

School Readiness Assessment of Graduating Head Start Students

Santa Clara County Head Start



Summary of Key Findings

In Spring 2010, the Santa Clara County Office of Education partnered with Applied Survey Research to assess the school readiness of 1135 preschool students graduating from Santa Clara Head Start. The table below summarizes the key findings from this project.

Research Question	Conclusion	Data Highlights
1. Are graduating Head Start students ready for school?	<p>YES</p> <p>Overall readiness score: 3.59</p>	For each individual readiness skill, children were scored on a scale from <i>Not yet</i> (1) to <i>Proficient</i> (4). Average scores for each <i>Basic Building Block</i> range from 1 to 4. The scores for overall readiness – as well as three of the <i>Basic Building Blocks</i> – are between the <i>In progress</i> (3) and <i>Proficient</i> (4) levels. Scores were highest in the <i>Self Care & Motor Skills</i> area (3.83) and lowest for <i>Kindergarten Academics</i> (3.48).
2. What factors are associated with enhanced school readiness?	<p>Child health & family involvement in kindergarten preparation and shared reading time were related to greater school readiness of Head Start graduates</p>	<p>When children were healthy, well fed, well rested, and had better attendance rates they had higher levels of readiness.</p> <p>Children who were read to and whose families engaged in more kindergarten preparation/transition activities were also more school ready.</p>

The following research questions were addressed through a comparison with data from a 2008 Santa Clara County assessment of kindergarten readiness

Research Question	Conclusion	Data Highlights
3. How do the school readiness levels of Head Start graduates compare to the readiness levels of Santa Clara students who entered kindergarten in 2008?	<p>The readiness levels of Head Start graduates were <u>higher</u> than the readiness levels of the students who entered kindergarten in 2008</p>	After accounting for demographic differences (income, ethnicity, primary language) between the two samples, the overall readiness scores of Head Start graduates were significantly

Research Question	Conclusion	Data Highlights
<p>4. How do Head Start and Kindergarten teachers' expectations compare regarding the skill proficiency children need in order to transition successfully to kindergarten?</p>	<p>Head Start teachers have <u>higher</u> expectations than Kindergarten teachers regarding the skill proficiency children need to transition successfully to kindergarten</p>	<p>Head Start teachers believed children needed significantly higher levels of proficiency at kindergarten entry than did Kindergarten teachers.</p> <p>Differences in expectations were particularly pronounced in the area of <i>Kindergarten Academic</i> skills where Kindergarten</p>

Executive Summary

Background

“Head Start is a national program that promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to enrolled children and families” (Administration for Children & Families, 2010, p 1). Head Start serves over 900,000 low income children and families nationally, and over 2,150 children and families locally in Santa Clara County, with the goal of supporting children’s development and enhancing readiness for kindergarten. All Head Start programs are required to monitor children’s progress toward these goals. In Santa Clara County, Head Start is administered through the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE).

To examine the effectiveness of Head Start services in preparing children for school, SCCOE contracted Applied Survey Research (ASR) to design and implement a county wide school children’s

for

Research Questions

ASR outlines the results from the Santa Clara County Head Start School Readiness Assessment to answer five primary research questions:

1. *How ready for kindergarten are students when they exit Santa Clara County Head Start?*
2. *What factors are associated with enhanced school readiness?*

Using the 2008 Santa Clara County School Readiness Assessment

Figure A. Sources of Information to Assess the Readiness of Graduating Head Start Students

The Pre Kindergarten Observation Form (P KOF) was the primary source of information regarding children's levels of readiness. The P KOF assesses children's readiness in regards to 24 skills that sort reliably into four "building blocks" of readiness:

1. *Self Care & Motor Skills;*
2. *Social Expression;*
3. *Self Regulation;* and
4. *Kindergarten Academics*

The figure below displays the 24 individual skills on which children were assessed, as well as how the skills sort into the four *Basic Building Blocks*.i

Sample

Response Rates

The following figure presents a summary of the number of classrooms, children, parents, and teachers assessed. Nearly all (99.8%; $N=1135$) of the graduating Head Start students across 58 Head Start classrooms were assessed with the *P KOF*. SCCOE required the teachers to administer the *P KOF* to all graduating students. The few students who were not assessed had either moved or dropped out of their programs at the time of the assessment.

Most parents completed and returned a *Parent Information Form* as requested ($N=1078$). Parents were asked to complete the *Parent Information Form* as a component of parent teacher conferences. Parent response rates varied across classrooms, ranging from 0% (in one classroom) to 100% (in 38 classrooms). The overall response rate was 95%.

Fifty five of 58 teachers completed the *Preschool Teacher Survey on Importance of Readiness Skills*.

Figure C. Completion Metrics for Santa Clara County Head Start

	Total
Number of classrooms	58
Number of children assessed (P-KOF)	1135
Number of parents surveyed (PIF)	1078
Parent response rate	95%
Number of teachers surveyed (<i>Pre-Kindergarten Teacher Survey on Importance of Readiness Skills</i>)	55

Child Characteristics

Children ranged in age from 4.52 to 5.52 years with an average age of 5 years. The majority of children were Latino and had family incomes below \$31,999 per year.

Teachers also reported:

- Which five readiness skills they considered to be most important to ensure a smooth transition into kindergarten;
- Which five readiness skills were easiest to impact during the course of the school year; and
- On which five skills they spent most of their time during the school year.

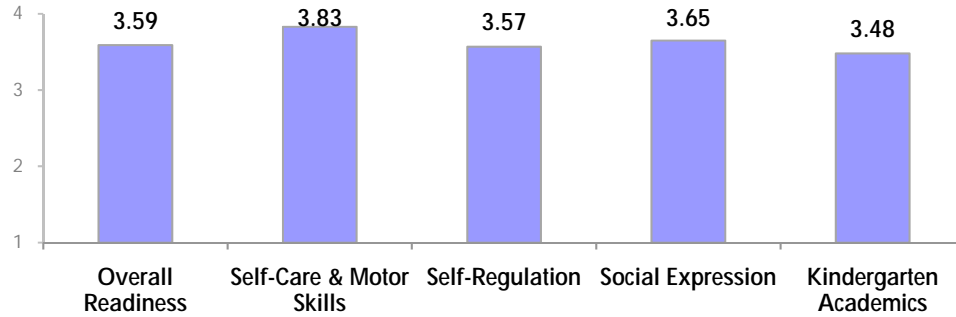
The *Basic Building Blocks* pyramids shown in the following figure are shaded to indicate teachers' differing priorities. Darker shading is used to highlight dimensions on which teachers placed a higher priority,

Figure G. Head Start Teacher Priorities for Skill Importance, Ease-of-Changing, and Amount of Time Spent

Are Head Start Graduates Ready for School?

The chart that follows shows children’s readiness levels across the *Basic Building Blocks*. Overall, children scored between the “In progress” and “Proficient” levels on the four building blocks. Children tended to score highest on *Self Care & Motor Skills* (average score = 3.83) and to have the greatest room to grow in *Kindergarten Academics* (average score = 3.48).

Figure H. Head Start Students’ Proficiency across Four Basic Building Blocks of Readiness



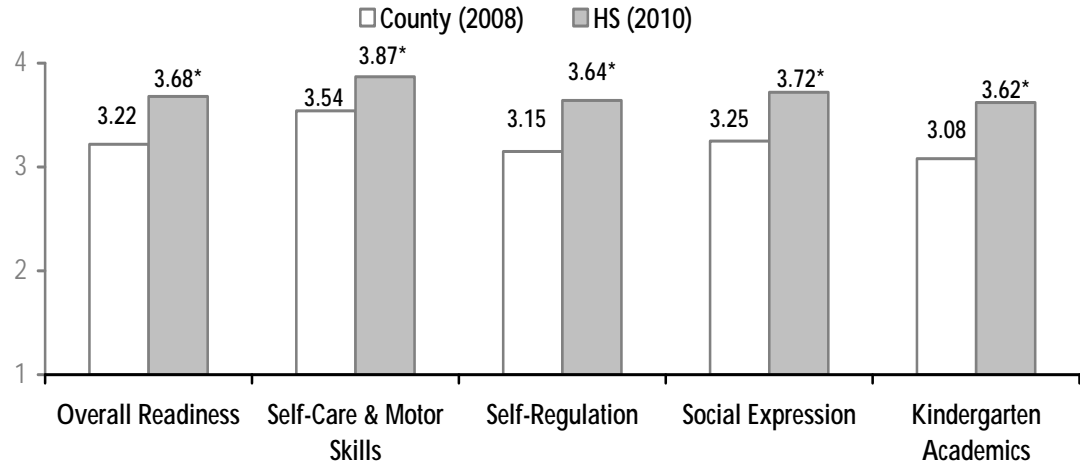
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Figure J. Relative Strength of Factors Associated with Each Basic Building Block

Factors	Overall Readiness	Self-Care & Motor Skills	Self-Regulation	Social Expression	Kindergarten Academics
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Figure K. Comparison of Head Start Students' Readiness Levels to County Averages for Incoming Kindergarteners After Adjusting for Demographic Differences



After controlling for demographic differences, Head Start graduates presented higher readiness scores than incoming kindergarten students across all dimensions of readiness. Again, it should be noted that Spring readiness scores of Head Start children may be higher than those

Start

Figure L. Head Start Children's Spring and Fall 2010 Readiness Scores (GUSD data)

- *Enhancing Children's Health and Well Being:*