

FIRST THINGS FIRST
Phoenix North Region
2020 Impact Report



From birth to age 5, a child's brain grows more than any other time in life.

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 Phoenix North Region, there are **66,337 children** (under age 6) with **26% living in poverty**.

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

“The early childhood programs and services, supported by the FTF Phoenix North Regional Council, strengthen families, improve the quality of early learning and enhance the health and well-being of children birth to 5 years old in our community. This impact would not have been possible without data to guide our discussions and decisions.”

Wendy Resnik

Chair of FTF Phoenix North Regional Partnership Council

FTF Phoenix North Regional Key Impact Highlights [Fiscal Year 2020]



Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

5,012

Families of newborns received the Arizona Parent Kit, filled with tips and tools to help support their child's healthy development.

2,745

Families or caregivers served by receiving referrals or by participating in activities at family resource centers.



Quality Preschool and Child Care

9,571

Children attended preschools and child care programs participating in Quality First.

1,184

Children birth to age 5 received a Quality First scholarship to attend high-quality preschools and child care programs.



Preventive Health

2,581

Children monitored to receive appropriate screenings to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues to prevent learning challenges later on.

870

Children received fluoride varnishes applied to protect against childhood tooth decay.

Additional Strategies

5,282

Books

were given to families with children ages birth to 5 years to encourage parent-child interaction and reading.

123

Early childhood educators

received college scholarships to improve their qualifications for working with infants, toddlers and preschoolers.



Quality First center in northwest Phoenix supports foster child's social skills in classroom

In 2015, Peggy McMenemy, and her husband Jeff's life journey opened a new path that unexpectedly included parenthood.

At 3 months old, Leona came into the McMenemy's care as a ward of the State. Even at such a young age, Leona's history of adverse child experiences showed an impact on her social and emotional development. In Leona's case, she would get physically aggressive with other children when upset.

Many children in Arizona's child protective system have experienced trauma and score high in adverse childhood experiences, known as ACEs.

"If we give kids the tools to regulate themselves when they are this young, as they grow and enter different phases of their life they will have the necessary coping skills to manage," said Peggy McMenemy.

Because of her aggressive nature toward other children, the McMenemys were concerned that Leona might be singled out as a bully and not be given a chance to fully engage in preschool and make friends. She and her husband knew Leona

would need a quality child care center equipped with patient, experienced teachers to help her overcome these behaviors in the classroom.

As tenured first responders and being devout followers in their faith, the McMenemys had a large village of support. A friend recommended Northwest Christian Preschool in northwest Phoenix. This referral resonated with the McMenemys, as they wanted their child to grow up surrounded in their faith.

Northwest Christian Preschool is a five-star child care center that participates in First Things First's signature program, Quality First, which partners with child care centers and preschools across Arizona to improve early learning for young children.

During the tour, the McMenemys shared their hopes and needs for Leona. Elementary Principal and Director of Early Education Dawna Underwood and two preschool teachers came up with a behavior plan for Leona to help her succeed.

"Being in a community that understood and accepted our kid, we don't think that we could ever repay that." - Peggy McMenemy, mother

Every day, the two preschool teachers supported Leona in the classroom to develop her social- emotional skills such as expressing feelings with words, showing affection to familiar people and self-control. They gave Leona activities that involved physical movement, evolved discipline to fit her specific needs, and coordinated efforts with Leona's behavioral therapist.

"It brought a lot of peace knowing that she was in good hands," McMenemy said.

The milestones Leona has achieved over the past years, since she joined their family, have been amazing.

"There is a major contrast," McMenemy said. "We often think about this. She was very combative and had a really hard time being around other kids, but now she has two friends at school."

The McMenemys are excited for Leona to start kindergarten next year and are confident that she is prepared with the skills to be successful student.

For the family, Northwest Christian School is more than a place for Leona to get her education.

"Without this group of people — this village — she would not be the kid she is now," McMenemy said. "Being in a community that understood and accepted our kid, we don't think that we could ever repay that. We feel so thankful and blessed, there are no words to describe the feeling of belonging."

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

FTF Phoenix North Regional Partnership Council

The FTF Phoenix 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.

FTF Phoenix North FY20 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool

\$10,131,904

Strengthening Families

\$2,979,087

Preventive Health

\$1,245,057

Research and Evaluation

\$429,395

Workforce Development and Training

\$233,227

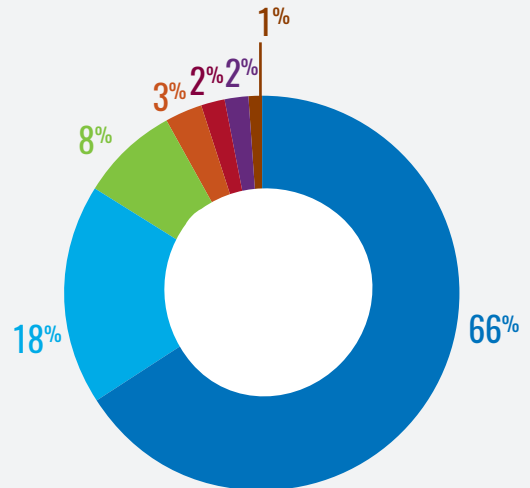
Parent and Community Awareness

\$174,279

Coordinating Care

\$59,419

Total \$15,252,370



FTF Phoenix North Regional Partnership Council and Staff

Chair
Wendy Resnik

Vice Chair
Lyn Bailey

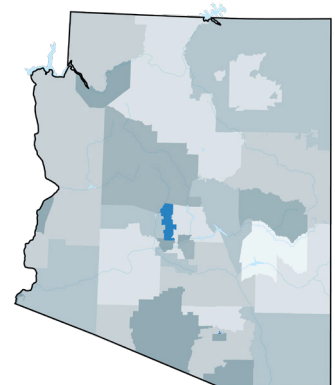
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The **FTF Phoenix North Region** is primarily the City of Phoenix north of Thomas Road. The region also includes the unincorporated communities of Anthem and New River to the north. Note that the Phoenix neighborhoods of Ahwatukee and Paradise Valley Village are assigned to the East Maricopa Region, and some Phoenix neighborhoods adjacent to Glendale are assigned to the Northwest Maricopa Region. The FTF Phoenix North Region includes Legislative districts 1, 15, 20, 23, 24, 28 and 30. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)

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