



# Sonoma County School Readiness Report 2017-18



Photographer: Ed Aiona  
Location: Bethel Children's Center  
Year: 2014  
Contact [READY@schsd.org](mailto:READY@schsd.org)

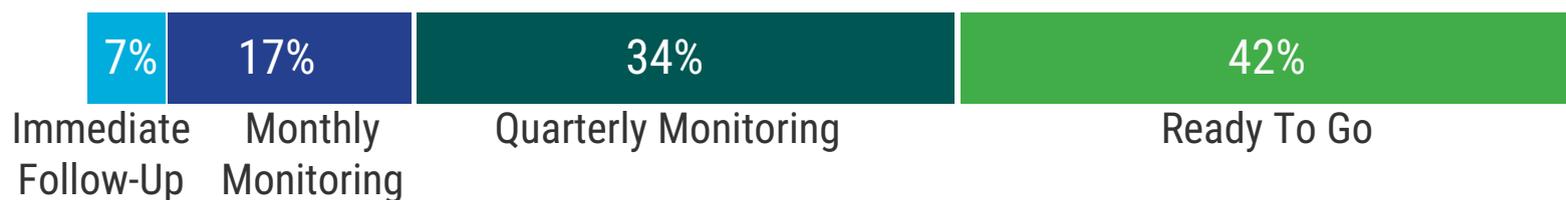


Since the 2015-16 school year, 8-11 school districts\* across Sonoma County have conducted a school readiness assessment of incoming kindergarten students using the Kindergarten Student Entrance Profile (KSEP), and gathered information on student's early learning experiences. School teachers, early learning providers and community partners are using school readiness findings to identify and address school-readiness gaps as early as possible. The READY project is enabling families, schools and other community partners to support all children in Sonoma County to begin school ready to learn.

\*Participation varies each year

## 2017-18 Sonoma County School Readiness Findings

### Kindergarten Student Entrance Profile (KSEP) Results Aggregated Scores (N=1,647\*)



**Ready-to-Go** = These students experience a smooth transition to kindergarten. Teachers should follow-up as needed.

**Quarterly Monitoring** = Students in this category will benefit from teachers monitoring their fall, winter and spring progress.

**Monthly Monitoring** = Teachers should keep track of students from October to December to see if they have adjusted.

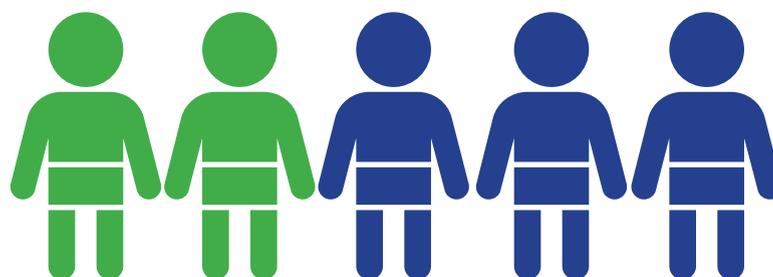
**Immediate Follow-Up** = Students are high risk and developmental needs should be evaluated in more depth.

\*Participating Districts:

Cloverdale Unified (N=104); Forestville Union (N=30); Guerneville (N=29); Healdsburg Unified (N=81); Horicon (N=7); Piner-Olivet Union (N=98); Rincon Valley (N=359); Santa Rosa Elementary (N=599); Two Rock Union (N=25); Windsor Unified (N=315).

**During the 2017-18 school year, only  
2 out of 5 students entered kindergarten Ready to Go**

This finding has remained consistent over the past three years. We hope this concerning statistic will motivate policy makers, education leaders and other stakeholders to use this information to identify gaps and increase investments in early learning opportunities proven to work. READY will continue to monitor these data to highlight successful interventions and identify disparities in access to opportunities in order for children to succeed in kindergarten.



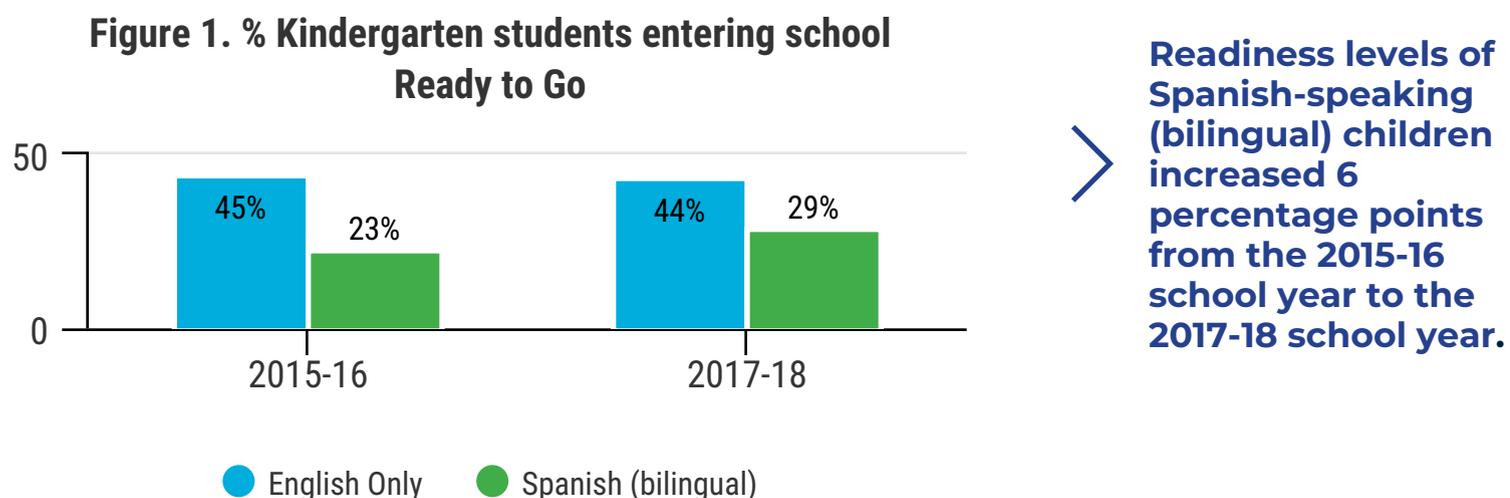


## Equity and School Readiness

While all parents hope their child will enter kindergarten "Ready to Go," not all parents have access to supportive, high-quality early learning opportunities. Access differs based on **income, race and geography**. Investments in county-wide support for schools to improve readiness, such as the READY program, are helping Sonoma County school districts close the "opportunity gap" for children entering kindergarten. **Socioeconomic and racial disparities** are some of the key contributors to the variance in access to quality early-learning education.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2015), Latino families demonstrate the lowest preschool participation rates of any major ethnicity or race (United States Department of Education, 2016). The United States Census Bureau cites that 73% of Latinos/Hispanics speak Spanish at home. Hence, for the current study, we examined "Spanish-speaking families" as one of several indicators that may lead to lowered accessibility to quality early learning opportunities.

### Equity & Readiness Findings: Spanish-Speaking Households



- After comparing three years of READY data for children from Spanish speaking families, we've seen a **19% increase** in the percentage of children attending an early learning program. In 2015, approximately **64% of children from Spanish-speaking households** attended an early learning program, and this increased to **76%** in 2017.
- Approximately **1 in 4 Spanish-speaking (bilingual) parents are reading to their children 5 or more days a week** in the home (this finding has remained stable at 27-28%).
- Over a two-year period, the number of **Spanish-speaking students entering school Ready to Go increased by 6 percentage points** (Figure 1).

It is worth noting that according to our 2017-2018 data, parents consistently cite **affordability** and **early learning program hours** not meeting their needs as the main reasons they do not enroll their children in an early learning program.

## Key Findings: Factors That Impact School Readiness



**85% of children attended an early learning program** such as preschool, transitional kindergarten and/or licensed home-based childcare before entering kindergarten, for an **average duration of 22 months**. Children that attended an early learning program were two times more likely to enter school Ready to Go\*, compared to children that did not attend an early learning program.



**54% of parents read to their child 5 or more days a week** for an average duration of **19 minutes**. Children who were read to 5 or more days per week were over two times more likely to enter school Ready To Go\*, compared to children who were read to two or fewer days a week.



Children whose parents engaged them in **5 or more early learning activities in the home** in the past 30 days (such as telling a story, completing crafts together, singing songs, playing games with numbers or letters, etc.) were 1.5 times more likely to enter school Ready to Go\*.

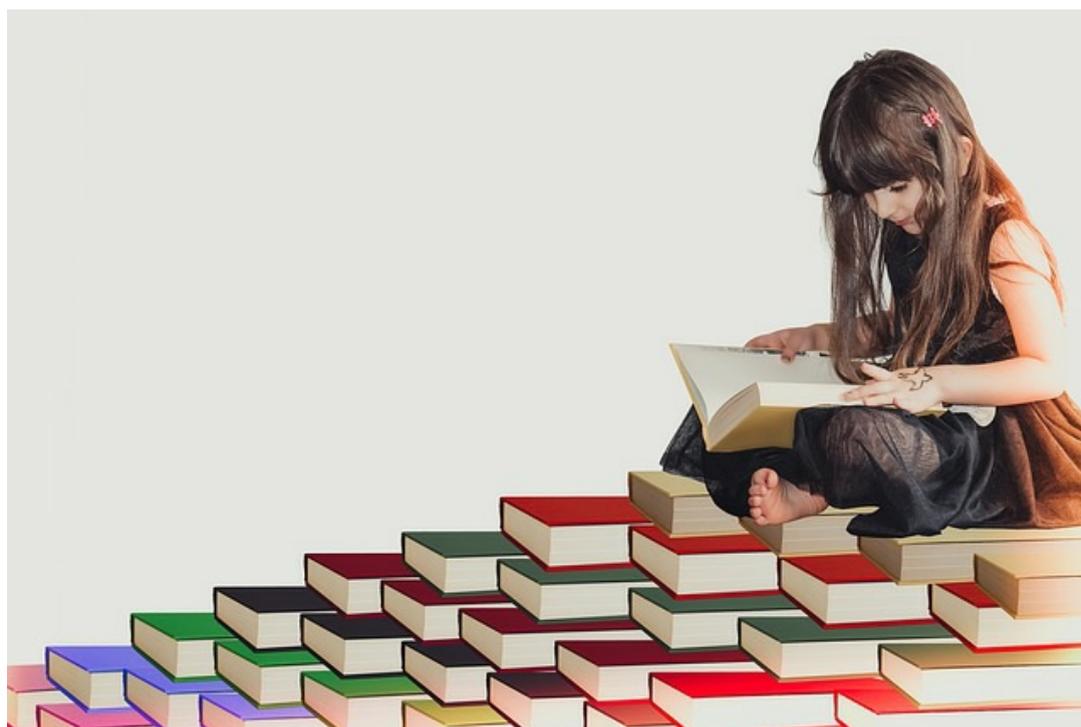


**43% of children visited a library** in the past 30 days. Children that visited the library in the past 30 days were 1.25 times more likely to enter school Ready to Go\*.



Children whose parents **limited screen time to 1 hour or less per day** were 1.25 times more likely to enter school Ready to Go\*.

\*Statistically significant finding at  $p < .01$



# Educators' Use of School Readiness Data



## Enhancing Early Childhood Education Curriculum For Kindergarten Readiness

Local preschools and other early educators have confirmed that KSEP results mirror what they are observing in their classrooms. Early childhood education (ECE) teachers are using KSEP findings to enhance curriculum in their programs to better prepare children for kindergarten and elementary school. ECE teachers and K-12 educators are motivated to continue collaborating to create stronger ties between early childhood education and the K-12 public school system.



## Implementing Targeted School Readiness Policies & Activities

School districts are using READY data to implement school readiness activities and policies targeted to the specific academic and social-emotional needs of their current and incoming kindergarten students.

In 2016, **Guerneville School District** passed a resolution to become a pre-kindergarten through 8th grade school district. The resolution identifies quality early childhood education as a core part of their effort to close the achievement gap and ensure students are ready for college and careers. Guerneville is also using KSEP data as an early indicator of student success in their Local Control and Accountability Plan.

**Rincon Valley Union School District** has participated in the READY program since 2016-17. Kindergarten teachers there have found that KSEP results help them pinpoint the academic and social-emotional domains that children need to work on to attain school readiness. Teachers discuss KSEP results with parents at parent-teacher conferences and encourage parents to work with their children at home to expand learning in these areas.

Since 2015-16, **Forestville Union School District's** school readiness rates have steadily increased from 53% to 67%. The district's elementary school has worked hard to promote early literacy by holding an annual literacy fair for current and incoming kindergarten students and their families. The district also recognizes the impact of quality early learning programs on school readiness. A few years ago the local preschool was in danger of closing due to limited funding. The district helped organize community meetings to raise awareness of the concern, and pledged to use a portion of general school district funds to support preschool operations.

**“By creating strong partnerships between K-12 public schools and early childhood education, we can positively impact the long-term academic success of children in Sonoma County. Ensuring a smooth transition from early care to kindergarten is crucial for every child’s developmental and academic success. I support READY because it aims to increase school readiness and help close the achievement gap.”**

-Steven D. Herrington, Ph.D., Sonoma County Superintendent of Schools

# Opportunities for Action

Extensive research and past READY data analysis have found that a number of factors are associated with school readiness. Below are key factors that influence school readiness and opportunities for action.



## Parental Education

Higher parental education is proxy for income and a higher socioeconomic status, and is associated with increased school readiness

**Action:** Expand accessible, affordable adult education to promote an inter-generational cycle of success



## Early Learning Attendance

Attending quality, licensed preschool, child care or transitional kindergarten programs is associated with increased school readiness

**Action:** Expand quality, affordable early learning programs for children ages 0-5



## Special Needs

Children with special needs often score lower on school readiness assessments

**Action:** Implement developmental screening & intervention as early as possible



## Reading at Home

Reading to young children, signing songs and storytelling aloud is associated with increased school readiness

**Action:** Promote culturally appropriate early literacy activities



## Home Language

While speaking multiple languages is an asset, dual language learners often score lower on school readiness assessments



## Gender

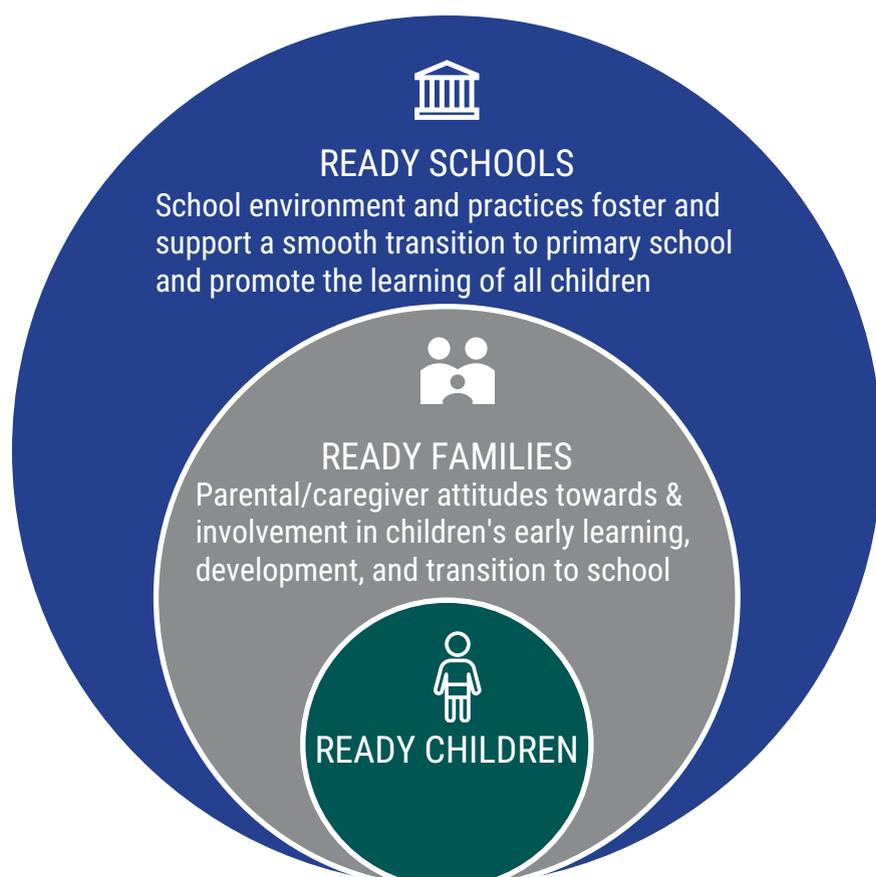
Female children often score higher on school readiness assessments



## Age

Older children often score higher on school readiness assessments

# Our Community Can Support School Readiness



# Key Recommendations

For Policy Makers, Education Leaders and other Stakeholders

- ✓ **Expand the use of READY data to strengthen early learning programs in Sonoma County**
- ✓ **Expand support to teachers with more coaching and resources**
- ✓ **Examine factors that might create barriers to accessing quality early learning opportunities (e.g., racial and/or socioeconomic differences)**
- ✓ **Continue to strengthen connections between early learning programs and K-12 school systems**
- ✓ **Support innovative early childhood investment strategies**
- ✓ **Continue to revisit the READY evaluation questions to measure the program's impact - long-term and short-term**

