

FIRST THINGS FIRST

East Maricopa Region

IMPACT REPORT 2021



FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/East-Maricopa

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 East Maricopa Region, there are **54,701 children** (under age 6) with **14% living in poverty**.

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

“ I have worked with many parents throughout the East Valley, and regardless of their circumstances, they love their children and want what is best for them. The more we invest in creating stable, enriching environments early in a child's life, the greater the personal and economic outcomes will be not only for the child, but for their family and for the community.”

Ann Lynn DiDomenico

Human Services Supervisor for the City of Tempe and 2021 FTF East Maricopa Champion for Young Children

FTF East Maricopa Region Strategic Priorities



Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

Families are a child's first and best teachers. FTF programs in the East Maricopa region give parents choices for how they want to support their child's health and learning. **Family resource centers** in the region offer a wide range of family activities, programs and referrals to additional services, and voluntary **home visiting** programs provide comprehensive, one-on-one support for families with young children. Families of newborns throughout the region and across the state also receive the **Arizona Parent Kit**, with helpful information and resources to support new parents.



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 East Maricopa 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. The region also funds **Quality First Scholarships** to help low-income families afford quality early learning for their young children.



Preventive Health

A child's health issues can impact learning later on. Left unaddressed and unsupported, developmental delays and chronic medical conditions can contribute to serious learning problems. FTF works to support the health and development of young children in the East Maricopa region by funding **care coordination** support to promote children's overall health and wellness by providing positive parenting guidance and navigation of the health care and social services systems.



Family resource center in Chandler helps parents give strong early literacy foundation to daughters

Ana Hernandez enjoyed reading to her daughters Emma, 3 and Eva, 1, but felt it could be a more impactful experience. She and her husband, Pedro, wanted to gain more tools to help their children develop a foundational love of reading to prepare them for kindergarten and beyond.

"I always wanted to be involved with my kids and their learning, that's something I didn't have growing up," said Hernandez, who lives in Chandler. "We're not perfect parents, but we can always try to be better. I know how important the early years are and wanted to help prepare them for success."

A friend recommended the early literacy programs at Chandler CARE Family Resource Center. The First Things First East Maricopa Regional Partnership Council funds the center to provide a community hub of services and programs such as parenting programs, early literacy, health and wellness programming and other fun activities for children birth to age 5 and their families. In addition, the free parent education programs are focused on positive and active parenting, early literacy and emerging language.

Hernandez initially registered herself and Emma for two early literacy programs, Raising a Reader and Learning Together. Throughout the Raising a Reader program, 3-year-old Emma blossomed. She looked forward to seeing other children and listening to Chandler CARE Center parent program coordinator, Consuelo Roa, who made the stories come alive.

Roa taught parents important techniques like reading with patience, how to better engage their child by asking questions and continuing the conversation about the story. Hernandez witnessed Emma developing a greater vocabulary, getting more comfortable with expressing her feelings, expanding her thinking skills and developing a true love of learning.

"I am so thankful for the programs we participated in at Chandler CARE Center," Hernandez said. "Emma loved her take-home materials, which she called her 'homework' from the Learning Together program. She enjoyed the activities and learned through the interaction such as going to the grocery store and making recipes together. The program really sparked Emma's imagination and was a launching point for preparing her for things to come later and in kindergarten."

Emma, now age 4, is enrolled in a pre-kindergarten class, thriving and enjoying participating in a new classroom setting. Hernandez attributes her daughter's success to laying an early literacy foundation, as well as understanding her important role as her child's first teacher.

"I would definitely recommend these programs to every parent looking for early learning opportunities for their child. The programs have made me feel more confident, and I feel like we are doing a good job and supporting our girls in the best way."

—Ana Hernandez, parent

Younger sister, Eva, now age 2, is ready to start up the Raising a Reader program to follow in big sister's footsteps.

"I would definitely recommend these programs to every parent looking for early learning opportunities for their child," she said. "The programs have made me feel more confident, and I feel like we are doing a good job and supporting our girls in the best way."

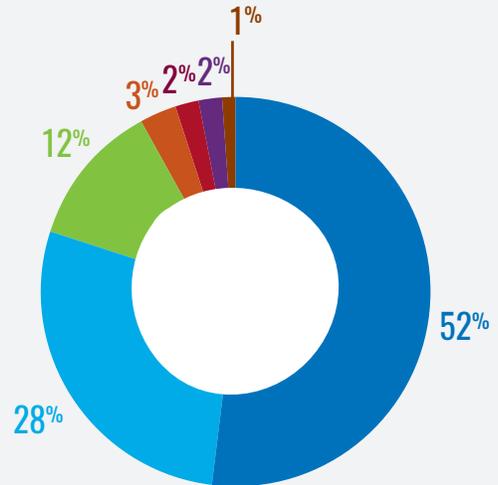
FTF East Maricopa Regional Partnership Council

The FTF East Maricopa 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 pediatric care coordination, Quality First and Healthy Families Arizona.

FTF East Maricopa SFY21 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool	\$4,250,427
Strengthening Families	\$2,293,800
Preventive Health	\$1,035,894
Research and Evaluation	\$284,127
Parent and Community Awareness	\$160,770
Workforce Development and Training	\$150,541
Coordinating Care	\$53,854
Total	\$8,229,412



FTF East Maricopa Regional Partnership Council and Staff

Chair
Lisa Bautista

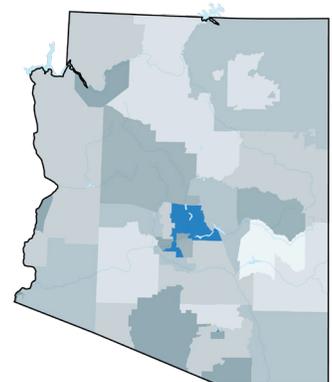
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The **FTF East Maricopa Region** lies entirely within Maricopa County and spans urban communities to the east of Phoenix as well as less densely populated, suburban and rural communities reaching towards the edges of the Maricopa County boundary. This diverse, expansive region includes: three cities — Chandler, Scottsdale and Tempe; five towns — Carefree, Cave Creek, Fountain Hills, Guadalupe and Paradise Valley; three unincorporated places — Goldfield Ranch, Rio Verde and Sun Lakes; two Phoenix neighborhoods — Ahwatukee and Paradise Valley Village; and one Indian reservation — the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation. The FTF East Maricopa Region includes Legislative Districts 1, 15, 17, 18, 24, 26 and 28. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)

Learn more at
[FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/East-Maricopa](https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/Regions/East-Maricopa)