Early experiences build the foundation for a lifetime
of a child’s brain growth happens before kindergarten

From birth to age 5, a child’s brain develops more than any other time in life. Research shows that the quality of a child’s early life experiences shape how their brain develops.

First Things First partners with families and communities to help our state’s youngest children prepare for kindergarten and beyond.

Fiscal Year 2019 Southeast Maricopa Region Impact Highlights

Here are a few highlights of the proven programs and innovative strategies from this region.

**Strengthening Families and Early Literacy**
- 475 Families or caregivers served by receiving referrals or by participating in activities at family resource centers.
- 11,074 Families of newborns received the Arizona Parent Kit, filled with tips and tools to help support their child’s healthy development.

**Quality Preschool and Child Care**
- 5,188 Children attended preschools and child care programs participating in Quality First.
- 607 Children birth to age 5 received a Quality First scholarship to attend high quality preschools and child care programs.

**Preventive Health**
- 680 Children monitored to receive appropriate screenings to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues to prevent learning challenges later on.
- 2,492 Children received a screening to detect tooth decay, which left undetected and treated could cause damage to permanent teeth, impaired speech development and failure to thrive.

Additional strategies:
- **586 Families with young children** participated in voluntary home visiting programs proven to reduce parental stress levels, increase connections to community supports, and improve children’s cognitive, motor, behavioral and social-emotional development.

“Building the knowledge base and skill set of Arizona’s parents requires more than nine months of gestation. It is a life-long apprenticeship.”

**Billie Enz**
Member of FTF Southeast Maricopa Regional Partnership Council
When Frankie Littlebear and her husband, Danny, discovered Parents as Teachers, a home visitation program funded by the First Things First Southeast Maricopa Region, they were curious about how the program would benefit their 2-year-old daughter, Ariya.

Littlebear thought it might help give their daughter a jumpstart on reaching milestones. She quickly found that not only was Ariya learning, but she also gained valuable lessons on how to teach her daughter.

Parents as Teachers provides voluntary coaching and in-home support for families. For Littlebear, that meant a parent educator visited her home in Mesa twice a month. During each visit, the parent coach provided parenting information, teaching strategies and connections to other community resources.

“As a parent, you wonder if you have the proper tools to teach your child,” Littlebear said. “Now with the help of our parent educator, I’ve learned many different approaches so that my husband and I can help Ariya with life skills and prepare her for kindergarten.”

Littlebear’s coach provided her with lessons to make learning fun, like placing shape cutouts on the floor and hopping from shape to shape, matching up colors, making buildings out of blocks, even learning different textures and sizes by playing with different balls. The parent educator showed Littlebear ways to incorporate teaching with everyday items as simple as pipe cleaners and straws.

“When our parent educator visits, Ariya lights up with excitement waiting for her to pull the next activity out of her bag,” Littlebear said. “She brings paints, blocks, instruments, tea sets, magnets and our daughter’s favorite: books!”

When the family first started the program, Ariya was quiet and shy. She even hid behind her parents. As the Littlebears participated in the program, they watched Ariya develop rapidly. In a short amount of time, Ariya, now 4, became outgoing. Today, she confidently introduces herself to other children when playing at the park.

“I’m so proud of Ariya. I love learning how to teach her,” Littlebear said. “Our parent educator has given both of us confidence.”

Littlebear attributes much of Ariya’s success to the foundation established from the home visits with Parents as Teachers. And now, Ariya’s 9-month-old sister, Amiya, is benefitting too.

“The connection between parent and child at this stage is so valuable and precious,” Littlebear said. “They remember all you do for them, and having a helping hand in my daughter’s learning process is a huge plus.”

Read more FTF stories at FirstThingsFirst.org/region-stories/
The Southeast Maricopa Region is comprised of several communities within the southeastern portion of Maricopa County and includes Mesa and Gilbert, as well as the parts of Queen Creek and Apache Junction which lie within Maricopa County. It also includes some unincorporated areas adjacent to Mesa or Gilbert. The Southeast Maricopa Region includes Legislative Districts 12, 16, 17, 25 and 26. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)

FTF Southeast Maricopa Regional Council

The FTF Southeast Maricopa Regional Partnership Council is made up of volunteers who study the unique needs of the local community and decide how funds will be used to best support the development, education and health of young children birth to age 5. FTF invests in proven programs and innovative strategies through grants to community organizations that provide services to children and families.

FY19 Total Regional Program Expenditures

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>Strengthening Families</td>
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<td>Quality Child Care and Preschool</td>
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<td>Preventive Health</td>
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<td>Research and Evaluation</td>
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<td>Coordinating Care</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$9,795,404</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FTF Southeast Maricopa Regional Partnership Council

- **Chair**: Abigail Conley
- **Vice Chair**: Marjaneh Gilpatrick
- **Members**:
  - Katrina Cope
  - David Crummey
  - Billie Enz
  - Irene Frklich
  - Stephanie Montez
- **Albie Abrahams,** FTF Regional Director
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Learn more at: FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Southeast-Maricopa

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