FIRST THINGS FIRST

Cochise

2015 IMPACT REPORT

SCHOOL SUCCESS BEGINS AT BIRTH

90% OF A CHILD'S CRITICAL BRAIN DEVELOPMENT HAPPENS BEFORE KINDERGARTEN,

so early experiences lay the foundation for success in school and in life. Arizonans created First Things First (FTF) to give more children the tools they need to arrive at school prepared to meet our state's high expectations. FTF provides resources and professional expertise then combines it with local decision-making to build on the work of community organizations impacting children and families. Local volunteers – parents, educators, business professionals, philanthropists, faith leaders and tribal representatives – decide how the funds will be used to best improve school readiness for children in their area.

EARLY CHILDHOOD IS ONE OF THE BEST INVESTMENTS A STATE CAN MAKE

Research by Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman showed that every $1 invested in early childhood can yield returns between $4 and $16. Early literacy and its impact on school success is one of the best examples of the return on investment in early childhood. High quality early learning experiences, rich in language and literacy, reduce early learning gaps and ensure that children are ready to start reading when they enter kindergarten.

Gaps in children's vocabulary start to appear as early as **18 MONTHS**.

By the time children are **3 & 4 YEARS OLD**, their vocabulary, attention and general knowledge are predictors of **THIRD & FOURTH GRADE** reading comprehension.

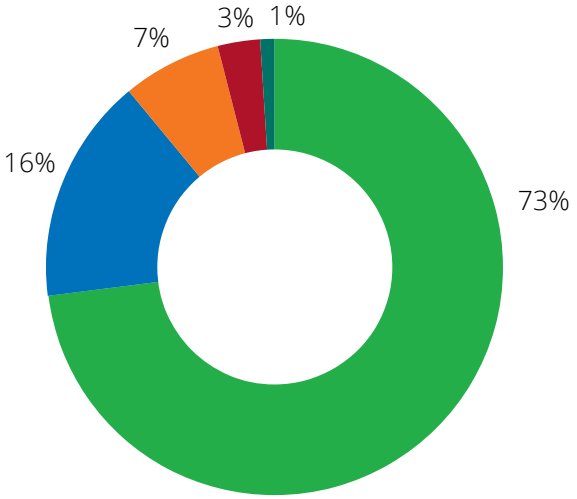
THIRD GRADE reading ability is one of the best predictors of **HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION.**

As an early childhood system partner, First Things First invests in proven programs and innovative strategies that: strengthen families in their role as their child's first teacher; improve the quality of early learning environments like preschool and child care, and expand access to those programs; and, promote prevention and early identification of health problems that could impact learning later on. By getting more Arizona kids ready for school, FTF helps put children on a path to academic success that benefits them, our communities and our state.

$1 **INVESTED IN EARLY CHILDHOOD YIELDS UP TO A $16 RETURN**

FISCAL YEAR 2015 IMPACT

COCHISE FY2015 PROGRAM EXPENDITURES



Quality Preschool and Child Care $2,610,353.25
Children exposed to high quality early learning do better in school and are more likely to graduate.

Strengthening Families and Early Literacy $567,888.14
Families are a child's first and best teachers.

Preventive Health $262,888.26
Undetected or untreated health issues can impact learning later on.

Parent and Community Awareness $87,017.61
We all have a shared responsibility to help children arrive at school prepared to succeed.

Research and Accountability $44,057.05
Measuring effectiveness and promoting continuous quality improvement rely on robust, accurate data.

Total = $3,572,204.31

1,064 Children had access to a higher standard of early learning through preschool and child care programs participating in quality first.

626 Infants, toddlers and preschoolers received scholarships to access high quality early learning through preschool or child care.

868 Families of newborns left the hospital with tools to help them support their child's health and learning.

248 Families received voluntary in-home visits from trained providers to enhance their parenting skills and deal with specific challenges, including first-time parenting, parenting a child with special needs, or dealing with multiple births.

2,102 Fluoride varnishes applied to protect against dental decay.

421 Screenings completed to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues in young kids and prevent learning challenges later on.

INVESTING IN SCHOOL READINESS

PARENTS AS TEACHERS SHOWS COCHISE COUNTY MOM HOW TO TEACH SON INDEPENDENCE

First-time mom Athena Reynolds was looking for a support system.

"I was clueless," Reynolds said, thinking back to when her son Alexander was born. "I have this little human being that depends on me and I knew I needed help."

She found Parents as Teachers, a voluntary home visitation program, funded by First

Things First. Reynolds received regular in-home visit from a parent coach who provided parenting information, teaching strategies and connections to other community resources.

"It's an amazing program that teaches you how to teach your child," Reynolds said. "I wasn't sure how he learned. Everything was about me asking, 'Is this normal?' Thankfully I wasn't looked at as this crazy neurotic parent."

Instead, she found in the parent coach what Reynolds described as an extremely knowledgeable older sister, who assured her that she was doing the right thing for her son. The coach provided her with information on how to help her son reach different levels according to his developmental stages.

Reynolds was also able to allow her son to learn tasks that she wasn't expecting to teach him so young, such as, cutting soft foods with a plastic knife.

"Now he's 4 and can serve himself and cut most of his food himself. It's an amazing amount of independence that he has that I didn't know was possible," she said.

About three months before Alexander was to turn 2, the toddler's pediatrician told Reynolds that he should have around 50 words in his vocabulary. Alexander was speaking about 25 words.

"How do I get him to talk more?" Reynolds asked her parent coach. "I was worried. He wouldn't say a lot. He was a quiet reserved little dude."

The coach reassured her that her constant talking to him was one of the best ways to build his vocabulary. She also encouraged the mother to ask the boy simple questions. For example, "That's the garbage truck outside. Can you hear the truck?"

Sure enough, within those few months before two years old, Alexander's vocabulary more than doubled. "All of a sudden, he was a very talkative guy," Reynolds said. "Now at 4 and half, his vocabulary is incredible."

Today, Reynolds and her husband are thinking about what kindergarten to send Alexander to in the fall.

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