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
6,844  Children had access to a higher standard of early learning through preschool and child care programs participating in Quality First.

2,667  Infants, toddlers and preschoolers received scholarships to access high quality early learning through preschool or child care.

22,794  Families accessed early childhood information, education or referrals through family resource centers.

8,988  Families of newborns left the hospital with tools to help them support their child's health and learning.

1,033  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.

786  Parents and other caregivers completed a voluntary series of community-based classes on topics like parenting skills, brain development, early literacy and nutrition.

10,000+  Fluoride varnishes applied to protect against dental decay.

9,450  Screenings completed to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues in young kids and prevent learning challenges later on.

5,529  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 PUTS PHOENIX FIRST GRADER AT TOP OF CLASS

Maria Jesus Cervantes’ initial experience with a child care center left her toddler crying every time she dropped her off. Through Quality First – First Things First’s early learning quality improvement and rating system – Cervantes researched other potential child care settings for her child and found Phoenix Day, which has achieved a Quality Plus rating.

Cervantes’ fears were quickly alleviated. Natalia quickly learned all of her colors and shapes and had a smile on her face when she was dropped off and when she was picked up at the end of the day. “There was instruction going on every day; there was a plan and I had meetings with her teachers,” Cervantes said. “I was amazed that they were teaching her science and math.”

Natalia also gained confidence every day as she shared new information with her mother of things she had learned. As Natalia moved on to kindergarten, she excelled in her class. The first grader is reading Junie B. Jones books. At her age she is expected to read around 20 words per minute, Natalia is reading 80, Cervantes said. “She looked forward to going to school every day, she was ready for kindergarten,” Cervantes said. “Early education makes a huge difference in preparing kids for school,” Cervantes said. “Natalia is testament to that.”

PHOENIX SOUTH REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL

Karen Stewart, Chair
Jessica Jarvi, Vice Chair
Kresta Horn
Dr. Bill Johnson
Dr. Patricia Merk
Angie Rodgers
Jasmine Sanchez
Ginger Ward
Kimulet Winzer
Jeremy Wood

Jennifer Johnson, Sr. Director
jjohnson@azftf.gov
602.771.5006

FUNDED PARTNERS - FY2015

American Academy of Pediatrics - AZ Chapter
Arizona Board of Regents/University of Arizona
Arizona Department of Economic Security
Arizona Department of Education
Arizona Department of Health Services
Arizona Partnership for Children, L.L.P.
Association for Supportive Child Care
Chicanos Por La Causa, Inc., dba Parenting Arizona
Children's Action Alliance
Crisis Nursery, Inc., dba Child Crisis Center
EAR Foundation of Arizona
International Rescue Committee
Landrum Foundation
Maricopa County Department of Public Health
Maricopa Integrated Health System

MCCCD - Phoenix College
Pendergast Elementary School District
Phoenix Children's Hospital
Pima County Health Department
Prevent Child Abuse Arizona
Raising Special Kids
Rio Salado College
Southwest Human Development
Tanner Community Development Corp.
TERROS
United Cerebral Palsy of Central Arizona
University of Arizona Cooperative Extension
Valley of the Sun United Way