

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## School Readiness Assessment Finds Only 40% of Children Surveyed are Ready for Kindergarten

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# READY

road to the early achievement  
and development of youth

According to a kindergarten readiness assessment survey, for the past two years approximately 2 out of 5 participating kindergarteners entered school "Ready to Go" with significant disparities by home language. These findings were presented to the First 5 Sonoma County Commission today. First 5 Sonoma County funded the title="READY assessment">READY assessment.

Last year's survey found that 46 percent of children from English speaking households entered kindergarten "Ready to Go" compared to 25 percent from Spanish speaking households. Parental education, home language and preschool were key factors that influenced school readiness ratings. Frequency of reading to children in the home is a key factor in school readiness for children from Spanish speaking families. These contributing factors are aligned with the national research about school readiness.

The results underscored the reality that preschool is unaffordable for a lot of families (both Spanish and English speaking) in our community and preschool hours do not meet the needs of many Spanish speaking families. Thus our community needs to continue directing resources for Spanish speaking families to ensure that early learning programs are not only affordable but also accessible.

Children from Spanish speaking families whose parents read or showed picture books 5 or more times a week were over 3 times more likely to enter kindergarten "Ready to Go." The report conveyed more work is needed to reach out and have programs available for Spanish speaking families involving reading, storytelling and music.



"We hope that with the release of these findings, education leaders, policymakers and community partners use this information to develop strategies and prioritize funding for culturally appropriate early learning programs targeting vulnerable populations in Sonoma County. We must continue to increase and promote access to high quality early learning opportunities, particularly for lower income and Spanish language families," First 5 Sonoma Executive Director Angie Dillon-Shore stated.

Preschool and transitional kindergarten were both significant factors in helping children get ready for school. Seventy four percent of all participating children attended preschool or transitional kindergarten in the year prior to kindergarten. However, there were significant differences in preschool enrollment and

access for Spanish speaking households. Spanish speaking households attended preschool for a shorter duration and at a lower rate (64 percent compared to 80 percent for English speaking only households).

In the fall of 2016, in partnership with 11 Sonoma County school districts and over 105 kindergarten teachers, the READYproject assessed 2,052 kindergarten students for school readiness, and also gathered information on the early learning experience of 1,396 of these children through a parent survey. Since 2013, the READY project has conducted ongoing background research to support the pilot and adoption of a common kindergarten readiness assessment throughout Sonoma County school districts.

READY is funded and supported by First 5 Sonoma County and implemented by Sonoma County Human Services Departments in collaboration with 11 local school districts and numerous early learning partners.

The nine-member First 5 Sonoma County Commission was established through the California Children and Families First Act of 1998 and directed to promote, support, and improve the early development of children from the prenatal stage through five years of age. The Act established a tobacco tax which funds the work of this Commission.

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