

FIRST THINGS FIRST

La Paz/Mohave



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.

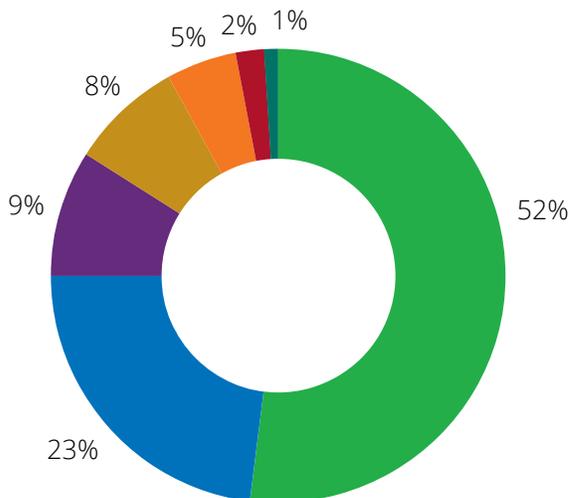
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INVESTED IN EARLY CHILDHOOD YIELDS UP TO A \$16 RETURN

FISCAL YEAR 2015 IMPACT

LA PAZ/MOHAVE FY2015 PROGRAM EXPENDITURES



- **Quality Preschool and Child Care \$2,292,421.28**
 Children exposed to high quality early learning do better in school and are more likely to graduate.
- **Strengthening Families and Early Literacy \$1,020,220.52**
 Families are a child's first and best teachers.
- **System Coordination \$382,546.25**
 Collaboration among system partners maximizes resources and effectiveness.
- **Workforce Development and Training \$335,972.32**
 A child's relationships with early caregivers impact whether her brain will develop in ways that promote learning.
- **Preventive Health \$197,104.34**
 Undetected or untreated health issues can impact learning later on.
- **Parent and Community Awareness \$87,528.88**
 We all have a shared responsibility to help children arrive at school prepared to succeed.
- **Research and Accountability \$64,402.34**
 Measuring effectiveness and promoting continuous quality improvement rely on robust, accurate data.

Total = \$4,380,195.93

- 📖 **992** Children had access to a higher standard of early learning through preschool and child care programs participating in Quality First.
- 📖 **526** Infants, toddlers and preschoolers received scholarships to access high quality early learning through preschool or child care.
- 👨👩👧 **1,288** Families of newborns left the hospital with tools to help them support their child's health and learning.
- 👨👩👧 **369** 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.
- 👂👁 **499** Screenings completed to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues in young kids and prevent learning challenges later on.
- 👂👁 **424** Infants and toddlers involved with the child welfare system benefitted from training and coordination efforts to meet their unique developmental needs.

INVESTING IN SCHOOL READINESS



QUALITY PRESCHOOL ENSURES SCHOOL READINESS FOR BULLHEAD CITY SIBLINGS

Cost and convenience are what first attracted Amanda Amann to Tiny T-Birds Early Childhood Center in Bullhead City, but the mother of two said it was the attention to detail and commitment to communication that made her stay. Now that her two children are in grade school, Amann said she sees the benefits of a quality child care center to her children being ready for kindergarten, and in the way her children approach school and are able to communicate with their teachers about what they are learning.

Tiny T-Birds has been a part of First Things First's Quality First program since 2009 and has earned the highest rating of five stars. Quality First works with child care and preschool providers to make quality improvements that research proves help children thrive, such as education for teachers to expand their skills in working with young children and coaching to help providers create learning environments that nurture the emotional, social and academic development of every child.

Amann enrolled her son, Espn, at 22 months old and daughter, Shea, at 5 months old. She remembers the way teachers interacted with Espn at his level on the floor rather than from a desk. Shea was encouraged to develop her love of literacy by reading her favorite book, "No David No," to the other children. The book still sits on now 8-year-old Shea's bookshelf.

Tiny T-Birds developed a reputation with the kindergarten teacher who had graduates of the center in her classroom. She told parents that the Tiny T-Birds kids were beyond the curriculum. "We were lucky that the kindergarten teacher knew she would have to challenge kids coming out of that preschool," Amann said.

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