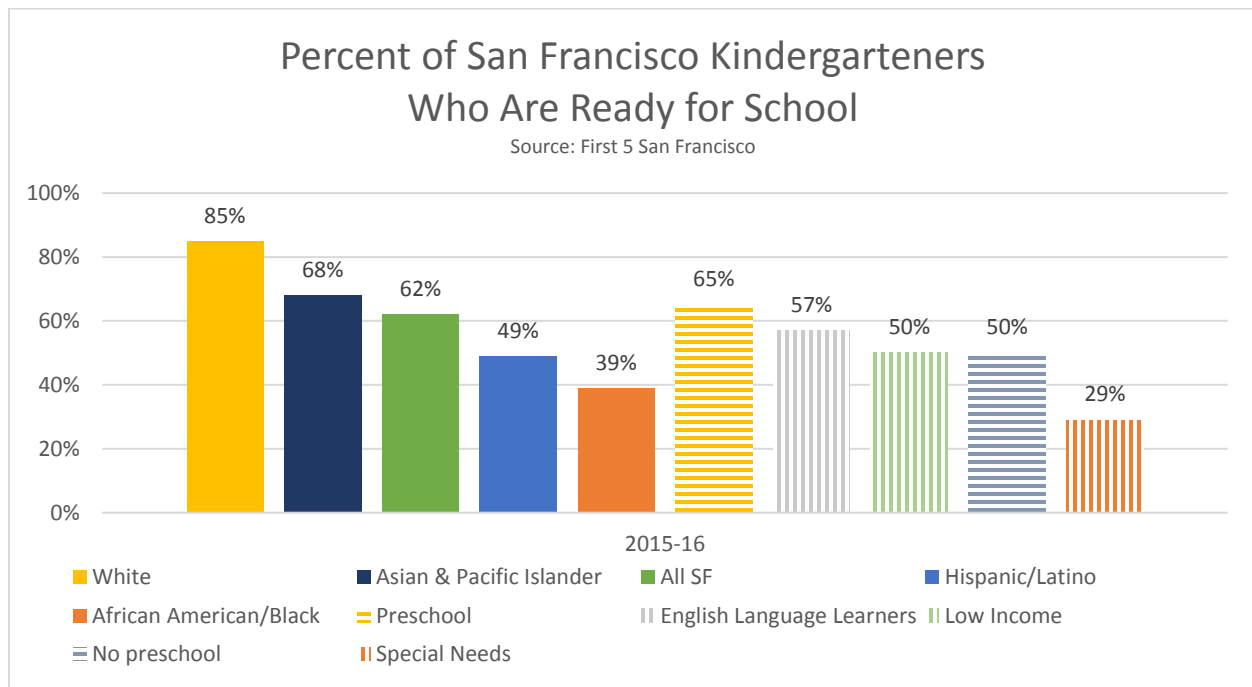


## Increase the percent of San Francisco Kindergarteners who are ready for School



The above chart shows the percent of SFUSD kindergarteners that were school-ready in the 2015-16 school year as well as the rates for various subgroups of children: African American, Asian & Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, White, English Language Learners, Low-income, Special Needs, Preschool Experience, and No Preschool Experience. Due to changes in how readiness has historically been collected and measured, multi-year data is not available.

### Data Definition & the San Francisco Trend line

School readiness is broadly defined as the set of physical, social emotional, and academic skills that enable a successful transition to kindergarten. The data included in this scorecard is based on the results of the ASR School Readiness Assessment Model Kindergarten Observation Form, a school readiness assessment developed with input from a variety of subject matter experts, including child development and education experts, preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers and administrators and community stakeholders. The assessment has been refined over the years in response to changes in local educational contexts and developments in the early childhood education research.<sup>i</sup>

The skills measured by the Kindergarten Observation Tool are grouped into four primary dimensions referred to as the “Basic Building Blocks” of school readiness:

- **Motor Skills:** Skills needed for demonstrating fine and gross motor coordination
- **Self-Regulation:** Basic emotion regulation and self-control skills that are needed to be able to perform well in the classroom
- **Social Expression:** Interacting with others and engagement with play and learning
- **Kindergarten Academic:** Basic academic skills that tend to be explicitly taught to children at home, in early care settings, and in kindergarten

In 2015-16, 62% of San Francisco kindergartners assessed were rated as school-ready. Marked disparities in school readiness exist by race/ethnicity: only 39% of African American and 49% of Hispanic/Latino children were rated as school-ready compared to 85% of White and 68% of Asian & Pacific Islander children. Other factors associated with a reduced likelihood of school readiness include preschool experience (only 50% of children with no preschool experience were school-ready), income level (only 50% of low-income children were school-ready), and special needs status (only 29% of children with special needs were school-ready).

## Story Behind the Curve

### Policy and Practice Shifts in San Francisco

Many factors impact a child's readiness for school. This section outlines key efforts to ensure children have equitable access to high-quality early care and education (ECE) in San Francisco.

**Preschool Attendance.** Both national research and the available baseline data presented above indicate that children who have had the opportunity to attend preschool are more likely to be ready for school than those who have not. According to San Francisco's 2015 City Survey, about 14% of parents in San Francisco did not enroll their children due to cost, 4% due to availability, and 3% due to distance from home. While subsidies have helped keep preschool accessible for low-income children in San Francisco, disparities in access to high-quality programming persist.

In 2004, San Francisco voters passed Proposition H, which created San Francisco's flagship universal preschool program, Preschool for All (PFA). PFA provides free and reduced-cost preschool at any of the preschools in the PFA network to all 4 year-olds residing in San Francisco. Eligibility for tuition-free PFA is not income-based; the only requirements are that the child turn four years of age by December 2<sup>nd</sup> of the school year and that the child be a San Francisco resident.

Analysis of American Community Survey estimates suggests that the PFA program has helped to increase access to preschool in San Francisco. In 2005, before the implementation of PFA, only 57% of the City's three-and four-year-olds were enrolled in preschool. By 2013, nine years after the official launch of PFA, the enrollment rate had increased to 71%. The 2015 school readiness assessment found enrollment rates have increased significantly for African American and Hispanic/Latino children. In 2007, enrollment rates were at 68% for African American children and 54% for Hispanic/Latino children. In 2015, those rates increased to 92% and 86%, respectively.<sup>ii</sup>

Additional efforts to ensure children in San Francisco have access to high-quality preschools include:

- The San Francisco Childcare Individualized County Subsidy Plan (SF Pilot), which the California Senate passed in 2005 as a 5-year pilot project, aimed to increase access to child care for middle income families and ensure adequate funding for high-quality programming.<sup>iii</sup>
- Since 2012 PFA has provided "Bridge Funding" to parents of children who had depended on state and local subsidies to cover child care but subsequently lost their benefits to ensure that their children could continue to attend preschool until entering kindergarten.<sup>iv</sup>
- SF3C, a web-based system that gives income-eligible families with children under 13 years of age the ability to connect with multiple subsidy programs, through a single application, that can partially or completely cover their childcare costs.<sup>v</sup>

**High-Quality Programming.** Efforts to ensure that early care and education providers have the capacity to provide high-quality programming include the California ECE Workforce Registry and the Compensation and Wage Augmentation Grants for Economic Support (C-WAGES). Implemented in 2010, the California ECE Workforce Registry is a state, regional and local collaboration designed to track and promote the education, training and experience of the early care and education workforce for the purpose of improving professionalism and workforce quality. C-WAGES is a local program jointly funded by the Office of Early Care and Education (OECE), DCYF, and First 5 and was launched in fiscal year 2012-2013 to increase compensation for ECE and preschool teachers.

Preschools in the PFA network are regularly assessed to ensure the quality of various aspects of the ECE classroom environment, including classroom layout, access for children with disabilities, staff to child ratios, emotional support, classroom organization and instructional support. Additionally all PFA classrooms are required to employ lead teachers who hold a state-issued Child Development Permit at the Teacher level or higher, implement an evidence-based curriculum aligned with the California Preschool Learning Foundations, screen all eligible 4-year-olds for developmental delays using the Ages and States Questionnaire, and assess all eligible 4 year-olds using the state's Desired Results Developmental Profile at least twice a year.

Additionally, the San Francisco Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Division of the Department of Public Health operates a Child Care Health Project for children 0-5 in childcare settings. The program provides health and safety consultation, screening, and trainings to ensure that parents and staff are well equipped to handle children's health needs and that children are screened early for any health conditions that could further impact their development.<sup>vi</sup>

### **What Works: A Selection of Best Practices to increase rates of Kindergarten Readiness**

No single policy or program will ensure that all children in San Francisco will be kindergarten ready. The following is a selection of practices that have been shown to improve the likelihood that children are kindergarten ready.

**Participation in ECE/Preschool Programs.** Research on the impact of preschool on long-term academic and economic outcomes is abundant. High-quality ECE and preschool programs have been shown to improve student's learning, increase educational attainment and income later in life, and produce long-term reductions in unemployment, crime, and unplanned pregnancy. Studies find that high-quality ECE and preschool programs benefit all children, but have the greatest impact on disadvantaged and minority children, helping to narrow achievement gaps even as they boost learning for all participants.<sup>vii</sup>

**High-Quality Programs.** When it comes to narrowing the achievement gap for children of color, children from lower-income families and children with special needs, attending preschool not only matters, but the quality of their ECE experiences also matters. Some elements of high-quality programming include: early learning standards and curricula that address the whole child, are developmentally appropriate, and are effectively implemented; assessments that consider children's academic, social emotional, and physical progress and contribute to instructional and program planning; well-prepared teachers who provide engaging interactions and classroom environments that support learning; and support for English learners and students with special needs, among others.<sup>viii</sup>

**Family Engagement.** Programs and interventions that engage families in supporting their children's learning at home are linked to higher student achievement.<sup>ix</sup> Parents/caregivers have a powerful role to

play in helping their children be ready for school. Research has shown that parent's beliefs about learning and their child's capabilities, the frequency and duration of shared reading at home, access to books at home or library visits, parents' expectations of their child's school success and parental characteristics (IQ, education, reading behaviors) in the early years of a child's life contribute to school readiness.

Effective parent engagement can help parents feel less stressed, more effective, and less alone. Parents' feelings of competence can be strengthened when program staff invite parents to share knowledge about their child and family, spend time in the classroom to play and learn with their child, engage with their children during home visits, and share experiences from home.<sup>x</sup>

**Early Health Screenings and Intervention.** At every age and stage of development, children from low-income families often receive less and lower-quality health care and services. As a result, they experience poor health at higher rates than children from higher income families. Thirty-three percent of entering kindergarteners in San Francisco experience at least some degree of hunger, tiredness, or sickness, and this lack of health and wellness has a direct effect on their readiness and academic performance.<sup>xi</sup> Ensuring early and appropriate screenings and interventions can address early health disparities that affect school readiness. Developmental screenings can identify delays and provide referrals to appropriate interventions. However, only 44% of children entering kindergarten have received a developmental screening. This is an improvement over past years, but still far from ideal.<sup>xii</sup> Hearing and vision screenings are also important; 20% of school children have vision impairments.<sup>xiii</sup>

## Selected References for more Information on the 'Story Behind the Curve' and highlighted 'Best Practices'

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