

# Learners Today, Leaders Tomorrow



Children & Families  
Commission  
of Orange County

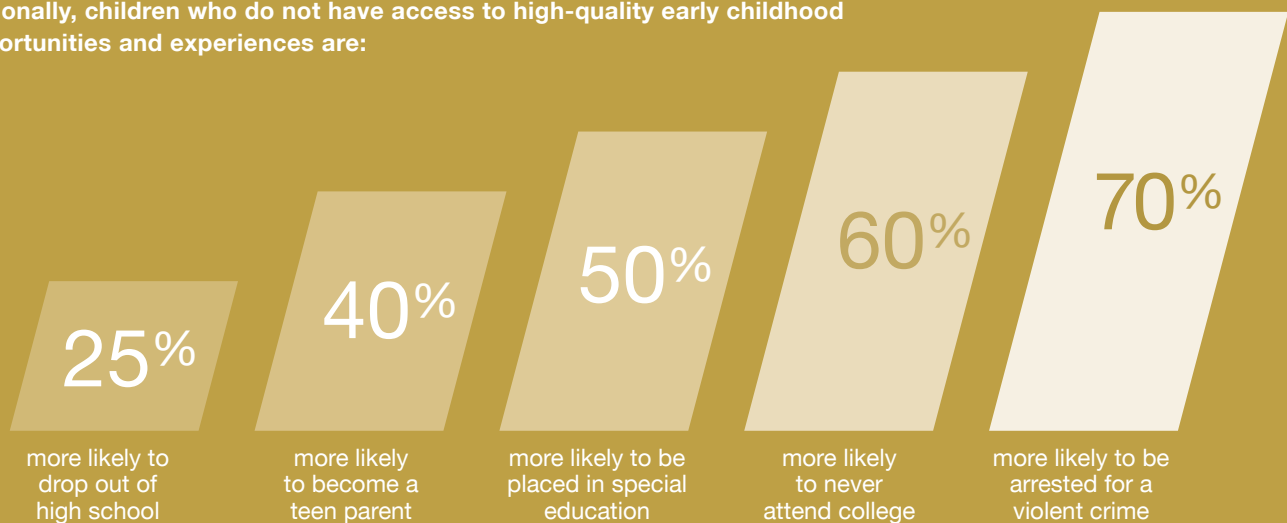
## Kindergarten Readiness Policy Brief

**Research has found that kindergarten readiness is an indicator for future academic and social success.**

Children who are developmentally ready when they start kindergarten are more likely to graduate high school, compete for higher paying jobs and reduce reliance on expensive social services. This doesn't mean every kindergartner needs to know their numbers and letters on day one, but if we can equip children with the skills to learn before they even enter their first classroom, they will have a solid foundation for a thriving future.



Nationally, children who do not have access to high-quality early childhood opportunities and experiences are:



**In fact, children who are not proficient readers by the end of third grade are four times more likely to leave school without a diploma than proficient readers.<sup>1</sup> These high school dropouts earn approximately \$8,000 a year less than graduates.<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Hernandez DJ. "Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade reading skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation." The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2012) Web. 6 Sept. 2015.

<sup>2</sup> <http://all4ed.org/reports-factsheets/education-and-the-economy-boosting-the-nations-economy-by-improving-high-school-graduation-rates/>.

# How Do We Measure Kindergarten Readiness?

The **Early Development Index (EDI)** is a valid and reliable school readiness measurement tool that provides community-level data on the strengths and vulnerabilities of children. The EDI provides information about children in five developmental areas that are known to affect well-being and school performance.



**Physical Health & Well-Being**  
The child can hold a pencil and sustain energy throughout the full school day.



**Language & Cognitive Development**  
The child knows how to handle a book and can attach sounds to some letters.



**Emotional Maturity**  
The child pays attention to directions and is willing to help others.



**Social Competence**  
The child gets along with others and follows rules and instructions.

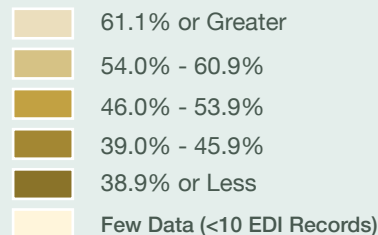


**Communication Skills & General Knowledge**  
The child can communicate his or her needs and takes part in imaginative play.

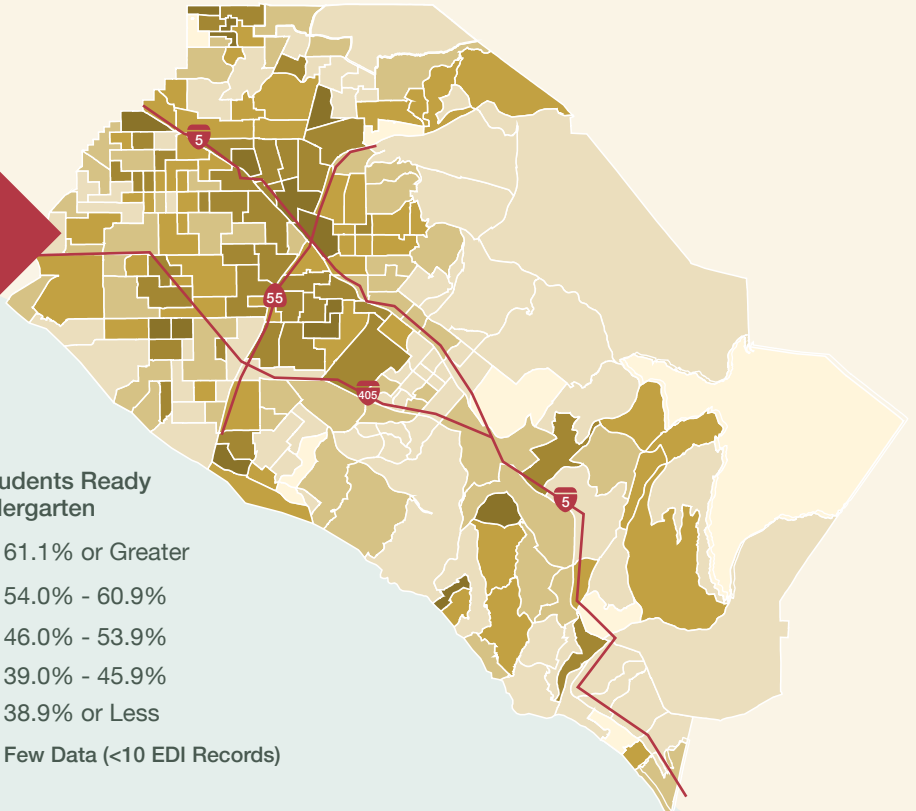
For the first time, the **Children and Families Commission of Orange County** has **comprehensive data about how ready children are when they enter kindergarten.** Never before have Orange County leaders and policy makers known how this entire population is doing.



**% of Students Ready for Kindergarten**



**Percentage of Children Ready For Kindergarten, 2016 Orange County, CA**



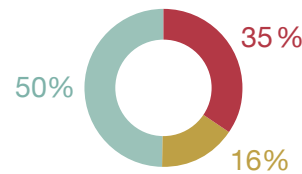
# What We've Learned

The kindergarten readiness data confirms that many Orange County children are not developmentally on-track when they enter kindergarten.

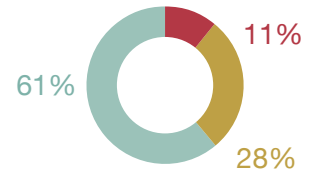
The Commission is using the kindergarten readiness data to educate parents and communities about how they can provide services and environments in which children and parents can learn and play together to foster healthy development.

Additionally, the Commission is digging deeper into the data to understand specific skills that need to be improved. For instance, more than one-third of kindergarteners in the county lack necessary gross and fine motor skills – a possible result of too much screen time and too little crayon-grasping. One out of three children are behind in their pro-social or “helping” behavior, and one out of 10 are not ready for school based on their overall approach to learning, which includes the ability to listen attentively, follow directions, and adjust to class routines.

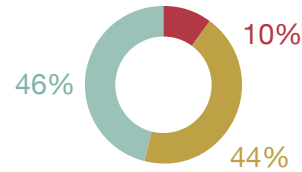
PHYSICAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING:  
Gross and Fine Motor Skills



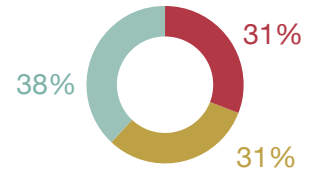
SOCIAL COMPETENCE:  
Approaches to Learning



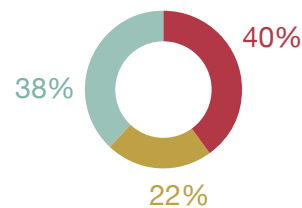
SOCIAL COMPETENCE:  
Overall Social Competence



EMOTIONAL MATURITY:  
Prosocial and helping behavior



COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND  
GENERAL KNOWLEDGE



■ READY  
■ SOMEWHAT READY  
■ NOT READY

\* Totals of 99 percent and 101 percent are due to rounding

## Kindergarten Readiness Data Can Be Used To Create Positive Change For Young Children


The results provide meaningful data that can help Orange County policy makers, providers and community funding partners make more strategic, local decisions about allocating and prioritizing resources and services for young children.

This New Countywide Data Can Be Used To:

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Provide a roadmap for targeted intervention and support for children and communities
- 

Improve grant making, needs assessments and other activities that benefit from real local data
- 

Facilitate community mobilization to create a “young children’s agenda” centered around improving outcomes
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Promote collaboration and integration of children’s services and service systems

# The Importance Of Early Learning Opportunities

For more than 16 years, the Commission has been a leader in responding to children's needs and supporting programs with demonstrable positive impacts on pediatric health and early learning opportunities to maximize children's developmental trajectory.



High-quality early learning opportunities lay the foundation for children's long-term success. Years of research show that early school readiness is a critical and crucial piece to setting children on the best possible trajectory for success in school and in life.

Noted Nobel Laureate and expert in the economics of human development, James J. Heckman, is so convinced of the importance of early investment to the individual, society and the economy, that he's dedicated his career to spreading the word.

"Informed communities can pave the way for success for our young learners. The EDI data sounded the alarm on areas of great need in our city. As we make critical, targeted investments in early childhood, the data makes it easy for us to track progress over time to see how these investment changes influence our children's development and overall preparedness when they enter the classroom for the first time."

– Teresa Egan, Assistant Superintendent, La Habra City School District

"Investing in quality early childhood development for disadvantaged children from birth through age 5 will help prevent achievement deficits and produce better education, health, social and economic outcomes. Such investments will reduce the need for costly remediation and social spending while increasing the value, productivity and earning potential of individuals. In fact, every dollar invested in quality early childhood development for disadvantaged children produces a 7 percent to 10 percent return, per child, per year."

– James J. Heckman, Nobel Prize winning University of Chicago Economics Professor

"The kindergarten readiness data the EDI provides helps us identify and target areas of greatest vulnerability and opportunity in our city. We are able to analyze the data and develop strategic partnerships to maximize our impact and to better meet the needs of families in our community."

– Dennis Wilberg, City Manager, City of Mission Viejo

"The importance of investing in young children before they reach their first classroom is critical. With a sustained and comprehensive effort to optimize the developmental trajectories for all children, they can succeed in school, form strong social and family relationships, and live productive lives."

– Neal Halfon, MD, MPH and founding director of the UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities

The Children and Families Commission of Orange County receives funding from the 1998 Tobacco Tax (Proposition 10) that was passed by California voters to improve the health and early education of children from birth to 5-years of age.



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