



## RESEARCH BRIEF

# Summary of Findings from the Successful Kids in Pre-K Project (SKIPP) Study

January 2016

LAUP, in association with Applied Survey Research (ASR), undertook a series of studies to gauge LAUP students' kindergarten readiness. The purpose of the resulting study was to assess LAUP children's level of kindergarten readiness at various points of time in their preparation and transition to kindergarten, and also to understand the types of programs and interventions that effectively promote school readiness. The study also explored the expectations and practices of parents and teachers around school readiness in both the Pre-K and kindergarten settings. The study found that the majority of the children in the sample left their LAUP preschools ready for success in kindergarten and beyond.

The following brief summarizes three separate phases and associated reports that were part of the Successful Kids in Pre-K Project (SKIPP) study.

## Overview

The Successful Kids in Pre-K Project (SKIPP) study was conducted in collaboration between LAUP and ASR to assess the kindergarten readiness of children at various points of their educational journeys. Preschool and kindergarten teachers were trained to serve as expert raters of school readiness using the assessments employed in the study. Phase 1 of the study piloted an assessment measure, the Student Observation Form (SOF). Phase 2 expanded the use of the SOF to assess the school readiness of LAUP children in the fall and spring of the 2008-2009 school year. In Phase 3, school readiness was assessed for children close to their completion of preschool; school readiness was also assessed for kindergarten children with and without past participation in an LAUP preschool at the start of the school year. In Phase 3, ASR also drew upon family surveys and teacher surveys to construct a comprehensive portrait of LAUP children's readiness for school. The Appendix provides a detailed table of the evaluation timeline and description of the SOF assessment.

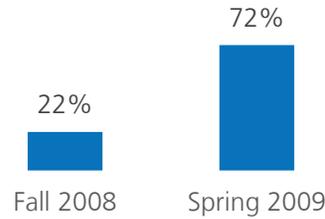
## Piloting of the Student Observation Form in Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the SKIPP study determined that it was an appropriate tool to use as an outcome measure.

ASR adapted the SOF from the Kindergarten Observation Form (KOF) for LAUP. The KOF is a tool extensively used in Northern California and has demonstrated strong content and construct validity; shows strong results on early tests for criterion validity (California Reading and Literature Project literacy assessment); has consistent known groups validity and strong predictive validity (highly correlated with the 3rd grade California Standards Tests in reading and math); and has a high degree of internal consistency. The SOF fulfilled key criteria sought by LAUP; it is short, easy to use, content-relevant to LAUP providers, comprehensive in its capture of important school readiness dimensions, developmentally appropriate, psychometrically sound, and able to show progress in the readiness skills of importance to LAUP. The SOF did not yield floor or ceiling effects, and the tool was sensitive enough to capture key differences in skills between groups known to have different levels of achievement. Additionally, teachers validated the tool as relevant, easy to implement, useful, valuable, and developmentally appropriate.

## The majority of children in the sample left LAUP preschools ready for success in kindergarten and beyond.

The SOF covers 24 readiness skills that can be summarized as an overall score, and also as four dimensions: Self-Care and Motor Skills, Self-Regulation Skills, Social Expression, and General Knowledge. In Phase 2, the study compared changes in school readiness from fall to spring of the preschool year and found an increase in children rated as "Combined Proficient" in all four dimensions of school readiness. This increase was statistically significant.

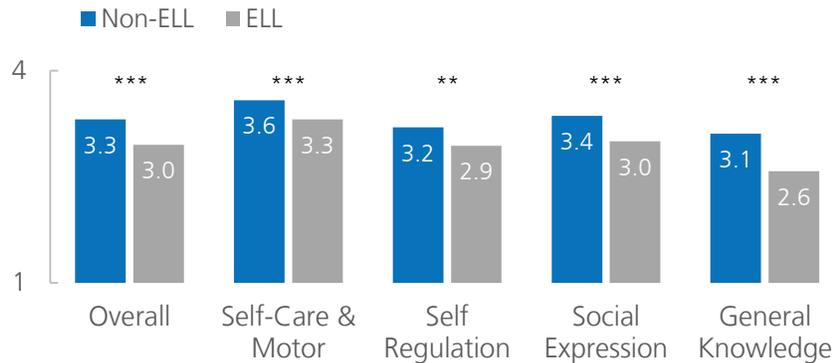
The percentage of children who were rated “Combined Proficient” increased from Fall 2008 to Spring 2009.



**Phase 2 of the study examined the performance gap between English Language Learners and Non-English Language Learners and found that the gap closed considerably for this sample of LAUP children between Fall 2008 and Spring 2009.**

In Fall 2008, there was a statistically significant gap between English learners and Non-English learners, both in overall readiness and in each of the dimensions of school readiness. The chart below shows results from Fall 2008, for the sample of children with matched Fall to Spring data available. This finding of a readiness gap between English learners and Non-English learners was replicated in the sample of all children without matched Fall to Spring data.

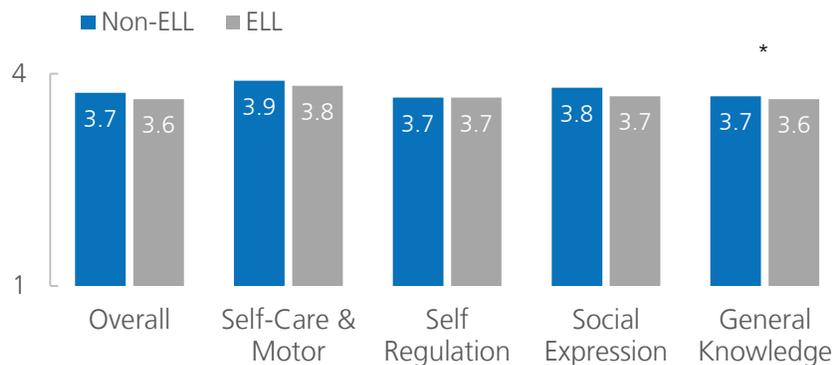
**In Fall 2008, there was a significant gap in school readiness between English learners and Non-English learners, across all dimensions.**



Note: \*\* p <0.005 and \*\*\* p <0.001

Phase 2 investigated whether there was any change in the difference between English learners and Non-English learners from fall to spring. The performance gap between ELL and non-ELL children closed for three of the four dimensions of school readiness. The only significant difference remaining was in the area of General Knowledge; however, the remaining difference in this domain was small.

**The fall-to-spring gains of English learners exceeded those of Non-English learners; the gap evident in fall narrowed or, in most cases, closed.**



Note: \* p <0.05

The fall-to-spring gains made by ELLs exceeded those made by non-ELLs in all school readiness dimensions. This was especially true in the area of General Knowledge, even though the average score for ELLs was still significantly lower in this area.

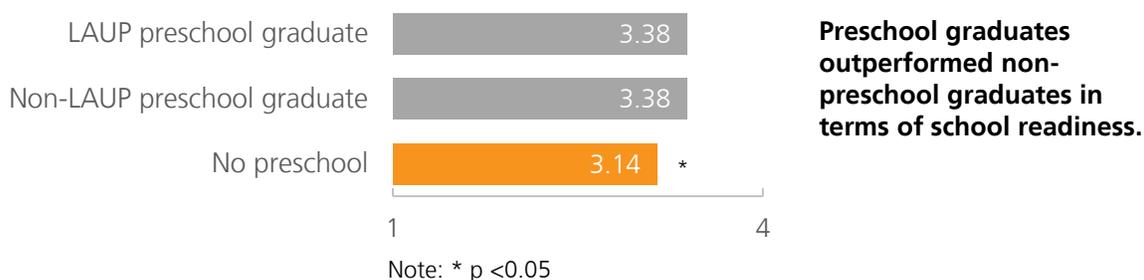
An earlier study of LAUP children (Mathematica Policy Research, 2009) found that children who spoke only Spanish had larger fall-to-spring gains in rapid letter naming and social skills, as compared to their English-only peers. In addition, children who spoke a language other than Spanish or English exhibited larger fall-to-spring gains in receptive and expressive English vocabulary, social skills, and gross motor skills, as compared to their English-only peers. Taken together, the findings from these two reports illustrate the dramatic increase in skills experienced by ELLs during the preschool year. These findings also highlight the need for further research to investigate potential links between preschool attendance and the large gains made by English Language Learners.

### Phase 3 of the study detected a decline in school readiness over the summer between preschool and kindergarten; however, this difference was not statistically significant.

Out of the four readiness dimensions, children were more likely to show decline in academic skills and self-regulation skills; the other two readiness dimensions, self-care and social expression skills, were more likely to remain stable or increase over the summer. These results made sense in that academic skills and self-regulation skills are more relevant in a classroom environment, and self-care and social expression skills are more likely to be used at home.

### Children who experienced preschool outperformed their peers who had not had the benefit of preschool on a measure of kindergarten readiness.

Phase 3 of the study examined the school readiness of preschool graduates, compared to children who had not attended preschool, as assessed by their kindergarten teachers. LAUP and non-LAUP preschool graduates significantly outperformed children with no preschool experience. There were no statistically significant differences detected between LAUP and non-LAUP preschool graduates, either in mean overall school readiness score, or in any of the four dimensions of the school readiness score. The results point to a positive effect of preschool on kindergarten readiness.

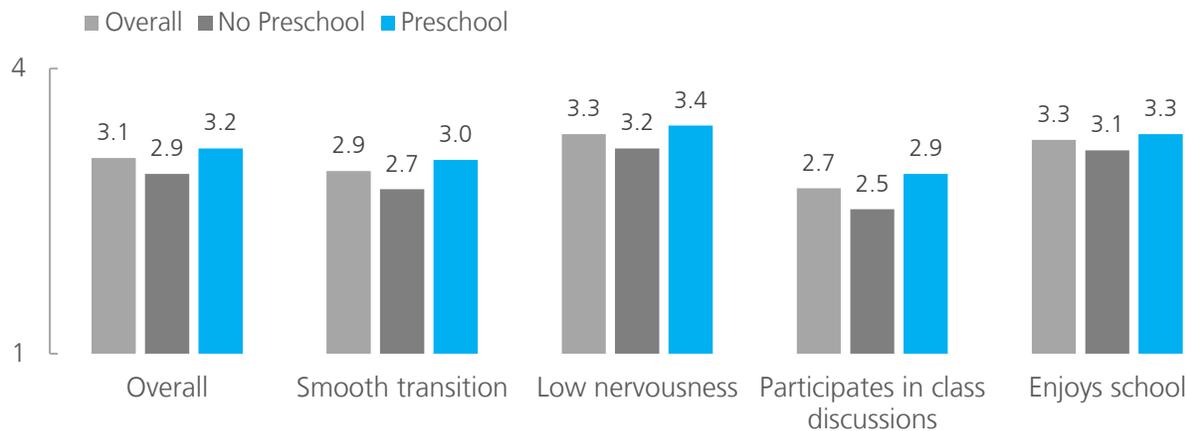


### Surprisingly, LAUP teachers had higher expectations of school readiness than kindergarten teachers.

In Phase 3, survey results showed that 70% of LAUP children showed readiness levels that met or exceeded kindergarten teachers' expectations. In contrast, just 35% of LAUP children met or exceeded the expectations of kindergarten readiness set by the teachers at LAUP. This implies that LAUP teachers have high standards for school readiness.

## LAUP graduates transitioned to kindergarten more successfully than their non-preschool peers.

In Phase 3, LAUP graduates were rated by their kindergarten teachers as having a smoother transition into school, being less nervous at school, participating more often in class, and enjoying school more than their peers who had not had any preschool experience. No significant differences were found between LAUP and non-LAUP preschool graduates with respect to the relative smoothness of the transition.



## The majority of LAUP teachers reported engaging in intentional practices to prepare children for kindergarten, including talking to students about kindergarten and sending informational materials to parents.

In Phase 3 of the SKIPP study, it was found that the majority of LAUP teachers surveyed (82%) talked to children about kindergarten, read books about kindergarten, or showed videos about kindergarten. Almost all LAUP providers surveyed (90%) shared materials with parents on school readiness; these materials covered strategies for preparing children for the transition to kindergarten and instructions for parents on registering for kindergarten.

## Phase 3 of the SKIPP study also found that the majority of parents reported engaging in intentional practices to prepare children for the transition to kindergarten, including talking to children about kindergarten and taking additional steps.

Almost all parents (94%) talked to their children about kindergarten. Additionally, 87% took their children to update vaccinations, and 80% bought or collected school supplies. Reading books or watching videos about kindergarten at home was associated with significantly higher readiness scores in self-care and motor skills, as well as with self-regulation. Not engaging in any of the home transition activities was associated with significantly lower readiness skills in terms of overall readiness, social expression, and general knowledge.

## Conclusion

The SKIPP study offers an encouraging conclusion that the majority of the children in the study left their LAUP preschools ready for success in kindergarten and beyond. The design of the study does not allow us to conclude that there is a causal link between preschool participation and school readiness. Further studies with an experimental research design would be needed to examine which specific student, school, and family variables may be associated with readiness scores independent of other variables.

Children's school readiness in kindergarten has implications for children's academic success in later grades. A separate ASR study found that children who scored highly on the KOF, the observation tool on which the SOF was based, later performed significantly better than children who had scored lower on the KOF, as measured on English and Math California Standards Tests (CSTs) in the 3rd, 4th and 5th grades (ASR, 2008). Given the implications for later academic success, LAUP plans to investigate this finding further.

## References

Applied Survey Research. (2008). *Does Readiness Matter? How kindergarten readiness translates into academic success*. San Jose: Applied Survey Research.

Colvig-Amir, L. & Huang, P. (2013). Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP). *The Successful Kids in Pre-K Project (SKIPP) Phase III: A portrait of school readiness in Spring and Fall 2009*. San Jose: Applied Survey Research.

Colvig-Amir, L., Mobilio, L., Huang, P., Aguirre, A., Ozawa, K. (2009). *The Successful Kids in Pre-K (SKIPP) Phase II: An assessment of Los Angeles Universal Preschool students' progression towards school readiness*. San Jose: Applied Survey Research.

Mathematica Policy Research. (2009). *Los Angeles Universal Preschool Programs, Children Served, and Children's Progress in the Preschool Year: Final Report of the First 5 LA Universal Preschool Child Outcomes Study*. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research.

## Appendix

### Detailed Tables

The following table describes each phase of the SKIPP study.

Phase	Focus	Time	Data Collection
Phase 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pilot testing of Student Observation Form (SOF) assessment</li> </ul>	Spring 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student Observation Form (N=91 LAUP children)</li> <li>Teacher Survey (N=9 LAUP teachers)</li> </ul>
Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expanded testing of SOF form using a representative group of providers</li> <li>Determine how well SOF measures school readiness throughout the school year</li> </ul>	Fall 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student Observation Form (N=437 LAUP children)</li> <li>Teacher Survey 2008 (N=24 LAUP teachers)</li> </ul>
		Spring 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student Observation Form (N=364 LAUP children)</li> <li>Assessment Feedback Questionnaire (N=21 providers)</li> </ul>
Phase 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess LAUP children's school readiness upon exiting preschool</li> <li>Assess LAUP children's school readiness upon entry into kindergarten as compared to non-LAUP children</li> <li>Understand teachers' and parents' expectations and practices around school readiness</li> </ul>	Spring 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student Observation Form (N=1,011 LAUP children)</li> <li>Teacher Expectation and Practice Survey (N=34 LAUP teachers)</li> </ul>
		Fall 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kindergarten Observation Form II (N=269 non-preschool children; 281 LAUP children; 155 other preschool children)</li> <li>Teacher Expectation and Practice Survey (N=42 Kindergarten teachers)</li> <li>Parent Information Form (N=524)</li> </ul>

The following table describes the school readiness skills associated with each of the four dimensions of school readiness assessed through the Student Observation Form.

Self-Care and Motor Skills	Self-Regulation	Social Expression	Academics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses small manipulatives</li> <li>Has general coordination</li> <li>Performs basic self-help/self-care tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comforts self</li> <li>Pays attention</li> <li>Controls impulses</li> <li>Follows directions</li> <li>Negotiates solutions</li> <li>Plays cooperatively</li> <li>Participates in circle time</li> <li>Handles frustration well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expresses empathy</li> <li>Relates well to adults</li> <li>Curious &amp; eager to learn</li> <li>Expresses needs and wants</li> <li>Engages in symbolic play</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognizes letters</li> <li>Recognizes shapes</li> <li>Recognizes colors</li> <li>Counts 10 objects</li> <li>Engages with books</li> <li>Writes own first name</li> <li>Recognizes rhyming words</li> </ul>

For more information about this evaluation please contact [researchmail@laup.net](mailto:researchmail@laup.net).