

# # FIRST THINGS FIRST

Pima North Region

# IMPACT REPORT 2021



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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 Pima North Region, there are **48,064 children** (under age 6) with **27% living in poverty**.

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

“ Early childhood education is a time where children's brains are making lifelong connections. These connections are made in all areas of development, including basic skills and social-emotional learning. It is a time where young children learn how to interact with their family, peers and educators and gain skills that will support them throughout their lives. This is why the work that we do in First Things First Pima North Region is making such a difference in our community.”

**Susan Shinn**

*Director of Early Learning Programs for Flowing Wells School District and Chair of the FTF Pima North Regional Partnership Council*

## FTF Pima North Region Strategic Priorities



### Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

Families are a child's first and best teachers. FTF programs in the Pima North region give parents choices for how they want to support their child's health and learning. The region provides voluntary **home visiting** programs providing comprehensive, one-on-one support for families with young children and also children with special needs as well as **evidence-based trainings** to teach parents about early childhood development.



### 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 Pima North 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

Undetected or untreated health issues can impact learning later on. Left unaddressed, 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 Pima North region by funding **developmental and sensory screenings** to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues and help prevent later learning challenges. **Oral health screenings** are also offered to protect children against childhood tooth decay, a leading cause of school absences.



## Specialized home visitation program helps Tucson boy catch up on developmental milestones

Maritza Vasquez expected her son's tantrums when he was 2. By age 3, when Manuel's tantrums became more frequent, she wanted help.

"I wanted him to be prepared for when he entered preschool," said Vasquez. "I wanted him to learn about socializing. He was having many tantrums."

Vasquez enrolled in the Parents as Teachers Children with Special Needs program, funded by the First Things First Pima North Regional Partnership Council.

The program provides a parent educator who visits the home to assess children for developmental milestones and delays. The parent educator also offers resources and teaches parents about healthy discipline, early childhood development and how to prepare their child for kindergarten. The program differs slightly from the regular Parents as Teachers program in that the parent educators are equipped to give greater support to children who are found to have moderate delays.

"If children have a moderate delay, they often fall through the cracks," said Megan Wills, chief community programs officer for Easterseals Blake Foundation/Parents as Teachers. "When kids start elementary school with these unaddressed minor delays, it affects their performance and experience in school. The parent educators have the expertise to navigate systems and support families with resources to help these children, so they can catch up before they start kindergarten."

Karla Hernandez, a parent educator, visited Vasquez at her home in Tucson and assessed Manuel using an Ages and Stages Questionnaire to find that he had a moderate delay in social-emotional and fine motor development.

Hernandez started working with Vasquez on attachment with her son, using logical consequences for discipline and improving his nutrition.

"We worked on him expressing his feelings," said Hernandez. "We asked him to tell mom when he was happy, sad or mad. Then he started asking mom how she was feeling."

Vasquez said she saw his tantrums decrease and his social skills improve.

"He is able to talk about his emotions and reflect on his behaviors," said Vasquez. "He learned to follow instructions from people other than mom and dad. We are having more positive interactions."

For developing his fine motor skills, Hernandez gave Vasquez activities to do at their home using scissors, coloring, holding pencils and crayons, and tracing his name and shapes. Vasquez dedicated an hour every day to sitting down with Manuel to do fine motor activities.

"We set goals for the entire family, including dad, who was also involved in joining in the activities," said Hernandez.

They also started to introduce reading times with him to expand his vocabulary.

"He is very interested in making crafts, doing different activities, and he loves reading," said Vasquez.

In six months, Hernandez reassessed Manuel using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire and found he had caught up in his development.

When it was time to go to preschool, Vasquez and her husband wanted Manuel to go to a Catholic preschool but couldn't afford the tuition.

**"If children have a moderate delay, they often fall through the cracks...The parent educators have the expertise to navigate systems and support families with resources to help these children, so they can catch up before they start kindergarten."**

**—Megan Wills, chief community programs officer, Easterseals Blake Foundation/Parents as Teachers.**

"The school did an assessment with him," said Hernandez. "He scored so well, he got a scholarship to go to the preschool there."

Now at age 4, Manuel is doing well in preschool and on his way to having a great start in kindergarten.

 Read more FTF stories at [FirstThingsFirst.org/Region-Stories](https://www.FirstThingsFirst.org/Region-Stories)

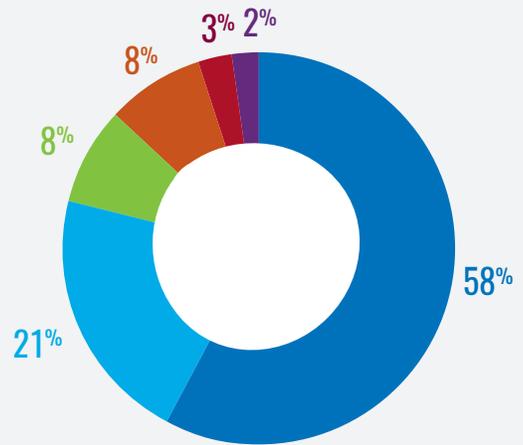
# FTF Pima North Regional Partnership Council

The FTF Pima North 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, Parents as Teachers and professional development.

## FTF Pima North SFY21 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool	\$5,449,423
Strengthening Families	\$2,014,646
Workforce Development and Training	\$766,848
Preventive Health	\$762,004
Research and Evaluation	\$341,576
Parent and Community Awareness	\$82,335
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$9,416,832</b>



## FTF Pima North Regional Partnership Council and Staff

*Chair*  
**Susan Shinn**

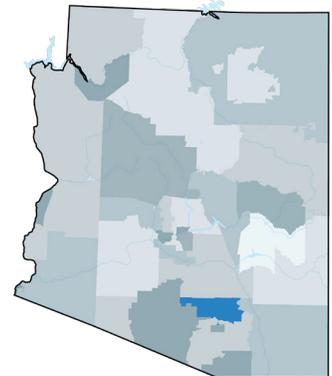
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The **FTF Pima North Region** is defined as the northern portion of Pima County, not including the lands belonging to the Pascua Yaqui Tribe and the Tohono O'odham Nation. The region includes the city of South Tucson, the towns of Oro Valley and Marana, and the unincorporated communities of Catalina Foothills, Tanque Verde, Picture Rocks, Catalina, Avra Valley and Nelson. It does not include the Redington area in the northeastern corner of Pima County, which is assigned to the FTF Cochise Region. The FTF Pima North Region includes Legislative Districts 2, 3, 9, 10 and 11. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)

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