

## II. Desired Outcome: Children Are Prepared for and Successful in School

Table 3 lists indicators related to child care, children's preparedness for kindergarten and their progress through school. Results suggest that:

- In 2006, fewer than half of Santa Clara County's preschoolers were prepared for kindergarten on all aspects of child development, and they especially needed extra skill-building in the area of self-regulation.
- While third grade reading scores have improved in the last few years, just half of the county's third graders performed at the proficient or advanced level on a standardized English language arts test in 2006, and only about one-fourth of English Learners and economically disadvantaged students scored at the same levels.

*Key issues related to children's success in school are summarized below, and more data are available at [www.kidsdata.org](http://www.kidsdata.org).*

### Child Care

High-quality child care and preschool programs can prepare children for school and life by providing them with opportunities that build their social-emotional, cognitive, language and physical skills. For many families, however, especially in a high-cost area such as Santa Clara County, child care and preschool can be prohibitively expensive, and too few licensed child care spaces—of any quality level—exist for the number of children who need them. In 2004, there were licensed child care spaces sufficient to serve only 26% of the children in the county ages 0-13 years with parents in the labor force (though not all working parents need licensed child care, as some, for example, may have relatives care for their children).<sup>68</sup>

**Table 3. Children Are Prepared for and Successful in School: Key Indicators in Santa Clara County**

#### Child Care

- Availability of licensed child care

#### Status at Kindergarten Entry

- Children's school readiness

#### Progress Through School

- Third grade reading proficiency
- High school dropout rates
- College readiness

### Status at Kindergarten Entry

Children entering kindergarten each year from 2004 to 2006 in Santa Clara County were assessed for their school readiness. Teachers rated a wide range of children's skills. Results held steady during this period: Children are most prepared in self-care and motor skills and least prepared in kindergarten academics and self-regulation skills. In 2006, scores ranged from 3.23<sup>vii</sup> for kindergarten academics and self-regulation to 3.49 for self-care and motor skills, on a 4-point scale (see Figure 11).<sup>69</sup> Kindergarten teachers identify self-regulation skills (e.g., pays attention, controls impulses, plays cooperatively) as the skills children need most when they enter school.<sup>70</sup> In 2006, about half (47%) of children were prepared for kindergarten on every domain, while others had mastered only some of the skills that they needed. For example, a little more than one in six (16%) had good social expression skills but needed advancement in kindergarten academics; 27% had good academic skills but needed practice

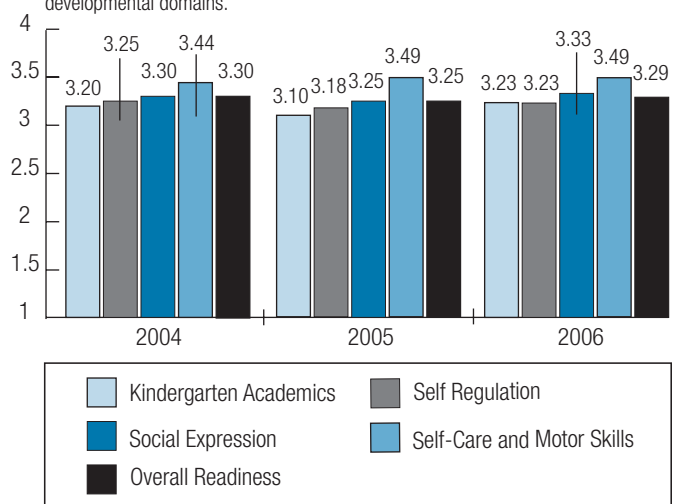
vii. Scores could range from 1 = not yet; 2= beginning; 3= in progress; and 4 = proficient.

on self-regulation and social expression; and 10% were not proficient in any of the 20 measured readiness skills.<sup>71</sup>

Across the three years of data collection, greater readiness was most strongly associated with the following factors: being older at kindergarten entry, being a girl, having no special needs, having attended preschool, being proficient in English, being exposed to more frequent reading in the home, and the presence of fewer family risk factors (e.g., having a single parent, teen mother, low income, or having low parental educational levels).<sup>72</sup>

**Figure 11. Santa Clara County School Readiness Scores for Children Entering Kindergarten, by Developmental Domain**

Scores on a 1-4 scale: 1= not yet; 2= beginning; 3= in progress; 4= proficient. Overall readiness scores are the means that reflect children's skill level across all developmental domains.



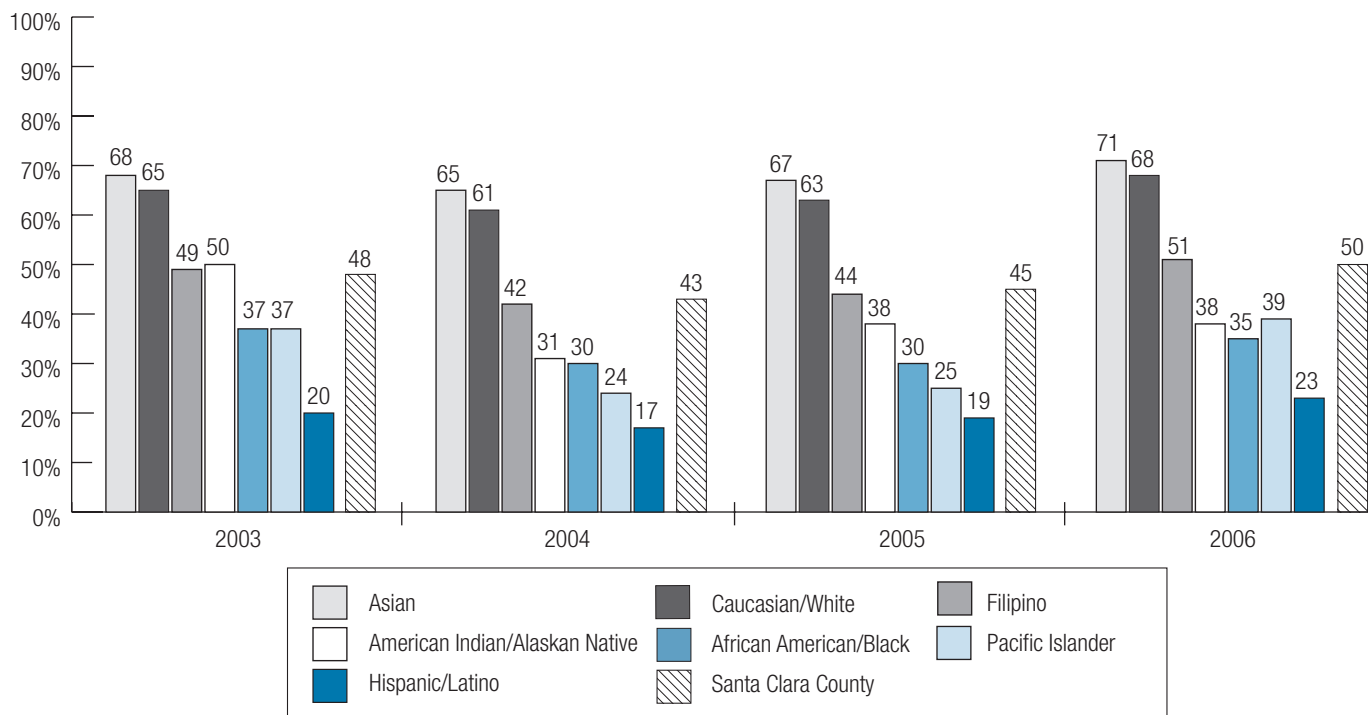
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2006). *Are children ready for school? Assessment of kindergarten readiness in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. Comprehensive Report 2005*. United Way Silicon Valley, E-mail Communication, 08/01/07.

### Children's Progress Through School

A child's reading level at the end of the third grade is one of the strongest predictors for later school success.<sup>73</sup> In 2006, a greater percentage of Santa Clara County children were reading at the proficient or advanced levels on the California Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) English Language Arts test than the statewide average (50% in the county versus 36% in California).<sup>74</sup>

Still, there remain large economic, linguistic and racial/ethnic disparities. While only 24% of the county's economically disadvantaged third graders scored at the advanced or proficient levels on the English Language Arts test, 67% of non-disadvantaged students did the same.<sup>75</sup> About one-quarter of all Santa Clara County's students are classified as English Learners. Of third grade English Learners, only 25% scored at the proficient or advanced levels in English Language Arts; while that is an increase from previous years, it still is far lower than the 62% of third graders proficient in English or English-only speakers who scored at the same levels.<sup>76</sup> From 2003-2006, the percentages of Caucasian/White and Asian students at the proficient or advanced levels were higher than the county average; the proportion for Filipino students was near the county mean; and the percentages for other groups were below the county averages (see Figure 12).<sup>77</sup>

**Figure 12. Percentage of Santa Clara County 3rd Graders Performing Proficiently or Better in English Language Arts, by Race/Ethnicity**



Source: California Department of Education. California Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR). <http://star.cde.ca.gov>

Note: 19,245 out of 19,564 third graders were tested in 2006. Of those, 4,963 were Asian, 4,797 were Caucasian/White, 911 were Filipino, 82 were American Indian/Alaskan Native, 637 were African American/Black, 152 were Pacific Islander and 7,354 were Latino/Hispanic.

These racial/ethnic group disparities are echoed in later years in measures such as high school dropouts<sup>viii</sup> and college preparation, where Caucasian/White and Asian students tend to stay in school longer and take more college preparatory classes than their peers in other racial/ethnic groups. The data show an upswing in the county's estimated dropout rate (14.3% in the county in 2005 versus 6.4% in 2003), so that the rate now outpaces California levels (12.6% in 2005).<sup>78</sup>

The rates for African American/Black (15.3% in 2005), Hispanic/Latino (28.3%) and Native American/Alaska Native (22.1%) students remain higher than those for Asian (4.8%) and Caucasian/White (6.8%) students.

The percentage of all high school graduates who completed college preparatory courses in 2005 is about the same (45.5%) as in recent years. However, only 25% of African American/Black students and 21% of Hispanic/Latino students completed such courses, versus close to two-thirds of Asian and more than half of Caucasian/White students.<sup>79</sup>

viii. Some controversy exists about high school dropout rates, because there is no standardized method to track students who stop attending school.