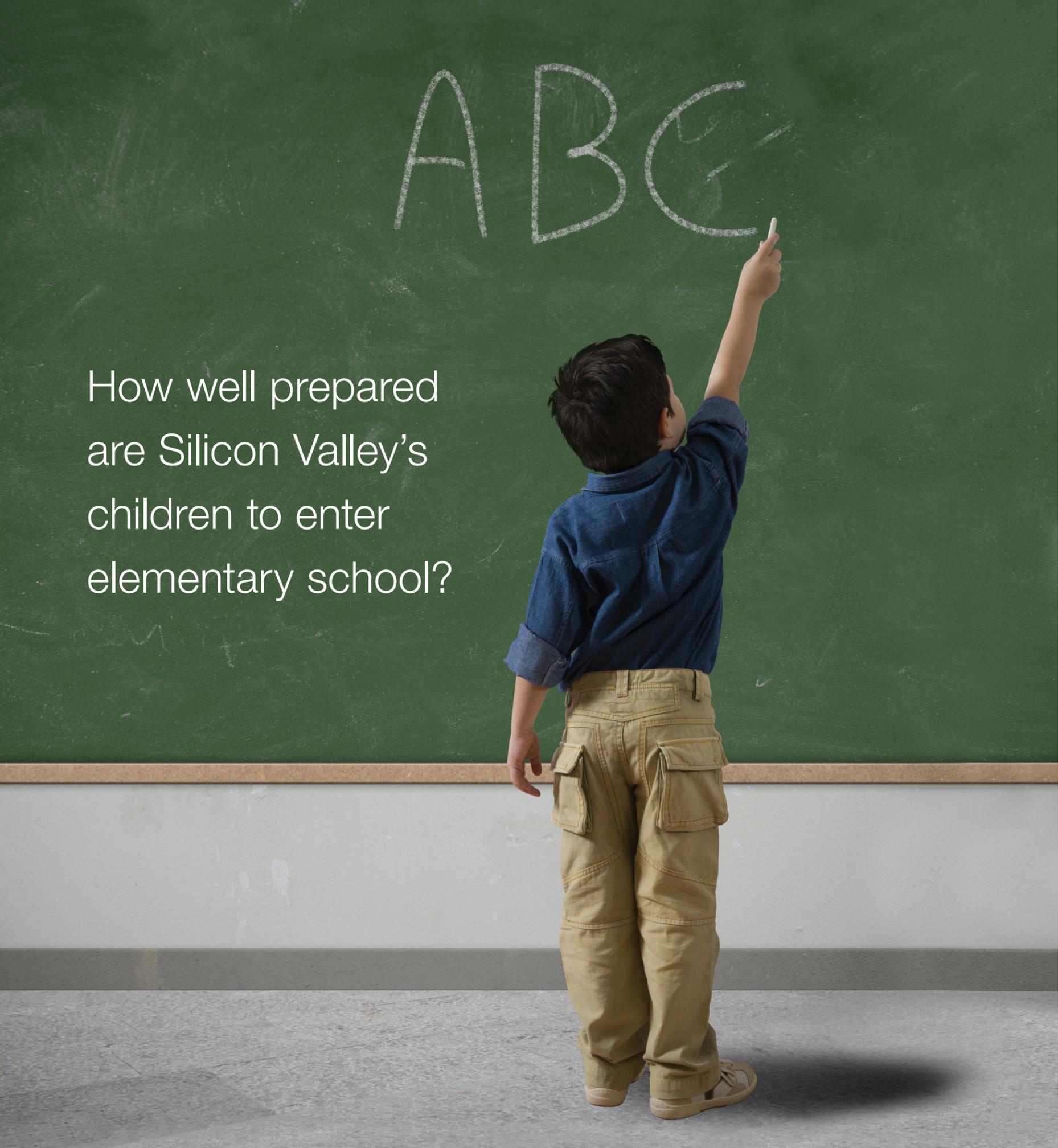


# are they ready?

Measuring Children's  
Readiness for School





How well prepared  
are Silicon Valley's  
children to enter  
elementary school?

## Introduction

How well prepared are Silicon Valley's children to enter elementary school? For more than a decade, San Mateo and Santa Clara counties have been conducting regional school readiness assessments to help answer this question and to gauge the long-term effects of children's readiness for school. These efforts have allowed local preschools and elementary school districts in both counties to improve their programs and services, as well as their alignment with each other.

In 2012, both counties used a new, free assessment tool recommended by the California Department of Education that is known as the Desired Results Developmental Profile – School Readiness, or DRDP-SR<sup>®</sup>. Despite its ungainly name, the DRDP-SR holds great promise for assessing students' readiness for elementary school on a variety of measures, from social to academic.

This issue brief provides an overview of the DRDP-SR, presents key findings from the 2012 Silicon Valley School Readiness Assessment and examines why measuring school readiness matters, especially as California moves toward implementation of the Common State Standards.

## What is “School Readiness” and Why is Measuring It Important?

School readiness is a measure of how prepared a child is to succeed in school across multiple dimensions, including physical, cognitive, social and emotional competence, as well as positive attitudes toward learning. Research indicates that children who are strong across all dimensions of readiness do better academically later in elementary school.

Because of this, there has been increased attention on assessing school readiness for a variety of reasons, which include:

- 1) Identifying successful, high-quality early learning experiences that can ensure a more even start for children entering kindergarten;
- 2) Aligning instruction and curricula from preschool to third grade so that children have consistent, high-quality learning experiences that build upon their academic and social gains in the prior year;
- 3) Supporting reflective, intentional teaching that meets the needs of individual children and of the classroom;
- 4) Facilitating communication with kindergarteners’ parents and caregivers to support the family-school partnership.

## What is the DRDP-SR?

The DRDP-SR was designed to focus on areas of development that have the most predictive power for success in kindergarten. These areas are:

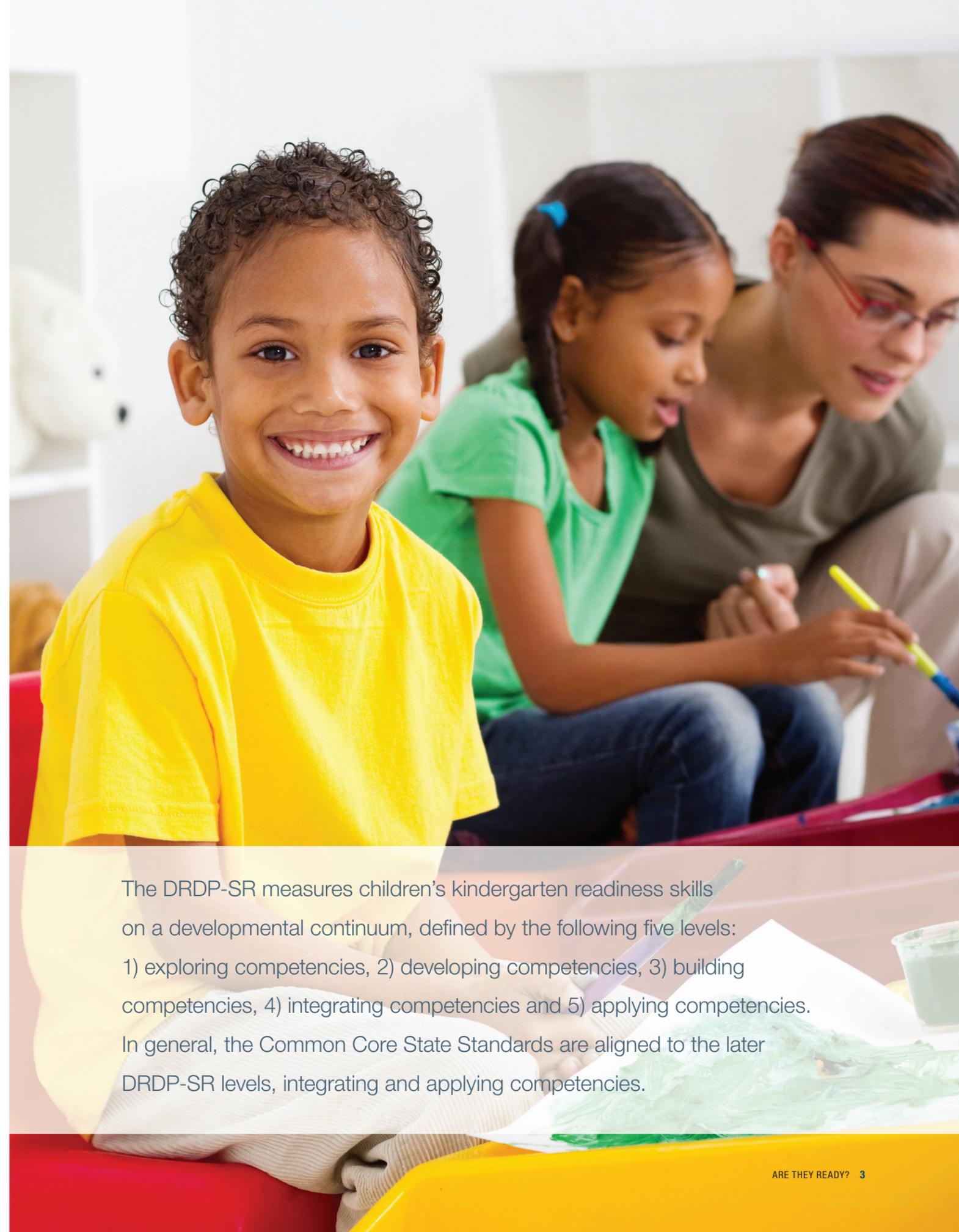
- self and social development
- self-regulation
- language and literacy development
- mathematical development
- English language development among students who are English-language learners

The DRDP-SR is an observational tool, not a “test.” Teachers observe children during regular, routine classroom activities and complete the DRDP-SR for each student within the first several weeks of school. It can be repeated again in the spring to gauge students’ progress throughout the year and support their transition to the next grade level.

The DRDP-SR is part of a larger assessment system aligned with California Department of Education’s child development services and the accountability system for elementary education. It is one of the only school readiness assessment tools aligned to the Common Core State Standards. It provides transitional kindergarten and kindergarten teachers with a valid, reliable measurement tool that will assist them in observing, documenting and reflecting on the learning, development and progress of their students on measures that directly correspond to these new standards.

The DRDP-SR is also aligned to the California Preschool Learning Foundations and its use is designed to strengthen the continuity of expectations, curricula and assessments between preschool and kindergarten.

An accompanying online and app-based reporting system to the DRDP-SR, DRDPtech, is integrated with CALPADS (California’s longitudinal data system used to maintain individual-level student data), and is now available for all school districts to enter student scores and produce reports at the student, classroom, grade, school and school district levels.



The DRDP-SR measures children’s kindergarten readiness skills on a developmental continuum, defined by the following five levels: 1) exploring competencies, 2) developing competencies, 3) building competencies, 4) integrating competencies and 5) applying competencies. In general, the Common Core State Standards are aligned to the later DRDP-SR levels, integrating and applying competencies.



Using the DRDP-SR “provides essential information on how prepared students are at the earliest stages to master the new standards.

The tool can help measure progress on the new standards in the first crucial year students are in the K-12 system.”

– Tom Torlakson, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

## Highlights from the 2012 Silicon Valley School Readiness Assessment

Over 700 children entering transitional kindergarten and kindergarten in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties were assessed using the DRDP-SR in the fall of 2012. Data from the assessment are representative of the student population in each county. In addition, 63 teachers completed a survey to capture information regarding their satisfaction with and the usefulness of the new tool.

### A look at the readiness level of our region’s kindergarten students

**66%** Sixty-six percent of students who were assessed rated in the later developmental levels (building, integrating and applying competencies) in all readiness domains, indicating that these students enter kindergarten optimally poised to succeed in school.

**10%** Close to 10 percent of students rated in the early developmental levels (exploring and developing competencies) in all readiness domains, indicating that these students enter kindergarten needing additional support and resources to catch up to their peers.

**80%** Close to 80 percent of students rated at or above the levels their teachers expected of them, depending on the developmental domain measured, indicating that teachers’ expectations were lower than students’ actual developmental levels across all domains.

### A look at what teachers had to say

- A majority of teachers reported that they were comfortable with the DRDP-SR assessment and that the DRDP-SR helped them determine which areas each child needed to work on.
- Some teachers also reported that, compared with other assessment tools, the DRDP-SR provided a better picture of children’s skills, particularly in the self-regulation and self and social development domains.
- One in three teachers said that they would continue using the tool, despite the limited training offered during this pilot year.

## Conclusions and Next Steps

With the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, kindergarteners will be challenged by new and higher expectations. Children who start behind in critical readiness areas are less likely to develop the higher-order thinking, problem-solving and communication skills that these new standards will require.

All district superintendents and charter school administrators in California have been encouraged by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to use the DRDP-SR in their transitional kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms as a way of providing essential information on how prepared students are at the earliest stages to master the new standards.

Silicon Valley Community Foundation urges parents, schools and communities to support the use of the DRDP-SR locally so that we have a consistent, accurate picture of the skills and abilities of entering kindergarteners and can direct resources and supports to the children and classrooms that need them most.

To learn more about the DRDP-SR and its implementation in Silicon Valley, please contact Michelle Sioson Hyman at 650.450.5497 or [mshyman@siliconvalleycf.org](mailto:mshyman@siliconvalleycf.org).



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To read the full study, please visit:

[siliconvalleycf.org/early-childhood-education-initiatives](http://siliconvalleycf.org/early-childhood-education-initiatives)

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