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# School Readiness in the Mission

DATA BRIEF PREPARED FOR MISSION PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS

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## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In partnership with First 5 San Francisco, Applied Survey Research (ASR) conducted its most recent countywide assessment of school readiness among students entering kindergarten in the fall of 2015. Using the ASR School Readiness Assessment Model, school readiness is measured for a set of skills along a scale ranging from “not yet” demonstrating a skill to being “proficient” in a skill. A range of skills are assessed, encompassing four Basic Building Blocks of readiness: Motor Skills, Social Expression, Self-Regulation, and Kindergarten Academics. Readiness levels are reported in several ways, including mean proficiency scores overall and within each readiness domain, as well as using benchmarks that sort students into groups designating that they are “not ready,” “partially ready,” or “ready.”

Among the schools participating in the 2015 assessment were two – Bryant Elementary and Cesar Chavez Elementary – that are in the Mission neighborhood of San Francisco. This research brief summarizes the following research questions for the Mission Promise Neighborhood initiative:

1. How do the assessed students and families in the Mission neighborhood (i.e., at Bryant and Chavez) reflect the Mission Promise Neighborhood initiative’s “recipe” for ensuring that students enter school ready to succeed?
2. What percentage of Mission students assessed were ready for school at kindergarten entry?
3. What are Mission students’ readiness levels across the Basic Building Blocks?
4. What student and family factors are associated with higher readiness levels among Mission neighborhood students?
5. What is the cumulative impact on readiness of having multiple “protective” factors that individually tend to be associated with higher readiness?

Important data note: It should be noted that the results described here are based on a sampling strategy that was designed to be representative of kindergarten students countywide, and not at the level of the Mission neighborhood specifically. Consequently, results should be considered suggestive of trends and relationships among students in this neighborhood; however, the sample size and sampling methodology does not allow for the data to represent all Mission neighborhood kindergarten students. Due to the small sample size, all results have been combined across Bryant and Chavez, the two schools in the Mission Promise Neighborhood. (See Appendix 1 for a breakdown of readiness levels for the individual schools.)

# FINDINGS

This data brief explores the five central research questions asked of the Mission Promise Neighborhood team.

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## Research Question 1: How do the assessed students and families reflect the organization’s “recipe” for ensuring that students enter school ready to succeed?

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The model for the Mission Promise Neighborhood states that “by connecting families with the community resources they need to succeed in life, we give students their best shot at academic achievement.”<sup>1</sup> As part of this model, Mission Promise Neighborhood focuses on the following components for early student learning: **Healthcare, preschool, parenting education, and early literacy.**

Along with a basic examination of children’s demographics and background characteristics, the table that follows shows the extent to which the families in the assessed Mission schools are connecting with available resources in these key areas.

Some of the key characteristics include the following:

- The students assessed were almost all from Hispanic/Latino backgrounds, and almost all were English Learners.
- A large proportion were from families with low education and/or income levels.
- All children were insured (mostly via Medi-Cal) and were connected to regular healthcare providers.
- About three quarters had attended a center-based or PFA preschool.
- About one in five families were connected to an FRC, but self-reported exposure to parenting education classes was less common.
- Family activities related to early literacy – reading and/or storytelling were regularly practiced by many families, but only a little more than one in three families used San Francisco’s libraries.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://missionpromise.org/our-work/our-model>. Accessed 3/15/17.

Table 1. Characteristics of students assessed in the Mission Promise Neighborhood schools, 2015

Student and Family Characteristics	Percent
CHILD DEMOGRAPHICS	
Sex (% female)	41%
Race/Ethnicity	
Hispanic	88%
Filipino	6%
Hispanic and other	6%
Average age at kindergarten entry	5.5 yrs
Has special needs at K	22%
English Learner	94%
Mother completed less than high school education	43%
Household earned less than \$32,000	58%
HEALTHCARE RELATED	
Child has a regular healthcare provider	100%
Child has a regular dentist	91%
Child has had a medical exam in the last year	91%
Child has had a dental exam in the last year	91%
Child's insurance source	
<i>Medi-Cal</i>	82%
<i>Private insurance</i>	18%
PRESCHOOL	
Attended center-based/Preschool for All preschool	74%
PARENTING EDUCATION	
Participation in First 5 services	59%
Attended parent education classes (parent report)	5%
EARLY LITERACY	
Read to child 5 times per week or more	45%
Told stories or sang songs with child 5 times per week or more	44%
Visited library with child prior to kindergarten	36%

Source: Kindergarten Observation Form, Parent Information Form, SFUSD administrative data. N = 19-32.

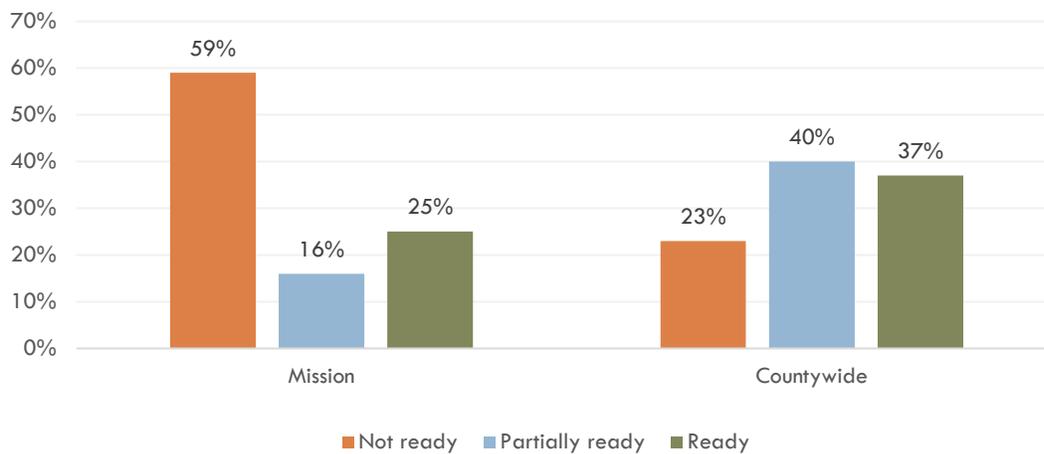
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## Research Question 2: What percentage of students assessed in the Mission Promise Neighborhood were ready for school?

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The vision for the Mission Promise Neighborhood is that students enter school ready for success. To what extent is that occurring among the 2015 kindergarten students in the Mission? Using a 3.25 benchmark, which indicates a student’s development is somewhere between *in progress* and *proficient* in the skills that comprise each domain, students whose mean scores were greater than or equal to 3.25 across all domains were categorized as “ready”. Those whose mean domain scores were less than 3.25 across all domains were categorized as “not ready”. The remaining students – who are ready in some but not all skill domains – fall into the “partially ready” category.

Figure 1. Kindergarten readiness levels: Mission Promise Neighborhood students versus students countywide, 2015



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form, Ns = Promise Neighborhood: 32, County (weighted N): 723.

As the figure above shows, one in four students in the Mission schools was ready for school, as compared with 37% county-wide. Almost six in ten Mission students were not ready on any of the four assessed readiness domains.

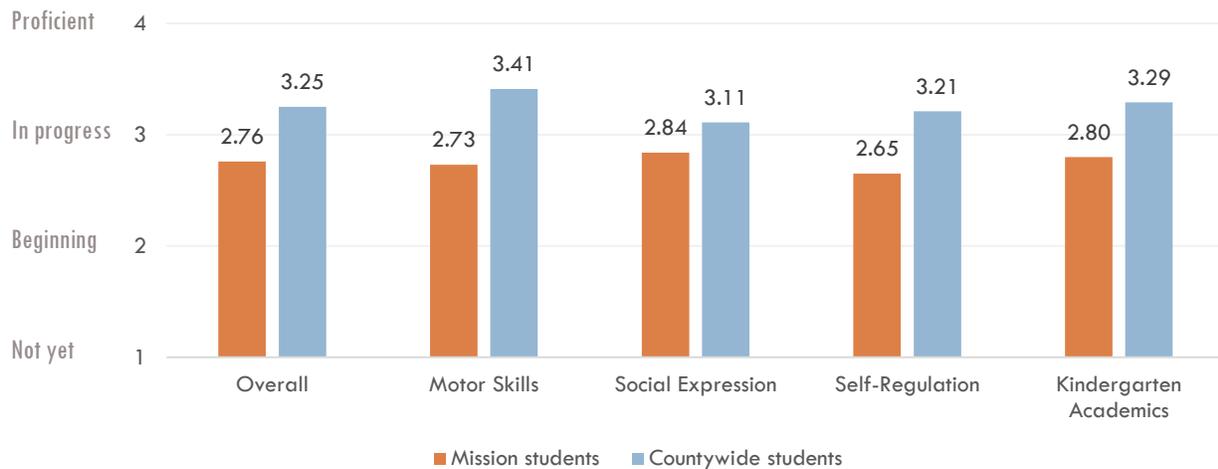
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### Research Question 3: What are Mission Promise Neighborhood students' readiness levels across the Basic Building Blocks?

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As the previous figure showed, many of the students in the Mission schools were not ready across all domains of readiness. The figure that follows provides more detail regarding students' readiness across the four Basic Building Blocks of readiness, displaying average readiness scores in comparison with those of students countywide.

Figure 2. Kindergarten readiness levels: Mission Promise Neighborhood students versus students countywide, 2015



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form, Ns = Promise Neighborhood: 32, County (weighted N): 725-751.

As the figure shows, the assessed Mission students had lower readiness in all domains than students countywide. On average – in each readiness domain and overall – Mission students were approaching the “in progress” level on their skills.

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### Research Question 4: What student and family factors are associated with higher readiness levels among Mission students?

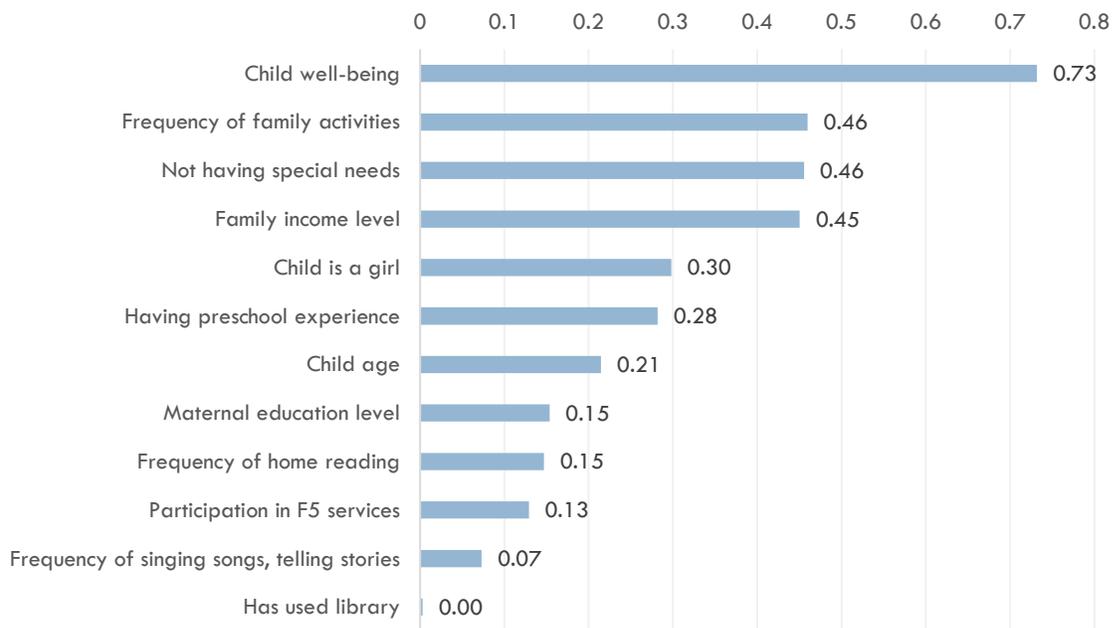
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To investigate predictors of school readiness, typical analyses use regression-based approaches to examine how much specific variables contribute to readiness while simultaneously controlling for the influence of other (potentially-related) variables. However, for the sample of assessed students in the Mission Promise Neighborhood, there are a relatively small number of assessed students (n=32), and even fewer whose parent or guardian also completed a Parent Information Form (n=22), which provides essential information about services, experiences, and other family- and home-related variables.

Because of these limitations due to the small sample size, simple correlations – rather than regressions – are used to determine the factors most strongly associated with higher overall readiness among Mission students. The predictors selected include variables that are part of the Mission Promise Neighborhood model for promoting early learning (healthcare, preschool, parenting education, and early literacy).

Because finding associations between predictors and outcomes requires some degree of variability to find a relationship, some variables are excluded in which there is no (or almost no) variability in our sample. For example, nearly all students in the Mission sample are Hispanic/Latino, so examinations of race/ethnicity associations with readiness are omitted. A summary of potential readiness predictors – sorted by the strength of their association with overall readiness – is shown in the figure that follows.

*Figure 3. Correlations between key predictors and overall readiness: Mission Promise Neighborhood students, 2015*



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form, Parent Information Form. N = 16-32.

Results of the correlation analyses revealed the following:

- Children’s well-being had the strongest association with overall readiness. Children who were less frequently characterized by their teachers as appearing tired, hungry, or ill had higher readiness levels.
- The overall frequency of engaging in a set of six different family activities also had a strong correlation with readiness. This variable was included in the set of correlations after the frequency of literacy-specific family activities (reading and telling stories/singing songs) did not show a strong association with readiness.
- Not having special needs and having a higher family income also had correlations greater than 0.40 with overall readiness.
- Among this set of students, preschool experience had a moderate correlation with readiness.
- Self-reported use of the library and using First 5 services did not show a strong correlation with readiness in the Mission students and families.

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## Research Question 5: What is the cumulative impact of positive predictors on overall readiness?

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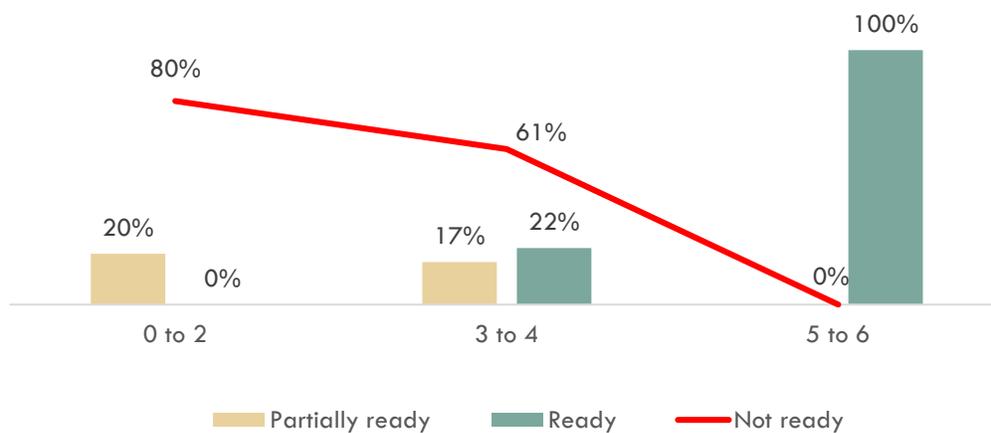
The previous research question individually examined possible correlates of school readiness. This section considers the cumulative impact of these correlates, addressing the following question: To what extent are students more prepared at kindergarten entry when they possess multiple factors associated with readiness? How much more ready for school are students with multiple “protective” factors, as compared with students who possess few or no protective factors?

Due to the small sample size among Mission Promise Neighborhood students, protective factors were chosen from among the subset of variables that were available for all assessed students. These included six protective factors:

- Having no instances of being sick, hungry, or tired at school according to teacher reports
- Not having special needs
- Being a girl
- Being at least 5 ½ years old
- Having preschool experience
- Having participated in First 5 services

As the figure below shows, all of the students with five or six of these protective factors were ready for kindergarten. In contrast, none of the students with two or fewer protective factors were ready for school, and 80% were not ready in any of the four readiness domains. Even among those students with three or four of the six protective factors, only slightly more than one in five (22%) were ready for school in all domains.

Figure 4. Percentage of students ready for school, by number of protective factors they possess, 2015



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form, SFUSD administrative data. N = 32.

## SUMMARY

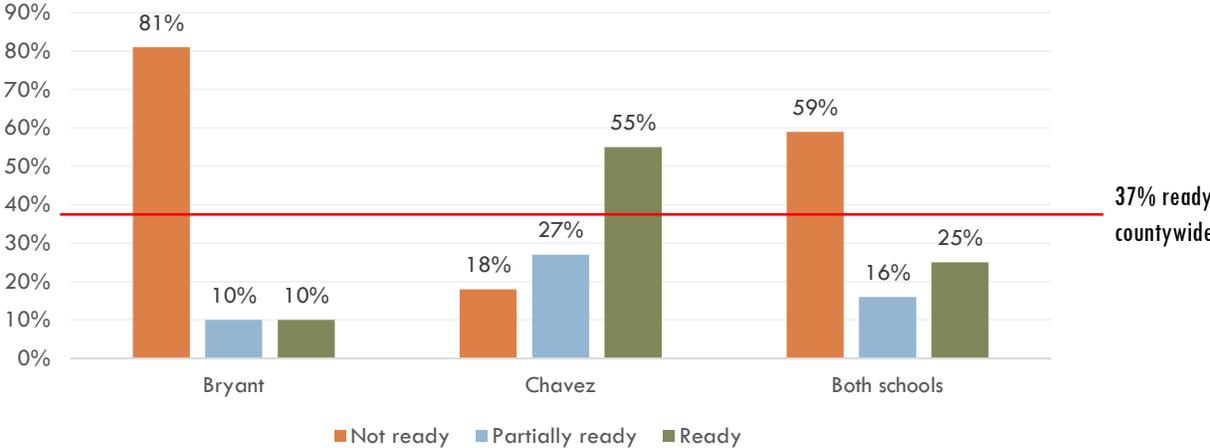
Findings in this data brief point to readiness deficits that are more prevalent in the Mission as compared to the overall SFUSD sample from the 2015 school readiness assessments. Nearly six in ten Mission neighborhood students were not ready on any of the four assessed readiness domains.

However, some findings also point to opportunities for closing achievement gaps between Mission neighborhood students and their peers.

- Children’s well-being had the strongest association with overall readiness. Children who were less frequently characterized by their teachers as appearing tired, hungry, or ill had higher readiness levels. This points to opportunities for educating parents on ensuring their children get enough sleep, are getting breakfast in the morning, and have access to immunizations for preventable illnesses.
- The overall frequency of engaging in a set of six different family activities also had a strong correlation with readiness, which underscores the importance of family engagement in supporting early learning.
- Preschool experience is also positively correlated with kindergarten preparedness and is another environment that provides opportunity for family engagement and education around the various ways young children can be supported to be prepared for and excel in school.

# APPENDIX 1: PERCENTAGE OF BRYANT AND CHAVEZ STUDENTS READY FOR KINDERGARTEN

Figure 5. Kindergarten readiness levels, by Mission Promise Neighborhood schools and overall, 2015



Source: Kindergarten Observation Form, Ns = Bryant: 21, Chavez: 11, Both: 32, County (weighted N): 723.