

2025

SANTA CLARA COUNTY

Latino Kindergarten Readiness: Baseline Findings and Opportunities

PREPARED BY



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Introduction

Children's readiness for kindergarten lays the foundation for lifelong learning, health, and well-being. Children who enter school ready to learn are more likely to achieve academic success, including third-grade reading proficiency and high school graduation, while also experiencing more positive health and economic outcomes later in life.^{i,ii,iii} These early skills develop within the context of children's families, schools, and communities. A successful transition to kindergarten reflects not only children's individual development, but also the opportunities and supports available to them before they enter school.



The **2025 Santa Clara County Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA)^{iv}** provides a comprehensive picture of how children, families, schools, and communities are working together to support school readiness across Santa Clara County. The countywide assessment combines teacher observations of children's readiness skills with caregiver-reported information about children's early learning experiences, health, family engagement, and access to community supports.

This report builds on the countywide assessment by examining kindergarten readiness among Latino children. The **Santa Clara County Latino Health Assessment^v** identified early childhood education and kindergarten readiness as priorities for improving long-term outcomes for Latino children, with a goal of having **at least 40% of Latino children ready for kindergarten by 2030**. The assessment specifically calls for partnership with FIRST 5 Santa Clara County and educational partners to assess early childhood investments, establish performance measures, and strengthen kindergarten readiness among Latino children, with particular attention to Latino boys.

The Latino Health Assessment drew on findings from the 2023 KRA in establishing this priority. This report uses the 2025 KRA to provide the most current assessment of kindergarten readiness among Latino children and to assess progress toward the 2030 goal. The report examines patterns in readiness, identifies factors associated with stronger readiness, and highlights measures that can be monitored over time to inform continued efforts to strengthen kindergarten readiness among Latino children.

METHODOLOGY

Kindergarten readiness was assessed by classroom teachers during the first few weeks of the school year using the **Kindergarten Observation Form (KOF)**, a validated assessment tool shown to predict academic outcomes, including third-grade achievement.^{vi} Teachers rated children's readiness skills on a four-point scale ranging from 1 (*Not Yet*) to 4 (*Proficient*). The KOF measures three core domains of school readiness: *Self-Regulation*, *Social Expression*, and *Kindergarten Academics*. Two additional items assess fine and gross motor skills, which are foundational for children's overall development.

Caregivers completed the **Parent Information Form (PIF)**, which gathered information about children's early learning experiences, family routines, health, kindergarten transition experiences, and access to community supports. Surveys were available in English and Spanish and written at approximately a sixth-grade reading level.

Findings from this Latino-specific analysis can be used to monitor kindergarten readiness and related experiences among participating Latino children over time.

SAMPLE

The 2025 KRA included **705 kindergarten students** across 36 classrooms, representing 23 schools in 11 districts throughout Santa Clara County. This supplemental analysis focuses on the **283 children (40%)** who were identified as **Hispanic or Latino**. Among Latino children, 55% were boys and 45% were girls. Spanish was the primary language spoken at home for 51% of Latino children, and 40% were identified by their teachers as emergent bilingual learners.

A Note about How to Interpret the Findings

The findings in this report provide important insight into kindergarten readiness among Latino children who participated in the 2025 KRA. However, they should be interpreted with several considerations in mind. Participation in the KRA was voluntary for teachers and caregivers, and participating children and families may differ from the broader population of Latino kindergarteners in Santa Clara County in demographic, geographic, or socioeconomic characteristics. As a result, findings should not be assumed to represent all Latino children in the County. Teacher ratings on the Kindergarten Observation Form (KOF) may also be influenced by differences in interpretation or implicit bias, while caregiver responses may be influenced by social desirability, individual experiences, or expectations.

The regression model identified factors independently associated with kindergarten readiness among Latino children after accounting for other factors in the model. These associations should not be interpreted as causal. Kindergarten readiness is shaped by multiple, interconnected factors across children's families, early learning environments, schools, and communities. In addition, the Latino-specific analyses are designed to identify characteristics, experiences, and supports associated with readiness among Latino children, not to explain differences in readiness between Latino and non-Latino children or attribute those differences to race or ethnicity.

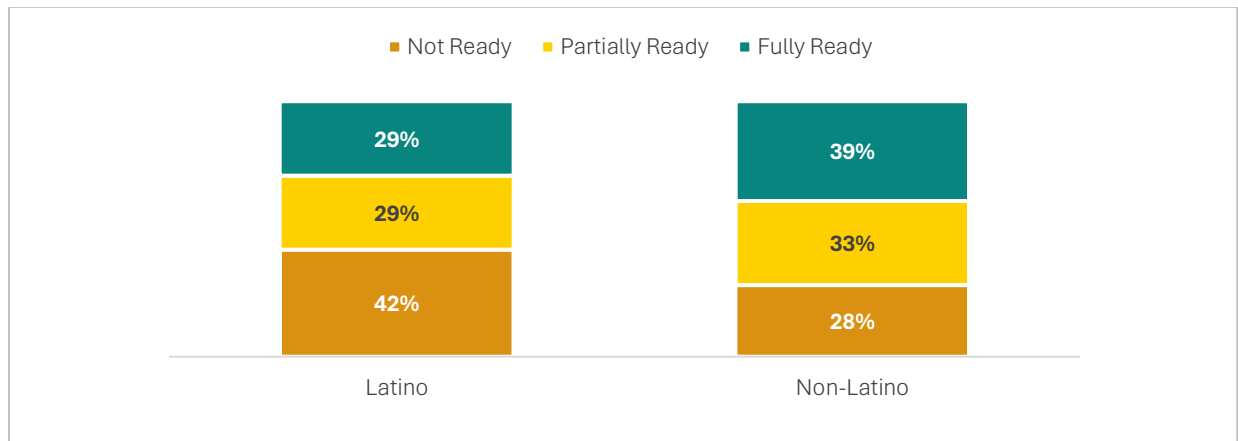
Taken together, the findings provide insight into kindergarten readiness among participating Latino children, identifying opportunities for support, and support monitoring of progress toward the Latino Health Assessment's 2030 kindergarten readiness goal.

Readiness of Latino Children

KINDERGARTEN READINESS

Among Latino children in the 2025 KRA, 29% were *Fully Ready* for kindergarten, demonstrating proficiency across all three readiness domains.¹ An additional 29% were *Partially Ready*, while 42% were *Not Ready*. Compared with non-Latino children, Latino children were less likely to be *Fully Ready* and more likely to be classified as *Not Ready*. The 29% *Fully Ready* finding provides a benchmark for monitoring progress toward the Latino Health Assessment goal of having at least 40% of Latino children ready for kindergarten by 2030.

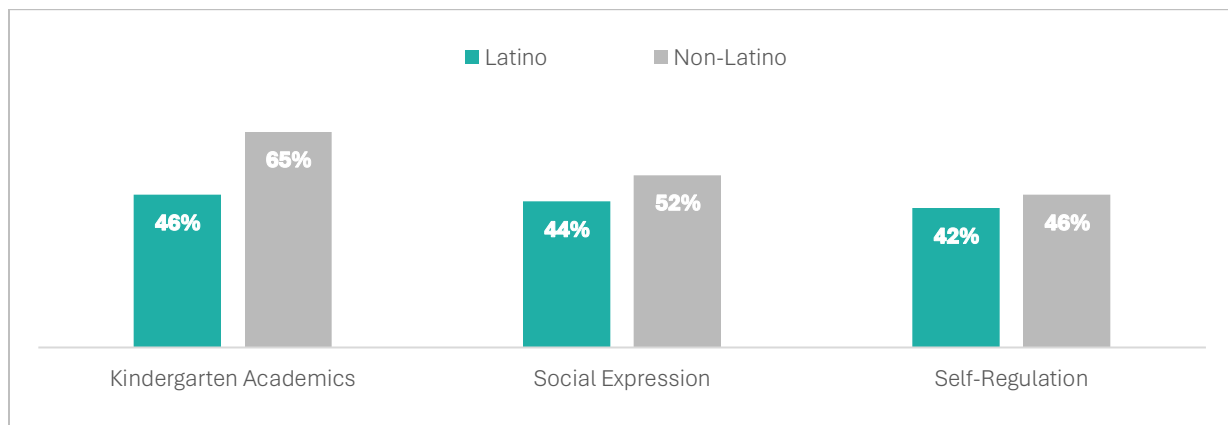
Exhibit 1. Kindergarten Readiness Among Latino and Non-Latino Children



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form 2025. Latino Children N = 283; Non-Latino Children N = 405.

Across all three readiness domains, Latino children demonstrated lower rates of proficiency than non-Latino children. The largest difference was observed in *Kindergarten Academics*, followed by *Social Expression*, while differences in *Self-Regulation* were comparatively smaller.

Exhibit 2. Percentage of Children Ready, by Domain, Latino and Non-Latino Children

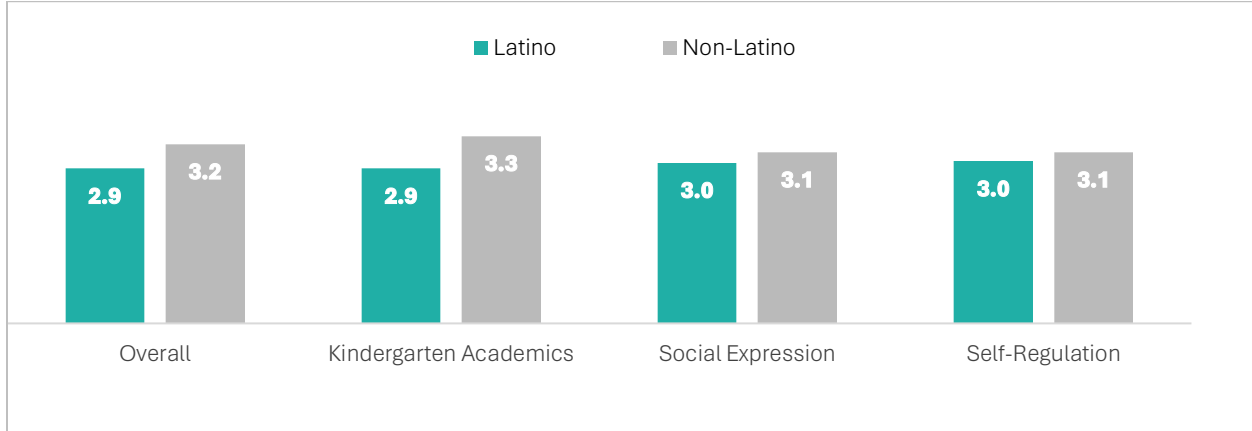


Source: Kindergarten Observation Form 2025. Latino Children N = 283; Non-Latino Children N = 405.

¹ Children were classified as *Fully Ready* when they achieved an average score of 3.25 or higher across all three readiness domains, a validated benchmark that has been shown to predict later academic success.

Latino children had an average overall readiness score of 2.9 (out of 4.0), compared with 3.2 for non-Latino children in the 2025 KRA sample. Average scores were slightly lower across each readiness domain, with the largest difference observed in Kindergarten Academics.

Exhibit 3. Average Readiness Scores by Domain, Latino and Non-Latino Children

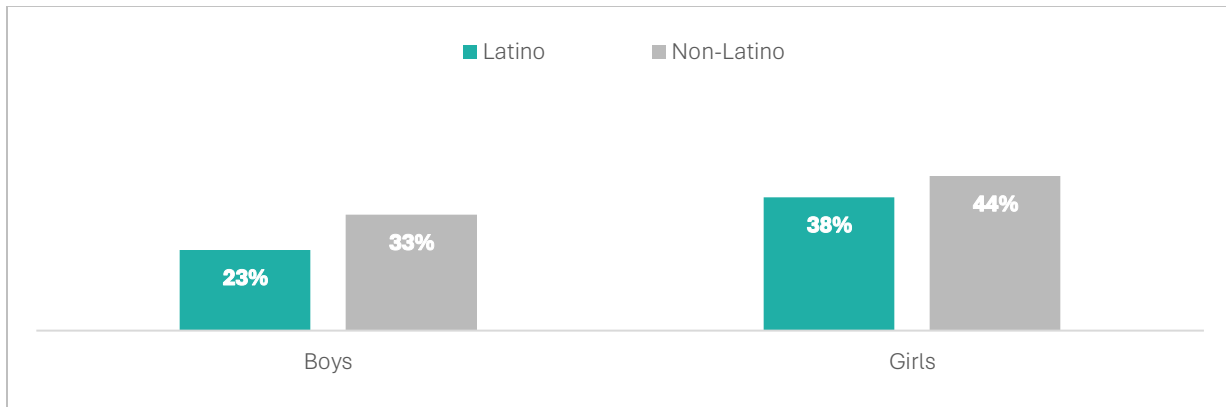


Source: Kindergarten Observation Form 2025. Latino Children N = 283; Non-Latino Children N = 405.

Kindergarten Readiness by Gender

The Latino Health Assessment identified kindergarten readiness among Latino boys as an area for particular attention based on previously observed readiness gaps. In the 2025 KRA, 23% of Latino boys were *Fully Ready* for kindergarten, compared with 38% of Latina girls. A similar gender pattern was observed among non-Latino children, with boys less likely than girls to be *Fully Ready*. However, regardless of gender, readiness was higher among non-Latino children than Latino children. These findings reinforce the importance of monitoring readiness among Latino boys as Santa Clara County works toward the goal of having at least 40% of Latino children ready for kindergarten by 2030.

Exhibit 4. Percentage of Children *Fully Ready*, by Gender, Latino and Non-Latino Children



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form 2025. Latino Boys N = 155; Latina Girls N = 128; Non-Latino Boys N = 202; Non-Latino Girls N = 203.

Readiness Skills

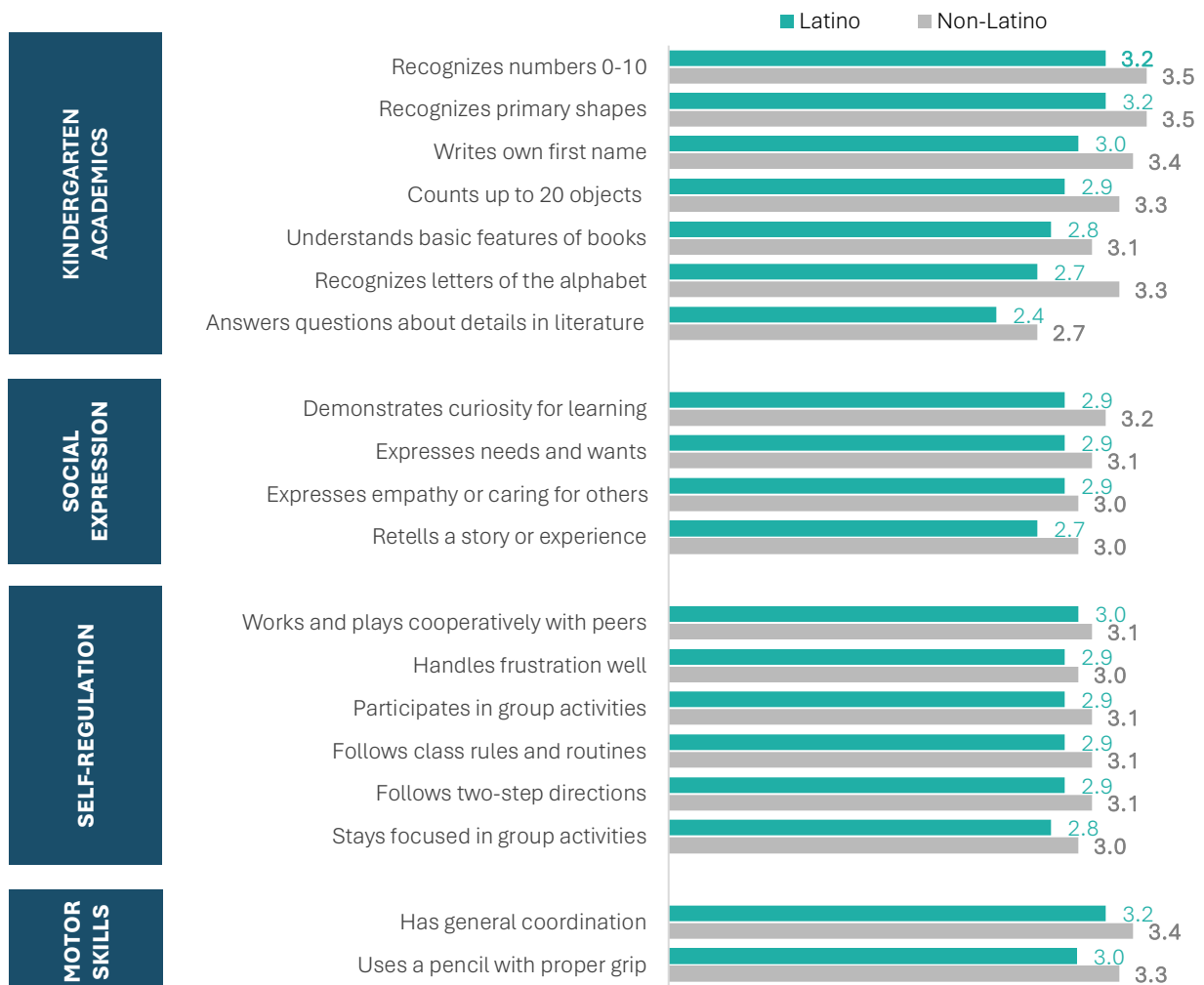
Understanding where Latino children demonstrate strengths and where additional developmental support may be beneficial provides important context for efforts to increase the percentage of children entering kindergarten *Fully Ready*.

The highest-rated skills included general coordination, recognizing primary shapes and numbers, writing their first name, and working and playing cooperatively with peers, reflecting strong motor development, early math concepts, and positive social interactions.

Opportunities for continued growth were most evident in early language and literacy skills, including answering questions about stories, retelling stories or experiences, recognizing letters of the alphabet, and understanding basic features of books. Additional opportunities were observed in counting objects, sustaining attention during group activities, following two-step directions, and participating in group activities.

Overall, Latino children demonstrated a similar pattern of strengths and opportunities for growth as non-Latino children. Both groups showed stronger performance in foundational motor and social skills than in language and early literacy skills. Differences were observed in several early literacy and academic skills, particularly letter and shape recognition, counting, writing their first name, and responding to questions about literature.

Exhibit 5. Average Kindergarten Readiness Skills, Latino and Non-Latino Children



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form 2025. Latino Children N = 283; Non-Latino Children N = 405.

2025 KRA MODEL: FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH KINDERGARTEN READINESS

The countywide 2025 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment identified several factors associated with higher kindergarten readiness. Examining the extent to which Latino children experienced these supports helps identify existing strengths and opportunities to promote school readiness.



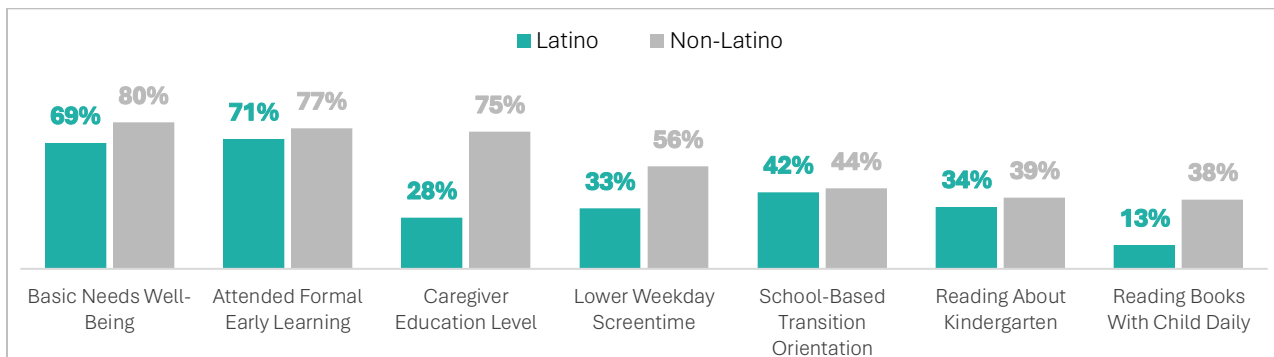
The factors strongly associated with kindergarten readiness in the countywide 2025 KRA were:

- » Basic needs and well-being (consistent sleep and nutrition)
- » Participation in a formal early learning program (e.g., preschool, Transitional Kindergarten, Head Start, or licensed family child care)
- » Caregiver education (bachelor's degree or higher)
- » Lower weekday screen time (one hour or less)
- » Participation in a school-based kindergarten transition orientation
- » Caregivers reading about kindergarten expectations
- » Daily shared reading with a caregiver

Among Latino children, participation in **formal early learning programs** and **school-based kindergarten transition activities** (e.g., orientations and reading about kindergarten) was generally comparable to that of non-Latino children, suggesting that many Latino families are already connected to important early learning opportunities.

At the same time, Latino children were less likely than non-Latino children to experience several other supports associated with kindergarten readiness. The largest differences were observed in **caregiver education** and **daily shared reading**, followed by **lower weekday screen time** and **basic needs well-being**. Together, these findings highlight opportunities to further strengthen the family and community supports available to Latino children and their families, helping more children enter kindergarten ready to learn.

Exhibit 6. Percentage of Latino and Non-Latino Children with Kindergarten Readiness Factors



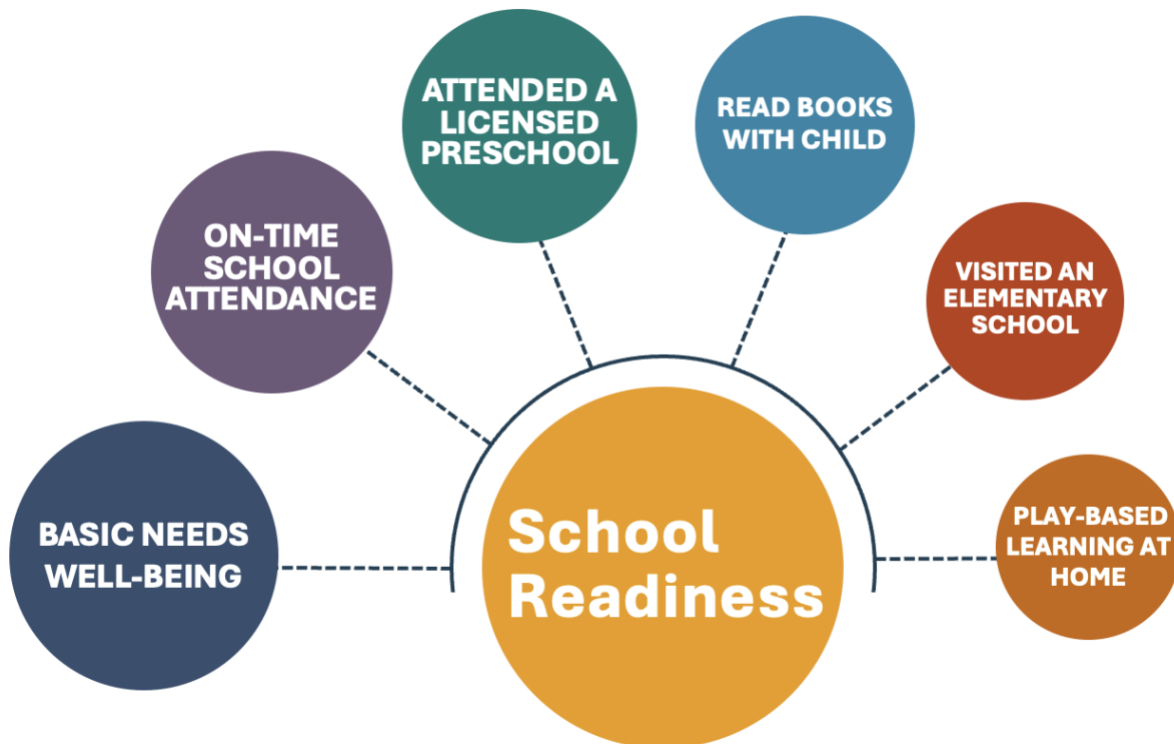
Source: Kindergarten Observation Form; Parent Information Form 2025. Latino Children N = 283; Non-Latino Children N = 405.

Factors Associated with Kindergarten Readiness Among Latino Children

To better understand which family, early learning, and community supports were associated with kindergarten readiness among Latino children, a multilevel regression analysis was used to examine patterns in the data while accounting for classroom-level differences and demographic factors. The goal was to identify strengths and experiences that schools, early childhood programs, and community partners can support to promote kindergarten readiness among Latino children.

Many of the experiences associated with higher readiness represent opportunities for coordinated investments in early childhood, family engagement, and community supports that can help more Latino children enter kindergarten ready to thrive.

Exhibit 7. Key Predictors of Overall Kindergarten Readiness Among Latino Children



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form; Parent Information Form 2025. Latino Children N = 95. The model controlled for age and identified disability designation. The overall model accounted for 52% of the variance in kindergarten readiness scores ($R^2 = 0.52$). All predictors shown were statistically significant at $p < .05$.

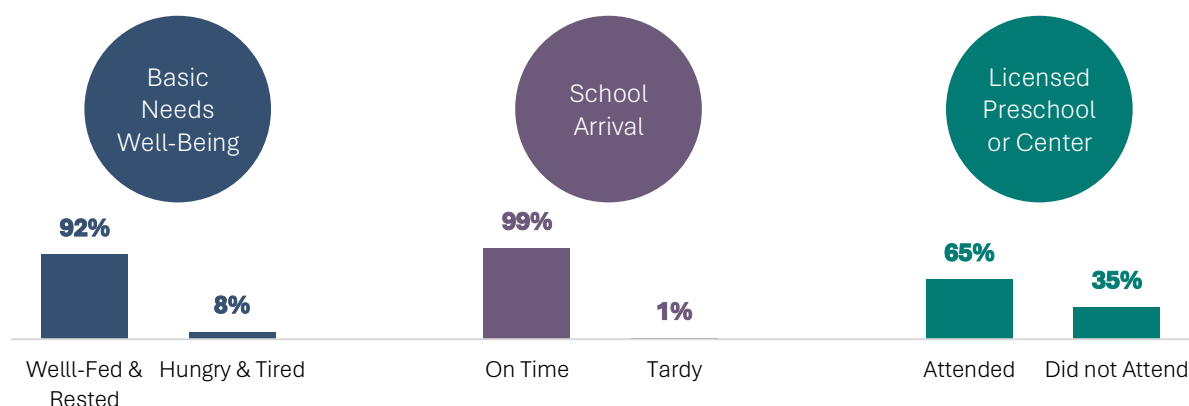
The factors most strongly associated with readiness outcomes were (in order by statistical strength):

BASIC NEEDS WELL-BEING²	Latino children who appeared well-rested and well-fed in class demonstrated the highest readiness scores, highlighting the importance of consistent sleep and nutrition.
ON-TIME SCHOOL ARRIVAL²	Latino children who arrived at school on time demonstrated higher readiness scores, highlighting the importance of consistent daily routines and regular participation in early learning.
ATTENDED A LICENSED PRESCHOOL	Latino children who attended a licensed preschool or center demonstrated higher readiness scores, highlighting the benefits of structured early learning experiences.
READ BOOKS WITH CHILD	Latino children whose caregiver read books with them (at least three days per week) demonstrated higher readiness scores, reinforcing the value of shared reading as a home-based learning activity.
VISITED AN ELEMENTARY	Latino children whose families visited an elementary school before kindergarten demonstrated higher readiness scores, highlighting the value of early familiarity with the school environment.
PLAY-BASED LEARNING	Latino children whose caregivers regularly engaged them in play activities at home (e.g., toys, puzzles, or games) demonstrated higher readiness scores, highlighting the value of learning through play.

READINESS FACTORS AMONG LATINO CHILDREN WHO WERE *FULLY READY*

Among Latino children who were *Fully Ready* for kindergarten, 92% appeared well-fed and well-rested in class, 99% arrived at school on time, and 65% had participated in a licensed preschool or center-based early learning program before kindergarten. These findings highlight the importance of ensuring that Latino children have the supports needed to meet their basic needs, establish consistent daily routines, and access high-quality early learning opportunities before entering kindergarten.

Exhibit 8. Wellness and Early Learning Factors Among Latino Children Who Were *Fully Ready*

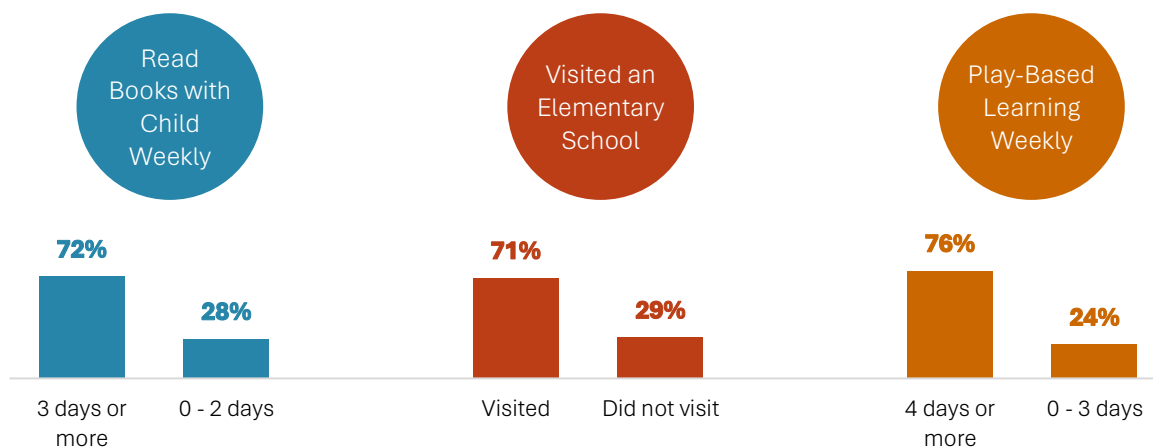


Source: Kindergarten Observation Form; Parent Information Form 2025. N = 95.

² According to child's teacher. All other factors reported by child's caregiver.

Family engagement was also strongly associated with kindergarten readiness among Latino children. Among Latino children who were *Fully Ready*, 72% had caregivers who read books with them at least three days per week, 71% had visited an elementary school before kindergarten, and 76% regularly participated in play-based learning activities at home. These findings reinforce the importance of early learning at home and meaningful family engagement with schools before kindergarten.

Exhibit 9. Family Engagement Factors Among Latino Children Who Were *Fully Ready*

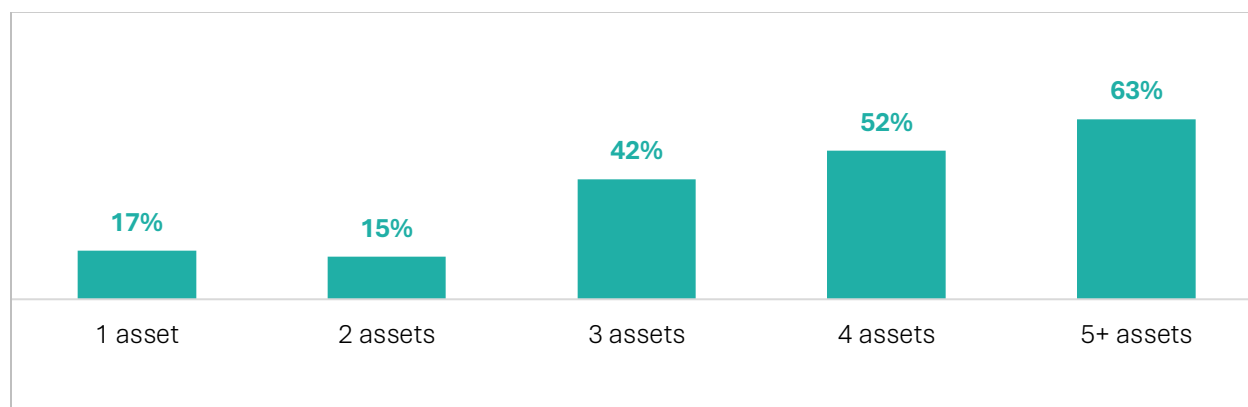


Source: Kindergarten Observation Form; Parent Information Form 2025. Latino Children N = 95.

CUMULATIVE PATTERN OF READINESS FACTORS

Latino children who experienced a greater number of factors associated with kindergarten readiness were more likely to enter kindergarten *Fully Ready*. Among children with one or two readiness factors, about one in six were *Fully Ready* for kindergarten. The percentage of children who were *Fully Ready* increased steadily as the number of readiness factors increased, with **nearly two-thirds of children with five or more readiness factors** meeting the benchmark. These findings suggest that progress toward the 2030 readiness goal is likely to depend on strengthening multiple supports across children's families, early learning settings, schools, and communities rather than focusing on any single factor.

Exhibit 10. Percentage of Latino Children *Fully Ready*, by Number of Readiness Factors

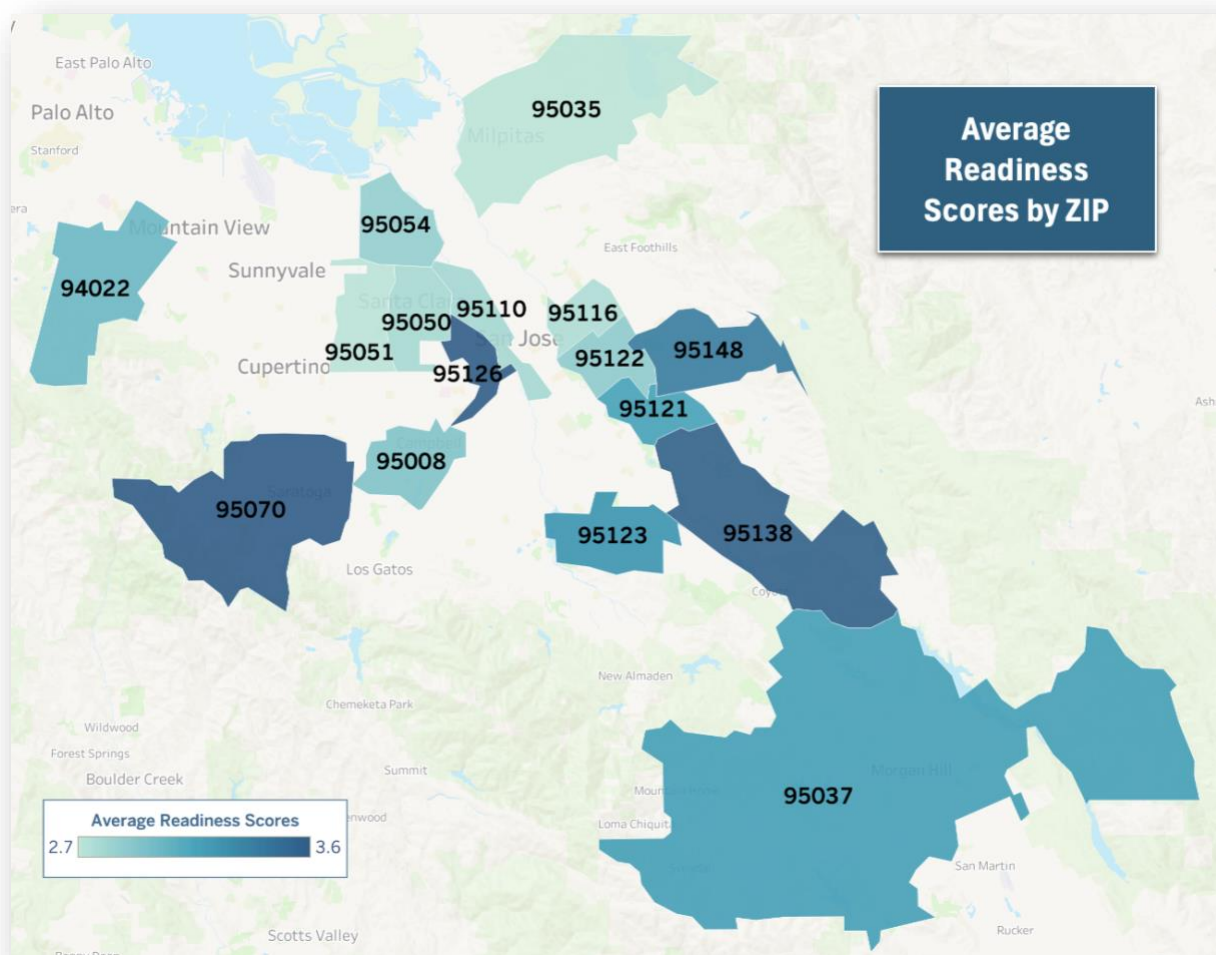


Source: Kindergarten Observation Form; Parent Information Form 2025. Latino Children N = 95.

GEOGRAPHIC VARIATION IN LATINO CHILDREN'S READINESS

Average kindergarten readiness scores among Latino children varied across the ZIP codes of participating schools in Santa Clara County. Higher average readiness was observed in school ZIP codes 95070, 95126, and 95138, while lower average readiness was observed in ZIP codes 95035, 95050, 95051, 95110, and 95116. Understanding these geographic patterns may help inform place-based strategies that expand opportunities for children to enter kindergarten ready to learn and support progress toward the County's 2030 kindergarten readiness goal.

Exhibit 11. Average Kindergarten Readiness Scores Among Latino Children, by School ZIP Code



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form 2025. Latino Children N = 283. Darker blue indicates areas with higher average readiness scores.

Monitoring Progress Toward 2030

The 2025 KRA provides an updated assessment of progress toward the Latino Health Assessment goal of having at least 40% of Latino children ready for kindergarten by 2030. In addition to tracking kindergarten readiness overall and by gender, several early experiences and supports can be monitored over time to understand whether more Latino children are experiencing conditions associated with successful school entry.

Among the 95 Latino children with complete data across the measures shown, 29% were *Fully Ready* for kindergarten. Readiness was lower among Latino boys than Latina girls, with 23% of boys *Fully Ready* compared with 38% of girls. Many children experienced several supports before or during the transition to kindergarten. Most arrived at school on time (89%), and more than three-quarters participated in play-based learning at home at least three days per week (78%). About two-thirds experienced basic needs well-being (69%) and had visited an elementary school before kindergarten (68%). More than three in five were read books at least three days per week (62%), while just over half had attended a licensed preschool (54%).

Together, these measures provide a set of indicators that can be tracked alongside kindergarten readiness to assess progress toward the 2030 goal and identify areas where additional supports and opportunities may be needed.



Exhibit 12. Measures for Monitoring Kindergarten Readiness Among Latino Children, KRA 2025

Measure to Monitor	2025
Latino children <i>Fully Ready</i>	29%
Latino boys <i>Fully Ready</i>	23%
Latina girls <i>Fully Ready</i>	38%
On-time school arrival	89%
Play-based learning at home (3+ days/week)	78%
Basic needs well-being	69%
Visited an elementary school	68%
Read books with child (3+ days/week)	62%
Attended a licensed preschool	54%

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form; Parent Information Form 2025. Latino Children N = 95. Analysis is limited to children with complete data across all measures shown.

Summary of Findings

The 2025 Santa Clara County KRA provides an updated assessment of kindergarten readiness among Latino children as the County works toward the Latino Health Assessment goal of having at least 40% of Latino children ready for kindergarten by 2030.

In 2025, 29% of Latino children were *Fully Ready*, while 29% were *Partially Ready* and 42% were *Not Ready*. The 2025 readiness rate is 11 percentage points below the 2030 goal.

Readiness was lower among Latino boys than Latina girls, reinforcing the Latino Health Assessment's emphasis on monitoring readiness among Latino boys.

Latino children demonstrated strengths across several developmental areas, including motor skills, early math concepts, and positive social interactions. Opportunities for continued growth were more evident in early language and literacy skills, attention, following directions, and participation in group activities.

The Latino-specific regression identified six factors independently associated with stronger kindergarten readiness: basic needs well-being, on-time school arrival, participation in a licensed preschool or center, shared reading, visiting an elementary school before kindergarten, and play-based learning at home. Readiness increased steadily as children experienced a greater number of these factors, highlighting the importance of coordinated supports across families, early learning programs, schools, and communities.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRESS TOWARD 2030

Reaching the Latino Health Assessment goal of having at least 40% of Latino children ready for kindergarten by 2030 will require continued attention to the multiple conditions and experiences that support children's development before and during the transition to school.

Opportunities highlighted by this assessment include:

- » **Strengthen children's basic needs and well-being** by supporting families' access to food, health, housing, and other resources that help children establish healthy routines and arrive at school well-rested, well-fed, on time, and ready to learn.
- » **Continue expanding high-quality early learning** through culturally and linguistically responsive preschool and family child care opportunities, while supporting quality improvement across early learning settings.
- » **Invest in family engagement and early literacy** by expanding bilingual family literacy initiatives, increasing access to culturally relevant children's books, strengthening library partnerships, and encouraging learning through everyday family routines.
- » **Strengthen kindergarten transition partnerships** by increasing opportunities for families to visit schools, participate in kindergarten orientation activities, and establish early connections with teachers and school communities.
- » **Support community-based early childhood systems** through continued investments in Family Resource Centers, community-based organizations, libraries, health care providers, and trusted neighborhood partners that connect families with early childhood resources and services.
- » **Continue monitoring kindergarten readiness** overall and by gender, with particular attention to Latino boys, to assess progress toward the 2030 goal. Track key readiness supports over time and examine how kindergarten readiness relates to later educational outcomes, including third-grade literacy, attendance, and academic achievement.
- » **Use geographic patterns to inform place-based strategies**, particularly in communities where readiness is lower and where strengthening access to early childhood, family, and school transition supports may expand opportunities for successful school entry.

LOOKING AHEAD

The 2025 KRA helps assess progress toward Santa Clara County's goal of having at least 40% of Latino children ready for kindergarten by 2030. The findings also identify concrete experiences and supports that can be monitored alongside readiness to understand whether the conditions associated with successful school entry are becoming more widely available to Latino children and families.

Progress will depend on more than any single program or intervention. The cumulative findings suggest that children benefit from multiple supports across their families, early learning environments, schools, and communities. Building on the strengths of Latino families while expanding access to high-quality early learning, supporting children's basic needs and well-being, strengthening learning at home, and creating meaningful connections between families and schools can help create the conditions for more children to enter kindergarten ready to learn and thrive.

Continued KRA measurement can help the County and its partners assess progress toward 2030, identify where gaps persist, and inform investments and strategies over time. Connecting kindergarten readiness data with later educational outcomes can also help strengthen understanding of how early readiness contributes to Latino children's long-term educational success, health, and well-being.



ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Applied Survey Research (ASR) is a non-profit social research firm dedicated to helping people build better communities by creating meaningful evaluative and assessment data, facilitating information-based planning, and developing custom strategies. The firm has more than 40 years of experience working with public and private agencies, health and human service organizations, city and county offices, school districts, institutions of higher learning, and charitable foundations. Through community assessments, program evaluations, and related studies, ASR provides the information communities need for effective strategic planning and community interventions.

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Endnotes

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- ⁱ Duncan, G. J., Dowsett, C. J., Claessens, A., Magnuson, K., Huston, A. C., Klebanov, P., Pagani, L.S., Feinstein, L., Engel, M., Brooks-Gunn, J., Sexton, H., Duckworth, K., & Japel, C. (2007). School readiness and later achievement. *Developmental Psychology*, 43(6), 1428–1446.
- ⁱⁱ Bettencourt, A. F., Gross, D., Ho, G., & Perrin, N. (2018). The costly consequences of not being socially and behaviorally ready to learn by kindergarten in Baltimore City. *Journal of Urban Health*, 95(1), 36–50.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Fitzpatrick, C., Boers, E., & Pagani, L. S. (2020). Kindergarten readiness, later health, and social costs. *Pediatrics*, 146(6).
- ^{iv} First 5 Santa Clara County. (2025). 2025 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. <https://first5kids.org/data-and-evaluation/#KRA>
- ^v County of Santa Clara Public Health Department. (2025). *Santa Clara County Latino Health Assessment*. County of Santa Clara. <https://publichealth.santacclaracounty.gov/health-information/health-data/speak-latino-health>
- ^{vi} Applied Survey Research. (n.d.) *Psychometric properties of the Kindergarten Observation Form*. San Jose, CA.