

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Gila River Indian Community Region



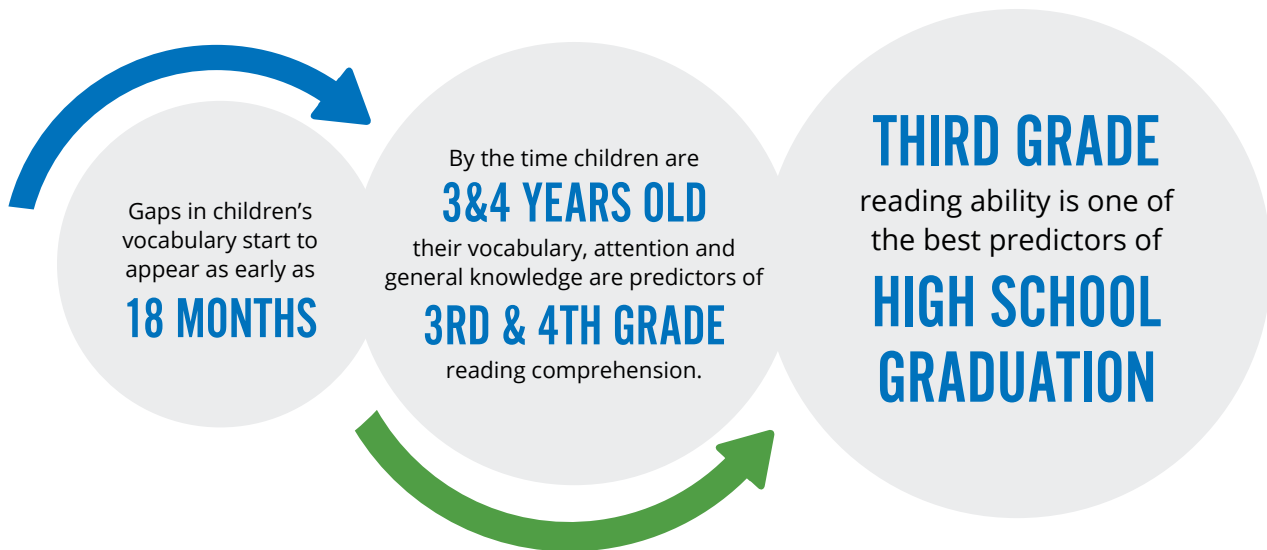
2016 **IMPACT REPORT**

THE PATH TO SCHOOL SUCCESS BEGINS AT BIRTH

A child's early years hold the key to their success in school and in life. 90% of brain development happens before kindergarten. That's why Arizonans created First Things First (FTF) – to give more children the tools they need to arrive at school healthy and ready to succeed.

Decades of research demonstrates that children with access to high quality early development and health experiences are more prepared for kindergarten, do better in school and are more likely to graduate and enroll in college. They also tend to be healthier and more productive members of society.

Early literacy and its impact on school success is just one example of why investing in early childhood is so important:



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.

ARIZONA'S INVESTMENT IN YOUNG CHILDREN

As an early childhood system partner, First Things First invests in proven programs and innovative strategies that:

-  **IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EARLY LEARNING**
-  **STRENGTHEN FAMILIES**
-  **PROMOTE HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT**

By getting more Arizona kids ready for school, First Things First helps put children on a path to academic success that benefits them, our communities and our state.

FISCAL YEAR 2016 IMPACT

HOME VISITS HELP GILA RIVER TEEN PARENTS KEEP TODDLER ON TRACK

For Heidi Bruder, success comes in small doses. As the Teen Parent Case Manager for Gila River HealthCare, Bruder supports teen parents in the Gila River Indian Community with their educational and parenting needs.

Teen parents sometimes have a rough time adjusting to caring for a baby and continuing their education, but one Gila River couple overcame a variety of obstacles, including the closing of their high school, and found success for their child.

“They are probably one of my most consistent and reliable parents in the program,” Bruder said.

For several years, Bruder has worked with the teens through the Baby Smarts program, which is funded by First Things First. Baby Smarts provides teen parents with child developmental information and parent coaching.

When the local high school permanently closed its doors in June 2015, Bruder helped Melissa Thomas, now 19, and her boyfriend research an alternative high school that would work with young parents. The parents soon achieved their high school diplomas.

Bruder also began home visits with the parents, who are raising a toddler. The child is not identified for privacy reasons. Bruder continues to work with Thomas on activities that she can do to encourage their 2-year-old child with language, motor, cognitive and social emotional development. For example, Bruder recently introduced lacing with beads and yarn to improve the toddler’s fine motor skills.





For Thomas, the twice monthly sessions help her feel confident in her decisions. “Like how to say no when (the toddler) can’t have what (the toddler) wants. And what to do when (the toddler) throws a temper tantrum,” Thomas said. “We work with (the toddler) on it.”

The visits are paying off. Bruder recently observed the toddler in an Early Head Start class, which provides preschool for children up to 3 years old. The teachers there told Thomas that the child is ready to move forward.

“The child is right on track developmentally,” Bruder said. “The child’s interactions with the parents are positive. The child communicates well, especially when talking a lot is not necessarily part of the culture.”

Support at home is also a factor. Thomas lives with her grandmother, so the toddler is being raised in a multi-generational home.

“These two go home and the grandmother very much supports what’s being taught,” Bruder said. “Everybody is on board, which makes for a greater success for the child.”

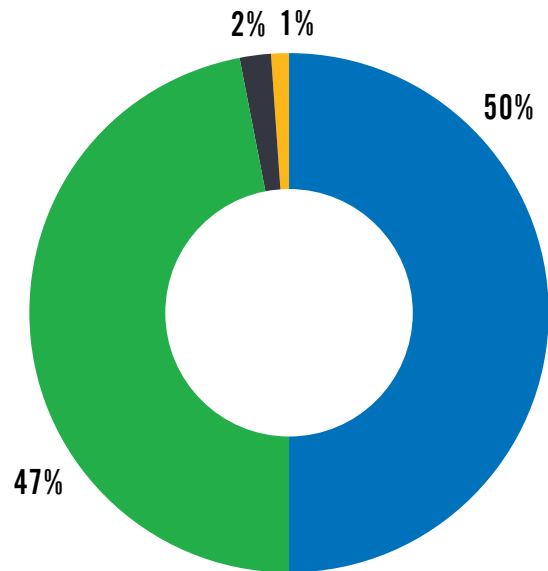
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-  **242** Children had access to a higher standard of early learning through preschool and child care programs participating in Quality First.
 -  **47** Infants, toddlers and preschoolers received scholarships to access high quality early learning through preschool or child care.
 -  **64** Families received voluntary, evidence-based home visitation 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.
 -  **77** Children received screenings to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues to prevent learning challenges later on.

FULFILLING OUR COMMITMENT TO ARIZONA'S YOUNGEST KIDS

Each First Things First regional partnership council, made up of local volunteers, studies the unique needs of its Arizona community and decides how funds will be used to best support the development, education and health of its young children (birth to age 5, before kindergarten). FTF invests in proven programs and innovative strategies through grants to community organizations that provide services to children and families.

GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY FY16 PROGRAM EXPENDITURES

● Quality Child Care & Preschool	\$273,723
● Strengthening Families	\$253,940
● Research & Evaluation	\$12,747
● Preventive Health	\$4,941
Total	\$545,352



FIRST THINGS FIRST GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL

Melissa Madrid,
Chair

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Priscilla Foote

Priscilla Antone

Sandra Nasewytewa

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Deborah Chadwick

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Geographically, the Gila River Indian Community is located on 372,000 acres of land in south-central Arizona. The Community lies south of the cities of Phoenix, Tempe, and Chandler, and north of Casa Grande, and its east to west borders run from Coolidge to Tolleson. The Gila River Indian Community Region includes Legislative Districts 8 and 27. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)

