



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 6, 2005

Contact: Christina Linville
Executive Director
(707) 435-2965

First 5 Solano to Release Initial Results of School Readiness Study

Fairfield, CA—Children entering kindergarten at First 5 Solano’s School Readiness sites are as ready for kindergarten as their peers in similar First 5 programs throughout California, a recent study found. Moreover, children who were most ready had parents who helped them prepare, according to the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Report, prepared by an independent consultant for the First 5 Solano Children and Families Commission.

Despite being on a par with peers, however, the study also showed that both in Solano and statewide, the School Readiness program is supporting the right schools and children. Less than half of children in School Readiness programs statewide were consistently rated by teachers as having mastered school readiness skills.

The study is based on the Kindergarten Entry Profile (KEP), a survey of teachers and parents that assesses how well children are prepared for kindergarten. The study’s initial results will be released at the First 5 Solano Commission meeting Tuesday, June 7 at 4 p.m. at the Solano County Health and Human Services Center, 2101 Courage Drive, Multi-purpose Room in Fairfield.

In fall 2004, kindergarten teachers evaluated more than 250 children at four School Readiness sites funded by First 5 Solano: Loma Vista Elementary School in

—MORE—

2-2-2-2

Vallejo, Anna Kyle Elementary School in Fairfield, Markham Elementary School in Vacaville and Silveyville Primary School in Dixon.

Teachers rated each child's school readiness skills (general knowledge, communication skills, emotional well-being and approaches to learning). In addition, 181 parents and caregivers were asked about their child's health and physical development, preschool and home experiences prior to kindergarten and kindergarten transition activities.

Overall, the study, prepared by LaFrance Associates, found that children at these schools scored at or near the state average when compared to kindergarteners in other First 5 readiness programs throughout California. When correlated with findings from the parent survey, the study found that children were most prepared for kindergarten when their parents participated in school readiness activities such as reading stories to their children, practicing counting, playing learning games and meeting with school staff prior to the school year's start.

"These findings reinforce research on parent involvement—that the more involved the parent is in a child's schooling, the more successful the child will be in school," said First 5 Commission Chair Sheryl Fairchild. "This study clearly demonstrates how this can also be true of preschool and school readiness activities."

In addition, according to the study's findings, the First 5 Solano School Readiness program is supporting the right schools and children: those with the greatest need. Families participating in School Readiness programs statewide tend to experience poverty, lack of access to quality child care and preschool

—MORE—

3-3-3-3

programs, barriers to health care and other challenges that, if not addressed, can make it difficult for children to do their best when kindergarten begins.

The KEP is part of the commission's School Readiness Initiative, which provides grants for programs that help prepare young children to enter school healthy, learning and

ready to reach their greatest potential. "Our School Readiness program is designed to support Solano County parents and caregivers so that their children have the maximum opportunity to succeed at school and, ultimately, in life," said Kathi McLaughlin, First 5 Solano School Readiness Coordinator.

The local First 5 Solano Commission, together with First 5 California, has allocated \$3.2 million over four years to fund pre-kindergarten academies, literacy fairs, immunizations, bilingual story hours, parent education, preschool, resource guides and support groups, home visits and a host of other activities.

"School Readiness is a zero-to-five program in Solano," said First 5 Solano Executive Director Christina Linville. "We know through research that a child's brain develops most dramatically in the first five years, so the Solano School Readiness program helps to support families from pregnancy through kindergarten." Hundreds of children and families have so far participated in the program, including parenting classes, health and literacy fairs and pre-kindergarten academies. The First 5 Solano School Readiness program began operation in Dixon in 2003-04 and was phased in to the three other sites in 2004-05.

The 2004-05 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, the first conducted by First 5 Solano, provides a benchmark for evaluating the commission's School Readiness

—MORE—

4-4-4-4

program in coming years. The study provides a snapshot of readiness to begin school among kindergarteners at Loma Vista, Anna Kyle, Markham and Silveyville elementary schools. Survey results cannot be generalized to other schools or Solano County overall.

School specific results will be available in First 5 Solano's annual evaluation report, which will be released in fall 2005.

First 5 Solano is dedicated to promoting, supporting and improving early childhood development by fostering and partnering with community resources and programs that support healthy and safe children, families and community.

####