



What is READY?

Road to the Early Achievement and Development of Youth known as READY is a cross-sector partnership in alignment with the vision of Upstream Investments and Cradle to Career that is built on the belief that prevention focused policies and interventions can have long-term impact. READY is a project that is reliant on a partnership with county school districts such as Santa Rosa City Schools in order to collect school readiness data from incoming kindergarten students and their families. The local data collected informs the discussion, policies and strategies that increase access to high quality early learning opportunities, helping our youngest to transition into kindergarten. READY was established in 2013, collecting school readiness assessment data and information from parents through surveys to gather key data to help guide and inform the county-wide conversion. It is funded by First 5 Sonoma County and implemented by the Sonoma County Human Services Department, Upstream Investments.

In order to gather the school readiness assessment data, READY currently partners with 8 local school districts and their kindergarten teachers to use a classroom friendly tool called the Kindergarten Student Entrance Profile (KSEP) to observe kindergarten students within the first few weeks of school. This data is analyzed and provided to the district, school sites and participating teachers to help provide an additional data point for conversation with families and to inform instruction and programs.

Listed below is a brief summary of READY's vision:

- Expand early learning programs in Sonoma County
- Increase access to high quality and innovative early learning programs for low income families, prioritizing community members that identify as Black, Indigenous, Latinx and Communities of Color (BIPOC)
- Expand support to teachers in use of KSEP data
- Continue to strengthen connection between early learning programs and the TK-12 school system
- Support investment in early childhood programs and promote public-private partnerships to help increase collective impact
- Grow an equity focus by expanding research from individual level factors of kindergarten readiness to encompass community and system level factors

History of Santa Rosa City Schools' Participation in READY

Santa Rosa City Schools began its partnership with READY in the 2013-14 school year at Steele Lane and James Monroe Elementary School where Kinder Academy and Kindergarten teachers supported the data collection and county-wide discussion by administering the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP). Since then, READY has grown to encompass partnerships with 8 local school districts, including Santa Rosa City Schools. Since 2016-17, READY has worked with the same school districts, using the same kindergarten readiness instrument, the Kindergarten Student Entrance Profile (KSEP). This cohort of districts using the same tool has enabled READY to examine trends in kindergarten readiness over time and help inform a county-wide conversation about the importance of early childhood learning opportunities for our youth.

In Santa Rosa City Schools, kindergarten teachers have participated in discussion at grade level meetings on the vision of READY to collaborate with the Department of Human Services in gathering observational data which is critical to the larger county-wide conversation. Without the participation of the teachers and the families who complete the Parent Survey, key pieces of information would be missing. In Santa Rosa City Schools, participation in READY is voluntary each year. Teachers are surveyed annually and those interested and willing to participate are supported in doing so. This includes providing them the necessary training, copies of the Parent Survey in a timely fashion and access to the online system in which they enter their data. They, in turn, receive classroom reports providing helpful graphs and analysis of their classroom data. This school year, 18 kindergarten teachers completed the KSEP for their students. READY and Santa Rosa City Schools thanks our participating teachers for their efforts to support this most important conversation in our community.

READY Moving Ahead-Systems Indicator Research

Since 2016-17, Sonoma County has been experiencing a decline in overall kindergarten readiness. To better understand this decline, in 2021-22, READY included more partners than ever before in the review, analysis and interpretation of local aggregate findings. Partners have included: the Sonoma County Office of Equity; First 5 Leadership Advisory Roundtable and First 5 Evaluation Committee; Cradle to Career; Upstream Investments, and more. This was done to broaden the frame from individual student and family level analysis, to examine protective and risk factors of kindergarten readiness at the organizational, community, policy and systems level as well.

Based on the best practice framework from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Socio-Ecological Model, to understand the larger context of local findings, it is important to acknowledge and examine the factors associated with children's kindergarten readiness are not only individual level skills and behaviors, but also include the readiness of families and communities to support children's development, organizational supports, systems level factors, and policy and environmental impacts. Some examples of local risk factors associated with kindergarten readiness disparities among BIPOC students and the overall decrease in kindergarten readiness include but are not limited to: environmental disaster impacts of

repeated fires, evacuations and floods; systemic impacts of institutionalized and structural racism; closures of schools, early care and education (ECE), and before/after care programs from fires and the COVID-19 pandemic, and; virtual learning from the COVID-19 pandemic. These examples have all had traumatic impacts on our community and students and cannot be ignored when examining kindergarten readiness.

READY and other researchers agree that differences in kindergarten readiness are largely attributable to systemic inequities in access to resources and opportunities. First 5 Sonoma County is committed to implementing targeted, evidence-based policies and practices to address these inequities, prioritizing children and their families that identify as Black, Indigenous and Communities of Color (BIPOC) and READY's findings are intended to inform First 5 policy priorities and investments.

READY data is intended to daylight the disparities that Sonoma County children and their families are facing. The READY Project and partners seek to investigate further the systemic factors that contribute to these disparities as a future research priority. Although disparities are painful to look at, this data offers an opportunity to move forward with an equity focus by informing effective data driven decision-making, advances racial equity & empowers us to seek solutions, rather than to assign blame.

Santa Rosa City Schools currently has a data sharing agreement with the Department of Human Services that includes READY. Data from the KSEP assessment and parent surveys has been provided to teachers and been used by READY in aggregate each year to contribute to the picture of kindergarten readiness at the county level, but district level data has not been shared in a larger public context. In efforts to grow READY's equity focus on system level indicators, this year READY will be including additional community level data to further inform findings.

Specifically, the Department of Human Services will align READY findings with the [Portrait of Sonoma County 2021](#) and its Human Development Index (HDI) Report findings. This alignment will be shared in READY's 2021-22 Sonoma County School Readiness Report, to be released publically May 23, 2022. This systems level perspective of READY data will include a data point (percentage of kindergarten students determined "Ready to Go"), collected through the KSEP from districts showing a possible connection between kindergarten readiness and key measurements of health, wealth and education as measured from the Portrait HDI scores. It is important to note that the data point to be shared for the Santa Rosa community will be that gathered by the 18 participating Santa Rosa City Schools' kindergarten teachers. From the Portrait of Sonoma:

"The Portrait of Sonoma County 2021 Update revises key measurements of health, wealth and education in Sonoma County and compares these data across race, ethnicity, gender and geography, giving Sonoma County a detailed picture of where preventable disparities persist in the county. The new study updates the groundbreaking 2014 Portrait of Sonoma County, which shifted our community's understanding of what determines well-being in Sonoma County and

how conditions vary in individual neighborhoods.” (taken from: [Portrait of Sonoma County: 2021 Update \(upstreaminvestments.org\)](#))

Yet another example of systems level data READY will be reporting on this year to further contextualize findings, is the current early care and education (ECE) desert Sonoma County is experiencing. Since ECE attendance and access is one of the top predictors of kindergarten readiness, it is important to share these facts as they relate to the decline in kindergarten readiness in Sonoma County. Nationally, the ECE workforce experienced extraordinary challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, as an estimated 60 percent of child care programs temporarily closed in 2020—some never recovering. Locally, Sonoma County experienced the same.

In addition, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Sonoma County was already facing a child care desert. According to the Sonoma County Child Care Planning Council (CCPC), there was a permanent loss of 450 licensed child care slots overnight due to the Tubbs Fire in 2017.

According to a [press release](#) from Our Kids Our Future, child care centers and job opportunities have been disappearing throughout the pandemic at alarming levels, with one study from the Sonoma County Economic Development Board (EDB) revealing a 40% reduction in the number of child care spaces available in Sonoma County.

According to a 2019 report by the Child Care Planning Council of Sonoma County (4Cs) and the Sonoma County Office of Education, Sonoma County suffers a shortage of almost 5,000 child care spaces across all ages.

Furthermore, if parents are able to find spaces, sometimes the financial burden of child care is just too much and child care financial assistance is sparse. According to a [2019 report](#) by First Five Sonoma County, 3,100 infants qualify for subsidized child care but only 445 spaces are available.

The above facts are some examples of systems indicators that help researchers understand the bigger picture of why Sonoma County is experiencing a decrease in kindergarten readiness, especially for BIPOC students. READY intends to not only further its analysis of system indicators to understand root cause and factors of kindergarten readiness, but also intends to center and learn from BIPOC communities by increasing community engagement. Moving forward, READY plans to improve data collection by increasing community participatory practice and build authentic relationships including the following the strategies:

- Working with community partners & families, prioritizing BIPOC communities, to examine root causes and identify strategies that support kindergarten readiness from the community's perspective
- Aligning with SCOE Universal Pre-Kindergarten partners for parent engagement & data collection efforts
- Increasing Qualitative Data collection to center BIPOC Voices by conducting focus groups, key informant interviews, etc.

- Developing action plan with partners in alignment with Portrait of Sonoma Agenda for Action

READY is grateful for the powerful partnership of Santa Rosa City School over the years. READY hopes SRCS will continue to support the expansion of our collaborative work to identify and address pathways forward to a more equitable future for the students and families of Sonoma County, so that all residents have the same opportunities to have health, wealth and to thrive.