

# # FIRST THINGS FIRST

Southwest Maricopa



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.**

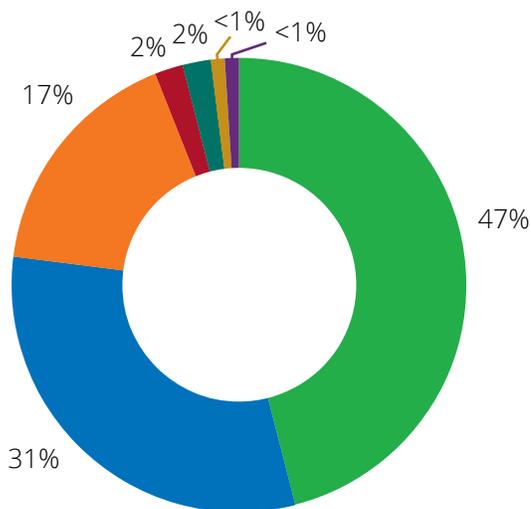


As an early childhood system partner, First Things First invests in proven programs and innovative strategies that: strengthen families in their role as their child's first teacher; improve the quality of early learning environments like preschool and child care, and expand access to those programs; 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

## SOUTHWEST MARICOPA FY2015 PROGRAM EXPENDITURES



- **Quality Preschool and Child Care \$2,092,636.88**  
 Children exposed to high quality early learning do better in school and are more likely to graduate.
- **Strengthening Families and Early Literacy \$1,383,727.17**  
 Families are a child's first and best teachers.
- **Preventive Health \$742,238.22**  
 Undetected or untreated health issues can impact learning later on.
- **Parent and Community Awareness \$95,327.87**  
 We all have a shared responsibility to help children arrive at school prepared to succeed.
- **Research and Accountability \$80,928.82**  
 Measuring effectiveness and promoting continuous quality improvement rely on robust, accurate data.
- **System Coordination \$21,652.76**  
 Collaboration among system partners maximizes resources and effectiveness.
- **Workforce Development and Training \$5,830**  
 A child's relationships with early caregivers impact whether her brain will develop in ways that promote learning.

**Total = \$4,422,341.72**

- 📖 **1,920** Children had access to a higher standard of early learning through preschool and child care programs participating in Quality First.
- 📖 **396** Infants, toddlers and preschoolers received scholarships to access high quality early learning through preschool or child care.
- 👨👩👧👦 **8,222** Families accessed early childhood information, education or referrals through family resource centers.
- 👨👩👧👦 **1,204** Families of newborns left the hospital with tools to help them support their child's health and learning.
- 👨👩👧👦 **125** 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.
- 👨👩👧👦 **391** Parents and other caregivers completed a voluntary series of community-based classes on topics like parenting skills, brain development, early literacy and nutrition.
- 👩⚕️ **2,472** Fluoride varnishes applied to protect against dental decay.
- 👩⚕️ **784** Screenings completed to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues in young kids and prevent learning challenges later on.

# INVESTING IN SCHOOL READINESS



## QUALITY FIRST PRESCHOOL PREPARES BOY WITH FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

For Warner D'Cunah, the cost of enrolling his three children in West Valley Christian School is an investment in quality education. His son, Liam, recently graduated from the preschool there and is in kindergarten at the primary school of the Goodyear campus.

"We just feel that providing this foundational education can help them in life, find the careers and success we want for them," D'Cunah said. "We looked around and know we have other options, but this school provided the academics and then some extras too like art, music and technology."

The West Valley Christian preschool is part of the Quality First program, a signature program of First Things First, which partners with child care and preschool providers to improve the quality of early learning across Arizona. Quality First funds quality improvements that research proves help children thrive, such as training for teachers to expand their skills and to help create learning environments that nurture the emotional, social and academic development of every child.

Those two years in preschool prepared Liam with foundational skills that have helped him move into the primary school, D'Cunah said. He said the experience made the transition "pretty smooth" compared to if the boy had not had exposure to a kindergarten readiness program.

"He learned socialization skills that really helped because he now has less nap time, play time and they need to learn how to sit still just to go through the lessons," D'Cunah said. Within the first three months of kindergarten, Liam won an academic award for his work in math. Liam studies at home with his mother, Letitia, who helps him remember his numbers and other basic skills.

## SOUTHWEST MARICOPA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL

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## FUNDED PARTNERS - FY2015

Association for Supportive Child Care  
Buckeye Elementary School District  
Central Arizona College  
Child and Family Resources Inc.  
City of Avondale  
Maricopa County Department of Public Health  
Maricopa Integrated Health System  
Pendergast Elementary School District  
Pilgrim Rest Foundation

Pima County Health Department  
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St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance  
Sun City Area Interfaith Services, Inc. dba Benevilla  
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