

FIRST THINGS FIRST

White Mountain Apache Tribe Region

IMPACT REPORT

2021



FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/White-Mountain-Apache-Tribe

90%

of a child's brain growth happens before kindergarten.

Early childhood matters.

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

Many young children in Arizona face challenges that threaten their healthy development and learning. In the FTF White Mountain Apache Tribe Region, there are **2,003 children** (under age 6) with **54% living in poverty**.

Here is how FTF is working to support young children and their families in this region.

“Quality early childhood experiences lead to better lives and outcomes for children and thus betterment for all of our futures. Longitudinal research through the years provides proof that children who were in quality programs were more successful and had brighter futures, with less detrimental outcomes. The early years matter, and it is all of our responsibility to believe and ensure all children are capable of success, no exceptions.”

Laurel Endfield

Chair of FTF White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council

FTF White Mountain Apache Tribe Region Strategic Priorities



Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

Families are a child's first and best teachers. FTF programs in the White Mountain Apache Tribe region give parents choices for how they want to support their child's health and learning. Parents can attend educational **family activities** to help support their child's healthy development and improve their parenting skills. The region also **distributes books** to families with children from birth to age 5 to encourage parent-child interaction and reading.



Quality Preschool and Child Care

Children who attend high-quality early learning programs go on to do better in school and are more likely to graduate. The White Mountain Apache Tribe region provides funding for child care providers and preschool programs to participate in FTF's **Quality First**. Providers benefit from training, coaching and a wide range of evidence-based supports to improve the quality of their early learning programs in ways that help children learn, grow and thrive. Early childhood educators living in the region can also apply to receive **college scholarships** to pursue an early education certification or degree. In addition, the region also funds **Quality First Scholarships** to help low-income families afford quality early learning for their young children.



Kith and Kin program helps Whiteriver mom be a better parent and caregiver

As a stay-at-home mom living in Whiteriver, Michelle Eubank takes care of her three children. During weekday work hours, she also watches her two nieces and two nephews ranging from two months to school age.

She was looking for ways “to learn to be a better parent and caretaker” and found the Kith and Kin program, which is funded by First Things First White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council.

The program offers family (kin), friend and neighbor (kith) child care providers a free 15-week class covering topics like nutrition, injury prevention, language, literacy, brain development and more. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the program used a virtual platform to teach classes.

Eubank’s youngest child is her 1-year-old son, Jasper. The classes offered information to help her understand early childhood development and how she could help all the children under her care to excel cognitively, emotionally and physically.

“I wanted to learn new ideas for how to take care of my baby and niece,” said Eubank. “For the older kids, I wanted ideas on how to cut back on their screen time, so the kids wouldn’t be stuck on their electronic devices all day.”

In addition to teaching about early childhood and connecting caregivers to community resources, the program also provides free car seats, smoke alarms and fire extinguishers. The program also pays for caregivers to get certified in CPR and first aid.

“There is a need for caretaker education in the area and supporting them to provide better safety while also creating a nurturing environment for children,” said Brianna Endfield, a Candelen Kith and Kin specialist/instructor.

The class taught Eubank how to design a safe outdoor environment for children so they could become more active and play outside during the day.

“In our yard, there used to be nothing,” said Eubank. “Slowly we started finding things to buy to make the backyard a fun place to play in.”

Eubank and her husband, John, purchased a discovery water wall that uses small buckets and other scoops so kids can gather and pour water. They also purchased a playset, two picnic tables, a small pool with a sun-protecting canopy and a basketball hoop.

“The kids love it,” said Eubank. “They want to run and play outside, and it’s great, because it’s so much healthier for them instead of being cooped up inside on an electronic device.”

Eubank also learned to create safe indoor environments using a checklist that listed dangers to avoid. She also created a safe room for time outs.

“I learned that if they are having a tantrum, I can place my child briefly in a safe room,” she said. “It gives me a chance to take a moment to take a few deep breaths before trying to help them calm down. It was a good reminder for me that as a mom, sometimes I need a moment to de-stress so I can be a better parent to my kids.”

Eubank also wanted to help Jasper and her niece to prepare for kindergarten, so she works with them on their fine motor skills, such as playing with different textures of food and water. Endfield suggested online resources that Eubank uses to plan learning activities.

“This program has really helped me be more structured during the day with a routine and to communicate more with the kids. I can see them learning and everyone is less stressed.”

—Michelle Eubank, parent

The program also provided home packages with books, crayons, scissors, colored pencils, construction paper and other materials with tips on how to make the most of interactions with kids.

“When we do activities, I praise the kids a lot and use different words so they can expand their vocabulary,” said Eubank. “This program has really helped me be more structured during the day with a routine and to communicate more with the kids. I can see them learning and everyone is less stressed.”

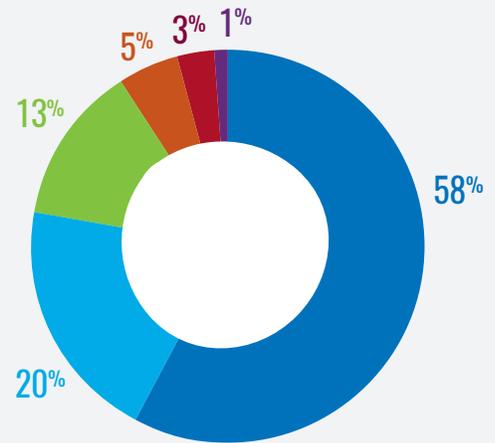
FTF White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council

The FTF White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council is made up of volunteers who study the unique needs of the local community and decide how funds should be used to best support the healthy development and early learning 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. Some of the programs in this region include Quality First, Kith and Kin, Parenting Counts and Parents as Teachers.

FTF White Mountain Apache Tribe SFY21 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool	\$540,706
Preventive Health	\$187,047
Strengthening Families	\$119,415
Workforce Development and Training	\$45,644
Research and Evaluation	\$27,067
Parent and Community Awareness	\$5,010
Total	\$924,888



FTF White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council and Staff

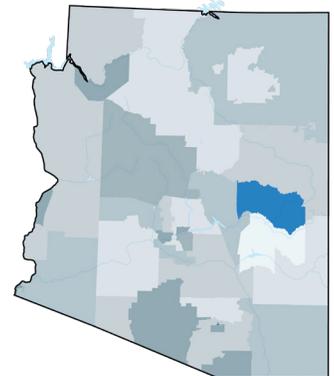
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The boundaries of the FTF White Mountain Apache Tribe Region are the same as the Fort Apache Indian Reservation. The region covers more than 2,500 square miles in Apache, Gila and Navajo counties. The larger communities in the region are Whiteriver, Cibecue, North Fork and Canyon Day. The FTF White Mountain Apache Tribe Region includes Legislative District 7. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)

Learn more at
[FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/White-Mountain-Apache-Tribe](https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/Regions/White-Mountain-Apache-Tribe)