Dear Dr. Herrington,

I am writing to resubmit a substantially revised version of the manuscript, **“Kids Today: Changes in School Readiness in an Early Childhood Era”** (joint work with Scott Latham) for consideration at Educational Researcher.

My co-author and I very much appreciate the helpful feedback from you and the four reviewers. We were excited to read that you and the reviewers thought the paper is “clearly written,” “addresses an important topic” (changes in school readiness over time), and has “potential for a unique contribution.” We were also grateful for the thoughtful and detailed suggestions. We have completed a major revision to address all the issues raised, and believe the manuscript is far stronger.

Below we provide a point-by-point response to reviewer suggestions. However, let me summarize the main changes we have made. First, the reviewers provided a variety of helpful suggestions about ways to better situate our work in the existing literature, ways to motivate our choice of covariates, and ways to discuss the policy relevance of our findings. To address these issues, we have expanded our discussion of the extant knowledge base, highlighting evidence from state-level reports that mirror the findings in our current analysis. We have provided much more discussion of our multivariate analyses and the motivation for including each set of covariates (e.g. child care variables, home environment measures, etc.). We have also expanded our discussion of the results, and in particular the surprising finding that including measures of public preschool participation (which rose substantially over our study paper) did virtually nothing to our estimates of changes in school readiness over time. We now describe other potential mechanisms driving the observed changes in readiness and also discuss the policy implications of children entering kindergarten with more academic skills than they once did.

In addition, the reviewers provided some important suggestions around alternative model specifications and other sensitivity checks. For instance, Reviewer 4 appropriately raised concern about analyzing highly skewed behavioral outcomes using OLS regressions. We reviewed published studies that use the same behavioral measures and ultimately decided to dichotomize the behavioral measures as is common in this literature. We then ran all analyses involving dichotomous outcomes using Linear Probability Models (LPM) as well as logistic regressions. Given the very high level of correspondence across these two types of models, we present LPM results throughout for their ease of interpretation.

One limitation raised by the reviewers is that our analysis relies on teacher-reported rather than directly assessed measures of academic skills and behavior. We share this concern, and believe a similar analysis to the one we have conducted here leveraging direct assessments would be welcome, as it would eliminate concerns about changes in the underlying rating process over time. Unfortunately, no such data exists. The Early Childhood Longitudinal Studies that we use for the current study provide direct assessments in both waves, but they are not comparable over time and no cross-walk has been released. While we do agree that the use of teacher-directed assessments has notable limitations, and we now articulate those more directly in the manuscript, we also provide strong evidence both from the ECLS data and from the extant literature around the validity of these measures. In addition, we provide several theoretical and empirical reasons to believe the teacher measures are capturing meaningful changes in children’s skills over time. Given the lack of direct assessment data, and the importance of the research question, we believe it makes sense to use the teacher-reported data to provide compelling new evidence of these changes over time.

Finally, in your letter you note the need for: *“clarifying information regarding the measures (R1, R2, R4), reporting correlations among measures (R1) as well as providing statistically significant differences between measures across cohorts (R3), clarifying regression analyses (e.g., type, sample sizes, use of weights, covariates; R4), and careful copy editing (R1).”* We believe the current manuscript has been responsive to all of these requests, and provide specific details below.

Again, we thank you and the reviewers for the very helpful feedback. We believe the revised manuscript is much improved. We continue to believe this paper addresses a timely education issue and that the results are striking, especially in light of debates around “academic kindergarten” and the role of Common Core Standards for kindergarten. Our study suggests children are entering kindergarten with a different skill set than they once were, and this finding has meaningful implications for how we structure early learning. It also raises intriguing questions for future research. We look forward to hearing your reactions to this revision. If you have any questions for me, I can be reached at [dbassok@virginia.edu](mailto:dbassok@virginia.edu) or by phone (650)814-5561. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Daphna Bassok