INVESTING IN ARIZONA'S FUTURE

EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

STRONG, SAFE COMMUNITIES

FIRST THINGS FIRST

90% of brain growth happens before kindergarten.

From birth to age 5, a child's brain develops more than any other time in life. And research shows that the quality of a child's experiences in the early childhood years helps shape how their brain develops.

Positive experiences — like nurturing relationships with parents and early learning opportunities like quality child care and preschool — promote healthy brain development and learning.

Early childhood is when kids begin to develop the skills they'll need for future success in school and in life: language and literacy, problem-solving, focus and getting along with others.

To see how early development impacts a lifetime, watch our video at:
FirstThingsFirst.org/video

First Things First

Created by Arizonans, First Things First partners with families and communities to help our state's youngest children be ready for success in kindergarten and beyond.

With statewide oversight and accountability, decisions about how to invest early childhood funds are made at the local level by community leaders who rely on data and invest in proven programs that address the development, education and health needs of children from birth to age 5.

93% of funds go to programs for children and families

First Things First is "A HIGH PERFORMING ORGANIZATION"

Arizona Auditor General report, 2016

First Things First named one of TOP 25 INNOVATIONS IN AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 2017

Arizona

Many young children in Arizona face challenges that threaten their healthy development and learning.

- More than **1 in 4** live in poverty.
- **Almost 2 out of 3** children ages 3 and 4 don't attend preschool.
- **1 in 8** has had two or more adverse childhood experiences.

A Wise Investment

Investing in early childhood development means funding proven programs and innovative strategies for children from birth to age 5.

- Kindergarten readiness
- 3rd grade reading scores
- High school graduation rates
- Workforce readiness
- Health and well-being

- Special education/remediation
- Dependence on social welfare
- Crime-related costs and incarceration rates

EARLY LEARNING

Improve and expand access to quality early learning in preschool and child care.

STRONG FAMILIES

Strengthen families in their role as their child's first teacher.

PREVENTIVE HEALTH

Prevent and identify health problems that can impact learning later on.

First Things First's Impact

Here are just a few ways we're making a significant impact on Arizona's future. In SFY2020:

60,927 CHILDREN

attended early learning programs committed to continuous quality improvement through Quality First.

4,786 FAMILIES

participated in voluntary home-based programs proven to improve children's cognitive, motor, behavioral and social-emotional development.

15,405 CHILDREN

received screenings to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues and prevent learning challenges later on.

QUALITY FIRST
FIRST THINGS FIRST

First Things First's signature program, Quality First, partners with child care and preschool providers to improve the quality of early learning across Arizona.

Research-based quality improvements include learning environments rich in language and literacy, coaching for early learning professionals to better engage young learners and developmentally appropriate learning materials.

Scholarships also are funded to help more infants, toddlers and preschoolers access quality early care and learning.

Early childhood matters.

Support for investing in early childhood has growing momentum among leaders statewide. Business leaders, educators, public safety officials, health care providers and other community stakeholders recognize the most effective and efficient time to develop critical skills needed for later success, is in a child's first five years.

One of the greatest predictors of a child's ultimate educational and economic success is their vocabulary at age four.

Michael Crow
President, Arizona State University

Creating a highly-skilled workforce begins with a world-class education system, including high-quality early learning opportunities.

Sharon Harper
President, CEO, Co-Founder
Plaza Companies

The smartest educational investments are with children birth to 5 years old – before they enter the K-12 system. All Arizonans – parents, business leaders, health professionals, elected officials – should invest early because we all benefit when kids arrive at school prepared to succeed.

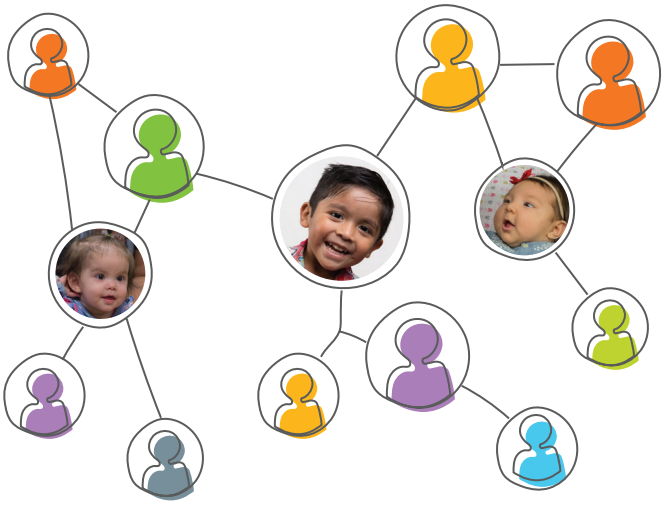
Don Budinger
Chairman and Founding Director,
The Rodel Foundations

Everyone has a role to play.

Early experiences are a proven investment in the future of our state. Since we all benefit when more kids arrive at school prepared to be successful, we all can play a role in building a strong foundation for Arizona's youngest kids.

Business leaders can support high-quality early learning programs and adopt policies that support working parents. The faith-based community can connect with early childhood or family support programs in need of focused volunteer efforts. Health care providers can help families with young children connect to early childhood resources in their community.

To get involved, connect with First Things First.



Learn more at
FirstThingsFirst.org