



LOS ANGELES AREA
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Preschool Assessments in Los Angeles County



Introduction & Background

Children who enter kindergarten ready to meet its academic, social and emotional demands are more likely to achieve later academic and life success. National research suggests that more than half the achievement gap found in later school years is already present at kindergarten entry; yet, unlike other states, California lacks a common measure to gauge young children's preparation for school. A common Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) would allow state and local decision makers to better understand the impact of early childhood investments and to target resources and interventions to communities with the greatest need.

Recognizing the significance of early childhood education (ECE) to future student success, L.A. Compact — a commitment by 23 cross-sector institutions to improve cradle-to-career student outcomes — identified kindergarten readiness in 2013 as a desired metric to provide insight on the strengths and needs of L.A. County's youngest learners. As a signing partner of L.A. Compact, First 5 LA further elevated the need for a common KRA in their 2015-2020 strategic plan and led the launch of a new L.A. Compact-supported KRA workgroup in the spring of 2015. First 5 LA's strategic plan and the KRA Workgroup established a multi-year goal of adopting a common KRA that can aggregate data on school readiness across L.A. County.

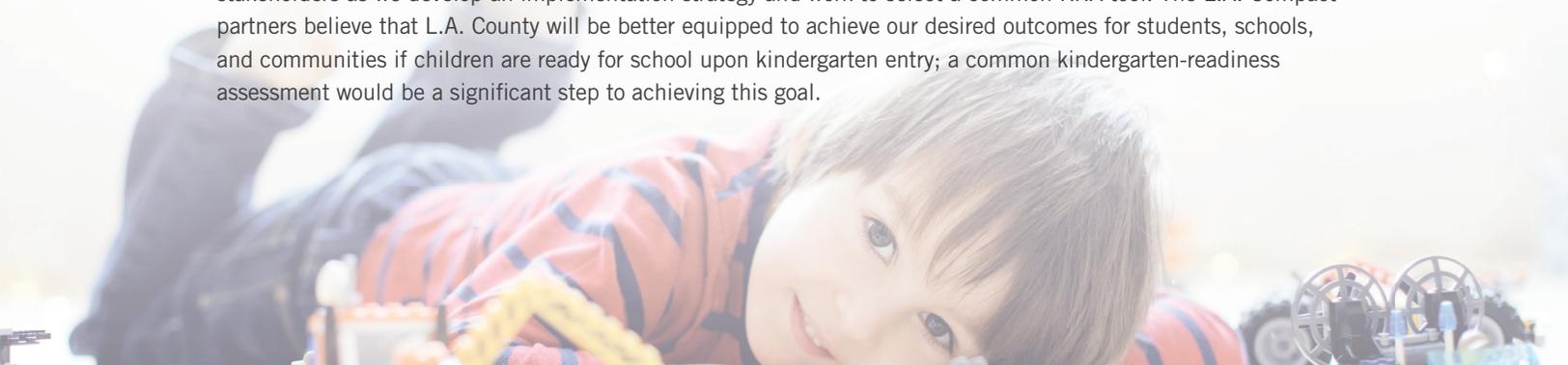
As a first step to advancing this goal, in the fall of 2015, Children Now and First 5 LA conducted a survey of L.A. County's 80 school districts. The *District Survey* gathered information on what KRA tools are currently used in kindergarten classrooms, what developmental domains they assess, what factors impede or facilitate effective implementation, and for what purposes KRA tools are used and valued.

To further inform the discussion of a common KRA, the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce (L.A. Area Chamber) conducted a complementary *Preschool Assessment Survey* with information on assessments of preschoolers by a wide range of preschool providers in L.A. County. The *District Survey* collected information on assessments of kindergarteners at the start of the school year. The *Preschool Survey*, which included a number of parallel questions, allows comparison of information on ECE assessments with kindergarten assessments.

As L.A. County stakeholders seek to develop a common KRA, policy advocates and partners from the K-12 sector can learn from the views and experiences of ECE providers. The inclusion of early childhood educators in the conversation around a common KRA is important for:

- Understanding how ECE providers assess youngsters, and the purposes for which ECE providers use assessments.
- Including the viewpoints of, and lessons learned by, ECE providers who regularly assess students on multiple developmental domains.
- Understanding differences between assessments of preschoolers versus assessments of kindergarteners.
- Ensuring alignment of kindergarten assessments with the assessments and standards that already exist at the ECE level.

The findings in this report, combined with those of the *District Survey*, aim to provide guidance to L.A. County stakeholders as we develop an implementation strategy and work to select a common KRA tool. The L.A. Compact partners believe that L.A. County will be better equipped to achieve our desired outcomes for students, schools, and communities if children are ready for school upon kindergarten entry; a common kindergarten-readiness assessment would be a significant step to achieving this goal.



Executive Summary

Surveys conducted at a 2016 Los Angeles Universal Preschool's (LAUP) ECE Provider Meeting reveal five findings that may help inform the conversation around a common KRA in Los Angeles.

FINDING 1:

Much like Los Angeles kindergarten administrators, the vast majority of ECE providers value assessment of all major developmental domains.

FINDING 2:

Nearly all surveyed ECE providers identified socio-emotional skills as a necessity for kindergarten readiness.

FINDING 3:

Social and emotional skills are not commonly assessed in kindergarten, and English language development is not commonly assessed among preschoolers.

FINDING 4:

LAUP preschool providers regularly and consistently assess students, most using the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) as required by LAUP.

FINDING 5:

Preschool assessment findings are rarely communicated with the K-12 system.

Methods

The *Preschool Assessment Survey* was offered in paper and electronic forms and distributed to ECE providers at a LAUP Network Provider Meeting on Jan. 20, 2016.¹ The survey captured responses from a non-random but diverse set of ECE providers. A total of 118 providers participated in the survey, out of 141 attendees at the LAUP Provider Meeting, for a response rate of 83.7 percent. Respondents represent ECE providers of different types and sizes, as well as from all corners of L.A. County; however, the sample is not random and includes only providers who are members of LAUP. LAUP indicates that the set of providers fairly represents the county: "There is a diversity reflected in the current network that seems like it mirrors the county's. Our sites include Family Child Care Homes, and large and small centers connected to community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, school districts, community colleges." (Rosa Valdes (LAUP Director of Research and Evaluation), personal communication, April 15, 2016).²

¹ LAUP providers receive coaching, mentoring, on-site training, business planning, curriculum assistance, quality support visits and parent engagement trainings, and are required to administer the DRDP to students.

² A list of respondents' organizations is included as Appendix A; note that 22 respondents choose not to include their organization name, and that 17 organizations were represented by more than one individual.

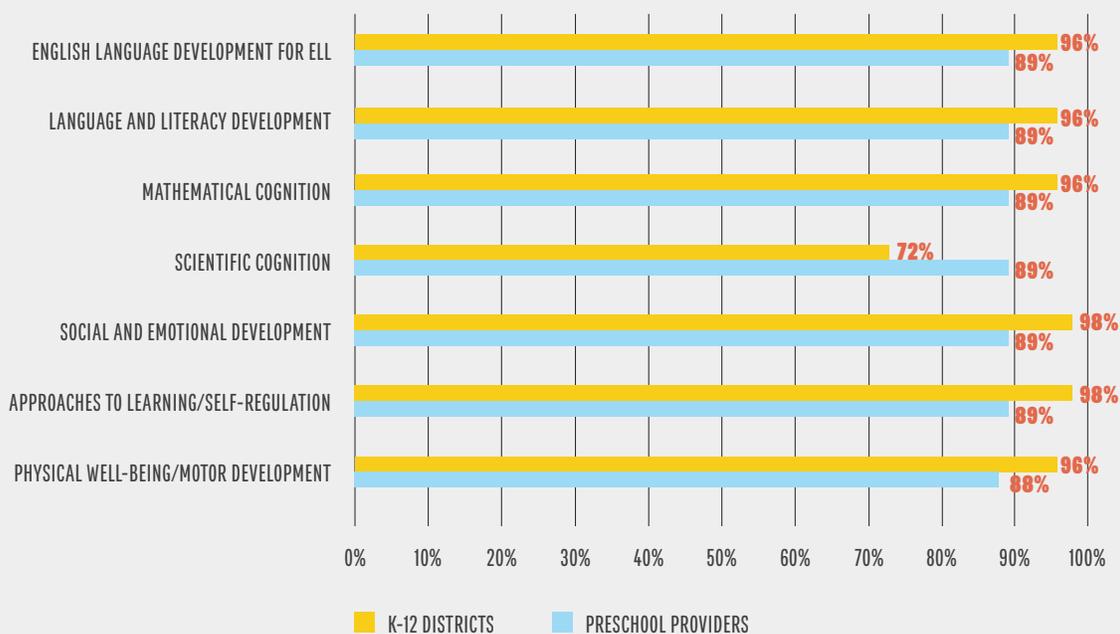
RESULTS

FINDING 1:

ECE and Kindergarten Providers Value Assessment of All Major Developmental Domains

The *Preschool Survey* asked respondents to indicate how important it is to assess each of a set of specified developmental domains for preschoolers, and the *District Survey* asked the identical question “for incoming kindergarteners.” Results are provided in Figure 1 for the preschool and kindergarten surveys on the following developmental domains: ‘English language development for English language learners,’ ‘language and literacy development,’ ‘mathematical cognition,’ ‘scientific cognition,’ ‘social and emotional development,’ ‘approaches to learning/self-regulation,’ and ‘physical well-being and general motor development.’

FIGURE 1 RESPONDENTS RATING EACH DOMAIN IMPORTANT OR VERY IMPORTANT TO ASSESS



Source: *Preschool Assessment District Survey & Kindergarten Readiness Survey*

On both surveys, the vast majority of respondents judged virtually all of these domains to be “important” or “very important:” 88-89 percent of respondents to the *Preschool Survey* and 96-98 percent of respondents to the *District Survey* on all items except scientific cognition, which was still rated important by almost three quarters (72 percent) of *District Survey* respondents.³ Other than the lesser importance attached to scientific cognition on the *District Survey*, there is no discernible difference in the importance attached to different domains by respondents. Therefore, we do not attach meaning to the small differences between surveys. While both kindergarten and ECE providers overwhelmingly view all of these developmental domains as important to assess, which are the most critical to kindergarten readiness?

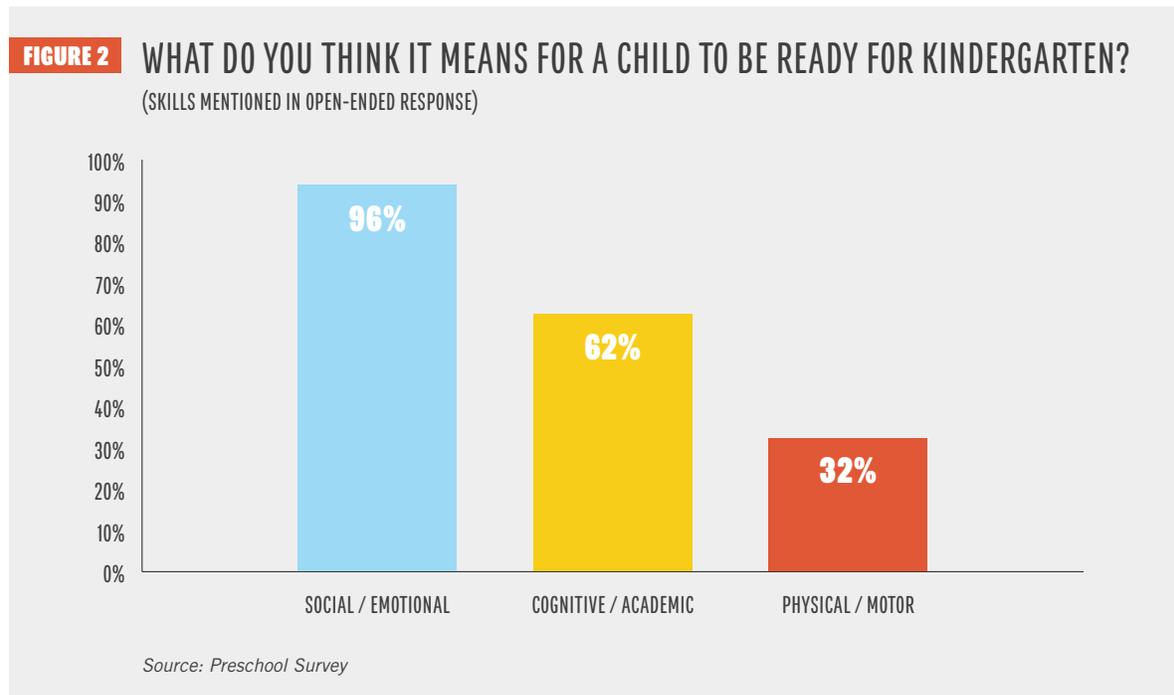
³ We think that the actual rate for the *Preschool Survey* may be higher and more closely matches results from the *Kindergarten Survey* because some respondents may have inadvertently marked ‘very unimportant’ instead of ‘very important:’ nine percent of participants indicated ‘very unimportant’ for *all* domains, yet answered other assessment questions very positively.

RESULTS

FINDING 2:

ECE Providers Identify Socio-Emotional Skills as a Prime Marker of Kindergarten Readiness

In order to more fully understand how ECE providers thought about kindergarten readiness, we asked an open-ended question on the *Preschool Survey*, “What do you think it means to be ready for kindergarten?” Results are provided in Figure 2.



Of those who named specific criteria for kindergarten readiness, almost all (96 percent) identified social or emotional skills; 62 percent named cognitive/academic skills; and 32 percent called out physical or motor skills. Full responses are included in Appendix B.



⁵ A parallel question was not asked on the *District Survey*.

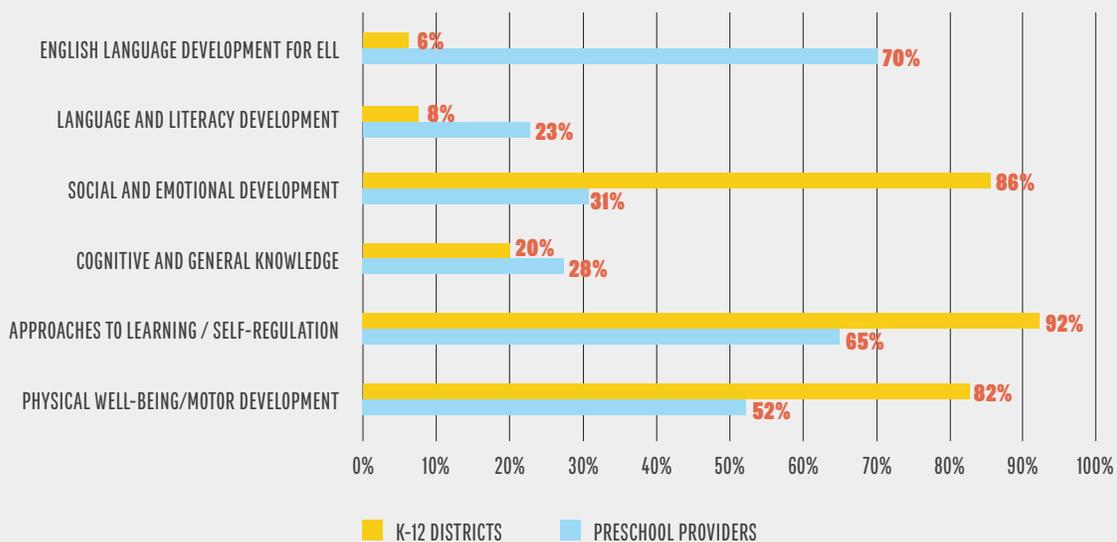
RESULTS

FINDING 3:

Social and Emotional Skills are Not Commonly Assessed for Kindergarteners, and English Language Development is Not Commonly Assessed Among Preschoolers

Providers were asked which three developmental domains were least commonly assessed. While ‘approaches to learning’ and ‘physical well-being’ were not commonly assessed for either preschoolers or kindergarteners, important differences are apparent in other domains. (See Figure 3.)

FIGURE 3 WHAT THREE DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAINS ARE LEAST ASSESSED IN YOUR ORGANIZATION?



Source: *Preschool Survey & District Survey*

Eighty-six percent of respondents on the *District Survey* reported that ‘social and emotional development’ was rarely assessed versus only 31 percent of respondents on the *Preschool Survey*. While preschoolers are typically assessed on this domain, once youngsters enter kindergarten, such assessments become relatively rare.

By contrast, ‘English language development for ELL’ was rarely assessed for preschoolers (with 70 percent of providers reporting it as one of the least common assessment domains) vs. kindergarteners (only six percent of respondents). Other cognitive domains appear to be commonly assessed for both preschoolers and kindergarteners.

RESULTS

FINDING 4:

LAUP Preschool Providers Regularly and Consistently Assess Youngsters

Ninety-five percent of respondents on the *Preschool Survey* reported that all (78 percent) or most (17 percent) teachers use the same assessment prescribed by the organization (Figure 4). (This result is unsurprising for our sample of providers, since LAUP requires Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) assessment. Thus, the share among *Preschool Survey* respondents is likely much higher than would be found in a random sample across L.A. County.) None reported that preschool teachers do not use any formal assessment, and only 4 percent reported that teachers can choose any assessment they want.

FIGURE 4 INDICATE WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING MOST CLOSELY DESCRIBES THE STATE OF ASSESSMENTS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

ANSWERED: 114 | SKIPPED: 4



- MOST OF THE PRESCHOOL TEACHERS DO NOT USE ANY FORMAL ASSESSMENT.
- MOST PRESCHOOL TEACHERS DO NOT USE AN ASSESSMENT AND CAN CHOOSE ANY ASSESSMENT THEY WANT.
- MOST PRESCHOOL TEACHERS USE AN EXISTING ASSESSMENT PRESCRIBED BY THE ORGANIZATION.
- ALL TEACHERS USE THE SAME ASSESSMENT PRESCRIBED BY THE ORGANIZATION.
- OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY).

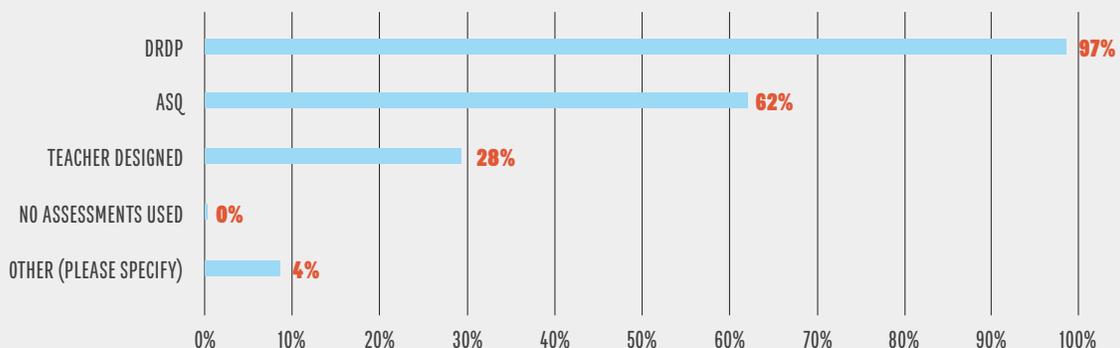
Source: *Preschool Survey*

Ninety-seven percent of *Preschool Survey* respondents used the DRDP as prescribed by LAUP. Sixty-two percent used the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), and 28 percent used assessments created by teachers. (See Figure 5.)

FIGURE 5 PLEASE NAME ALL ASSESSMENTS THAT YOUR ORGANIZATION USES

(INCLUDING MANDATED, OPTIONAL, AND INDEPENDENT-DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENTS)

ANSWERED: 118 | SKIPPED: 0



Source: *Preschool Survey*

RESULTS

FINDING 5:

Preschool Assessment Findings are Rarely Communicated with K-12 System

Preschool providers were asked to indicate how they use assessment findings (Table 1). The three most common uses of assessment findings were to inform parents/legal guardians about their child's progress (90 percent), to inform teachers and administrators about the child's progress (80 percent), and to evaluate and/or promote continuous improvement in the classroom/program (75 percent).

TABLE 1

How Preschool Assessment Findings are Utilized

Formative: Inform parents/legal guardians of child's developmental progress.	90%
Formative: Inform teachers and administrators of child's progress.	80%
Summative: To evaluate and/or promote continuous improvement of your classroom or program.	75%
Assessment to identify potential developmental delays.	74%
Summative: To determine if a child is ready for kindergarten.	63%
To meet federal, state and/or district requirements.	59%
To inform teacher professional development.	53%
To share with feeder schools and help inform kindergarten teachers.	36%

Source: Preschool Survey

Sixty-three percent of respondents indicated that assessments were used to determine if a child is ready for kindergarten. However, the least cited use of assessment findings was sharing information with feeder schools (36 percent). While sharing is uncommon, one provider indicated that preschool teachers in their program check in with kindergarten teachers at the local feeder school twice yearly to compare student progress and collaborate in the development of pre-k curriculum aligned with kindergarten goals and expectations.



Conclusions & Key Questions for Consideration

The survey of preschool assessments raises several key considerations as L.A. County stakeholders proceed in discussions to adopt a common, county-wide KRA:

#1 How do we ensure that assessments at kindergarten entry are aligned to existing standards at the ECE level to ensure a consistent P-3 continuum?

When a child advances from pre-k to kindergarten, she shouldn't be suddenly held to new, more rigorous standards. Instead, the early education through third grade years should be approached as a developmental continuum. Aligning standards and assessments between ECE and kindergarten classrooms could also allow for analysis of how cohorts or populations of children are progressing developmentally across multiple domains and highlight needs for community-level interventions.

A key component of articulation between early education and k-12 districts is to ensure that assessments are actually measuring the same domains and developmental skills. The *Preschool* and *District Surveys* reveal that measuring socio-emotional development was highly valued by both systems, yet it was the least assessed measure reported at kindergarten entry. Similarly, preschool providers reported they were much less likely to assess language development for English language learners than was true in kindergarten. Preschool programs and districts should have a common understanding of developmental standards for young children and utilize aligned assessments to effectively monitor a child's progress and identify appropriate interventions.

#2 How can we promote increased collaboration and sharing of assessment information between preschool providers and kindergarten classrooms?

While preschool providers reported they were least likely to use assessment findings to share with district schools, more than a third of respondents reported utilizing assessments to inform kindergarten teachers. Such individual-level information on a child's strengths and needs would be incredibly valuable to kindergarten teachers at the beginning of the school year to tailor instructional practices and promote a seamless learning continuum for young students.

#3 How should the ECE community be engaged in discussions of the adoption of a common KRA?

A common KRA for L.A. County stands to provide critical information about the strengths and needs of our youngest learners and the impact of investments in early childhood programs and services. ECE providers may naturally have fears or suspicions about how KRA results may be used, and these concerns should be surfaced and addressed early on in KRA discussions and advocacy efforts. The ECE community can be a powerful ally to promote the adoption of a common KRA in L.A. County, but only if they are meaningfully engaged.

Appendix A: Preschool Providers Represented in *Preschool Survey*

Acacia Montessori School
Akitoi Learning Center
Alma Family Services
Around the World/Kids Korner
Baldwin Park Unified School District
Bethlehem Temple 5 Star
Bettes Family Child Care
Bright Steps/LAUP
Camino Nuevo Charter Academy
Child Development Consortium of Los Angeles
Ceja Family Child Care
Charter Oak Unified School District
Children's Bureau of Magnolia Family Center
City of Los Angeles - Department of Recreation
and Parks
Claremont School District
Creative Kid Stop
Crossroads Montessori Child Care
Castaic Union School District
Diamond Bar YMCA
Dignity Health
Future Stars Preschool
Guadalupe Gonzalez
Guardian Angel Academy
Hacienda La Puente
Harbor Interfaith Services
Hernandez Family Child Care
Hacienda La Puente Unified School District
Jones Family Child Care
Joyce's Play Ranch
Kids Korner
Kidz R Us
K-Step Montessori
Lardizabal Family Child Care
LAUP @ Longfellow
Los Angeles Unified School District
Lennox School District
Linda Vista Children's Center
Little World Preschool
Lopez Family Child Care
Lynwood Unified School District
Madrigal Family Child Care
Maple Avenue Preschool
Mendoza Family Day Care
Mexican American Opportunity Foundation
Michel Family Child Care
Montessori Academy of La Puente/West Covina
Mountain View School District
Mulberry Tree
Nellie's Wonderland Development Center
New Montessori School
Newhall School District
Noor Montessori
Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District
Ochoa Family Child Care
Okie Dokie Child Development Center
Pomona Valley YMCA
Paramount Unified School District
Pasadena Unified School District
Pathways
Perez Family Child Care
Pine Tree Preschool
Plascencia Family Child Care
Plaza de la Raza Child Development Inc
Rainbow-In-A-cloud Child Development Center
Razuri Family Child Care
Rodriguez Family Child Care
Sharm Preschool
Shea Family Child Care
Shining Star
South Bay Universal Child Development
South Central Los Angeles Ministry Project
Sulphur Springs School District
Saugus Union School District
The Children's Collective
The Jeffrey Foundation
Weingart East Los Angeles YMCA
Westside Union School District
YMCA of Greater Long Beach

Appendix B: Responses to the question, “What do you think it means for a child to be ready for kindergarten?” on *Preschool Survey*.

- If a child enters kindergarten feeling happy, self-confident, optimistic, curious and friendly, the child will learn. If the child is nervous, frightened, angry, and preoccupied with unmet needs, the child will not be able to make use of the intellectual stimulation and opportunities available. A child is ready for school and life when the following skills are in place: self-love, to read behavior, to communicate with words, to understand the difference between thoughts and actions, to wonder and ask why, to risk failure as a necessary part to growing, to understand that complicated questions do not have simple answers, to have a mind of his or her own, to trust grown ups, to know when to lean on adults.
- For that child to be able to adapt to social and emotional learning environment.
- To be ready social, emotional to interact with children. To feel confident to learn and challenge themselves.
- Being ready to learn; self-regulation and emotionally ready to learn.
- To be socially and emotionally ready to enter kindergarten. They need to be exposed to developmentally appropriate activities in preschool to be ready for kindergarten.
- Able to socialize and participate in activities able to learn new skills and communicate their needs and thought verbally.
- Being ready for kindergarten means being able to have social skills, gross motor skills, and fine motor skills. I also feel that having some knowledge of letters and numbers is important.
- For a child to be ready socially and emotionally knows routine well and meets realness.
- To be ready emotional to be able to interact with other children to be able to follow routine.
- Child knows his/her basic skills such as ABC/123 and colors, how to spell his/her name
- For a child to be ready for kindergarten, he is she is progressively developing in the following areas: socially (listening, sharing, taking turns), physically (fine and gross motor skills, self-care routines), mathematically (counting, sorting, classifying, etc), language/literacy (letter recognition, emergent, and story comprehension).
- Able to sit and listen, able to interact with adults and other students, able to follow directions, able to resolve conflicts, problems, on their own.
- Social emotional (peer to peer, self care) ability to engage, question literacy development (print knowledge, phonological awareness, phonic awareness) vocabulary development motor/gross ability to move and control body.
- To be socially ready for him/her to know the basics and letters, colors, numbers, write name, and last name. Be a leader.
- When student are social-emotionally ready to continue learning.
- Child able to support themselves both physically and emotionally.
- Able to remain on task.
- The child must exhibit impulse control. They must be socially developed. They must be able to access the curriculum. They must be able to focus on and complete tasks that are developmentally appropriate.
- To be socially-emotionally ready and to have the pre-academic skills in place as well.
- That they are ready emotionally and be ready for more academics during their elementary years.
- Able to interact with his peers, teachers, and elder in their environment. Able to understand what is expected of them and knows the rules and how to be social, emotional and able to function in a classroom setting.

Appendix B, continued

- Overall child and capable of communication (receptional expressive) and demonstrates social, physical, emotional, cognitive skills necessary to meet k-standards.
- A child to be able to join a classroom setting and display self-control and respect for themselves, peers, and the environment and comprehend what is being taught with understanding and capable to ask questions to get a better understanding.
- Children are developmentally appropriate in all areas including social development.
- A child is prepared to be socially and emotion ready to go kindergarten.
- Be socially competent.
- Confident, independent, and excited to learn. Support from partnership between parents/family and school. Healthy, safe, and secure, about ability to succeed.
- Social skills, developing appropriate cognitive physical verbal.
- To be able to have self-control & understand his/her emotions.
- Child has been given opportunities to develop social skills (self-control/regulation, respect towards self and others personal space). Language Skills (I speech/you speak, pre-reading exposure to letter sounds, stories, etc.).
- Prepare to attend school children need to be independent, responsible, and learn the basics to help them with learning the numbers, letters, colors, shapes, and words that will help for them to be ready and prepared for kinder.
- Most of the children feed into a local public school. We met with the kinder teachers twice yearly to compare and contrast where our children are. Ready is determined by them; therefore, we use our own curriculum to meet their goals and expectations.
- The child must be ready in the areas of social emotional, cognitive, and language development.
- A child who has met specific social, physical, educational, developmental milestones.
- Ready in following domains: Social emotional physical cognitive language and literacy
- Social skills! That's what children are lacking.
- I think it means for a child to be independent, sociable competent, curious, eager to learn and be able to follow instructions. To be able to use his/her words to express needs, wants, and ideas.
- It means to be happy and emotional ready for learning and have an excellent kindergarten year.
- Social emotional ready.
- The child is ready socially and academically. He's able to listen and sit for instructions. Child is able to work around children and also be by him/herself.
- To know the basics: -letters, numbers, shapes, color, being able to write and recognize their own name. Typically understanding a routine.
- They need to be socially and emotionally ready to be able to self-regulate. Each child develops letter recognition at their own pace.
- Social and emotional development. Be able to self-regulate.
- Possesses the necessary DA social-emotional, cognitive, large motor, language, small motor skills to be able to learn.
- Having a wonderment of learning and discovering social engagement.
- Enjoys coming to school and is able to follow a schedule.

Appendix B, continued

- It means developmentally ready (not age ready) and many children might excel in one or two areas of development rather than all. Preschool teachers and child's parent would be the people to determine that as they are the most knowledgeable about a child's development growth.
- Be ready in many areas, social and emotional, literacy and reading, math, comprehension, motivation.
- That a child is socially and emotionally ready.
- That the child is cognitively and socially ready.
- Social, emotional, physical, cognitive, creative. Every child has to be comfortable to be going further to kindergarten.
- A child is ready if he/she meet all the appropriate levels in the domain from physical, cognitive, social, language, health, emotional, etc.
- Able to attend; self-regulate; communicate needs, wants, and opinions; think critically about problems and come up with solutions.
- To be social-emotional competent, have self-regulation, and pre-academic skills need to succeed in K.
- That the child is socially, emotionally, cognitively, and physically are ready for K programs in public schools.
- To be social, emotional, and cognitive ready it is very important for a child when enter to kindergarten.
- Child's progress in all areas (social, emotional, etc.).
- Child develops emotionally, socially, cognitively and physically. Child is able to learn independently. Child will be able to have good foundation in all aspects so that child is prepared to progress and succeed.
- To be ready in his social development and can be knowledgeable in basic language and math concepts. Also child must be able to demonstrate independence in toileting, dressing, feeding, etc.
- To be confident to express need and wants. Able to follow directions. Familiar with school routines. Interested in learning.
- Socially and independent.
- To ensure that children have basic learning skills to thrive in kindergarten. Children have social skills to interact with other.
- The children having not only social skills but also the ability to express how they feel and how to solve a problem.
- Socially and ready developmentally.
- School readiness must be a smooth transition into kindergarten. Students must have language and literacy skills plus social skills. All developmental skills needed and assessed on the DRDP-2015 tool.
- Children need to be emotionally, socially, and academically.
- Socially and emotionally ready for rigors of K. Awareness of alphabet/numbers/patterns/reading.
- Child familiar with letters, numbers, colors, etc. Also child able to communicate, social skills.
- I think it means a child is self-aware, resilient, verbally expressive, healthy, possesses a strong self-esteem, can problem solve and self-regulate, is well balanced, utilized fine motor skills with growing confidence, can think and question, respond to inquiries, engage in dialogue, follows 2-3 steps instruction, processes information, can run, jump, cross the mid-line, knows basic information/cognition (letter names and sounds, number sense, etc.) cause and effect, and the list goes on! Child whom can respond to his/her name when called and feels secure in his/her skin will do well in kindergarten.
- For the child to be able to self-monitor themselves. Also, the child should have had a chance to engage in a social environment to start using their skills in language, mathematical, scientific as well as their physical well-being.

Appendix B, continued

- To be ready socially, emotionally, cognitively.
- I think when Children have the opportunity to play in groups and face the following domains they are ready for kindergarten: physical development, social, emotional and cognitive knowledge.
- Socially prepared, basic learning tools.
- That they are socially and emotionally prepared.
- A child ready for kindergarten includes many factors and includes the child's development physically, socially, and cognitively. This can be demonstrated in the child's ability to speak, interaction with other children and adults, ability to listen and follow instructions, able to go to the bathroom by him/herself, letter and number recognition and/or awareness are some examples.
- Socially/emotionally developed.
- To be socially competent, emotionally, and cognitive.
- To be prepared for kindergarten academically and emotionally.
- The child is in constant development in cognitive, social-emotional, physical, and language. Once a child experiences preschool, the foundation blocks are forming and will allow the child to flourish in their academic career.
- Be ready social or expose to social dev. with other children and to get an idea to be in a routine.
- When child shows improvement that one requires by DRDP and confidence in himself that tell the child is ready for kindergarten.
- Student is socially, emotionally, physically, and academically ready to learn and play.
- Have some readiness skills, social skills, emerging self-regulation and initiative to problem solve.
- Possesses the social/emotional maturity to interact positively with teachers and peers, within the classroom environment --demonstrates curiosity, takes initiative in learning, and possesses the cognitive inclination to be a lifelong learner --meets other markers for fine/gross motor, language development.
- A child needs to be socially and emotionally confident to go to kindergarten. He or she needs to feel safe and involved in his or her environment. A curious mind that knows how to explore the area around it. Knowing how to play.
- It means many things. They need to be ready or at average in all areas of development. That includes social and emotional development.