

FIRST THINGS FIRST Santa Cruz 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 Santa Cruz Region, there are **4,416 children** (under age 6) with **35% living in poverty**.

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

“ Within our Santa Cruz region, we deal with many chronic challenges including high unemployment, struggling single parent households and a shortage of vital resources to name a few. However, in concert with our many super-dedicated partners, we work hard at developing an environment promoting and supporting early childhood development.”

William Kirkpatrick

Chair of FTF Santa Cruz Regional Partnership Council

FTF Santa Cruz Regional Key Impact Highlights [Fiscal Year 2020]



Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

966

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

324

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



Quality Preschool and Child Care

266

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

82

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



Preventive Health

716

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

59

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

Additional Strategies

558

Activities

were held for parents to learn about early childhood development and resources at family resource centers.

79

Families with young children

participated in voluntary home visiting programs proven to reduce parental stress levels, increase connections to community supports, and improve children's cognitive, motor, behavioral and social-emotional development.



Home visitation program helps Nogales brother and sister excel in developmental milestones

When Jefferson Laffey and Arlenne Piña moved to Nogales from Hermosillo, Sonora, as husband and wife, they wanted a strong start for their family.

Piña was passionate about education and decided to pursue her General Educational Development diploma. In class, she heard about other community resources that would teach her about early childhood development and best parenting practices, which she wanted to learn for her two young children, Douglass, age 3, and Audubon, age 1.

One of the resources that caught her attention was the Santa Cruz County Superintendents Office Los Padres son los Primeros Profesores (Parents are the First Teachers) home visitation program. The First Things First Santa Cruz Regional Partnership Council funds the program, which provides parents with no-cost, in-home visits from a parent educator who teaches parents how to support their children's emotional, cognitive and physical development. The program supports parents with children from pregnancy up to age 5.

"Our main purpose is to strengthen the parent and child interactions," said Georgina Parra, Los Padres home visitation program director. "We lend them books, bring activities and do screenings. If a screening detects an issue, then we refer parents to the proper services to address the issue."

Piña wanted to learn the best way to care for her children so they could do well in kindergarten and in life.

"My husband and I want to have successful kids," said Piña. "We knew if we did good things for them as children, then we wouldn't need to worry about them in the future. We wanted to learn the best things we could do for our kids now, and this program has been helping us a lot."

"It's a good experience, because I can speak with the other parents about raising kids."
- Arlenne Piña, mother

A parent educator helped Piña prepare Douglass for kindergarten by teaching him to write his name, identify colors and count. For Audubon, Piña found out about tummy time and crawling. Piña learned effective discipline techniques, milestones for each age and the importance of reading.

"I learned what I should read at each stage of development and how I can teach them while I read to them," said Piña. "For Douglass, now I'm asking him questions to help him use his imagination. I ask him questions like: 'How could you change the ending of that story? What would you do if you were that kid?'"

Piña's parent educator also connected her to local resources and other supports.

"We refer our parents to family support groups so they can connect to the community," said Parra.

Piña said the support groups were helpful.

"Once a month, they have meetings, and I have met a lot of mothers there," said Piña. "It's a good experience, because I can speak with the other parents about raising kids. It's a really nice community."

As Piña's children continue to excel in their development and get ready for kindergarten, she is excited to see what the future holds for them and hopes other people in Nogales will use the program.

"I'm very grateful for this program," said Piña. "This type of program helps the community to have better citizens, because childhood is so very important. It's the foundation that a life is built on."

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

FTF Santa Cruz Regional Partnership Council

The FTF Santa Cruz 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 Parents as Teachers, family resource centers and Happy Smiles/Sonriza Feliz.

FTF Santa Cruz FY20 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Strengthening Families

\$632,735

Quality Child Care and Preschool

\$400,703

Preventive Health

\$156,751

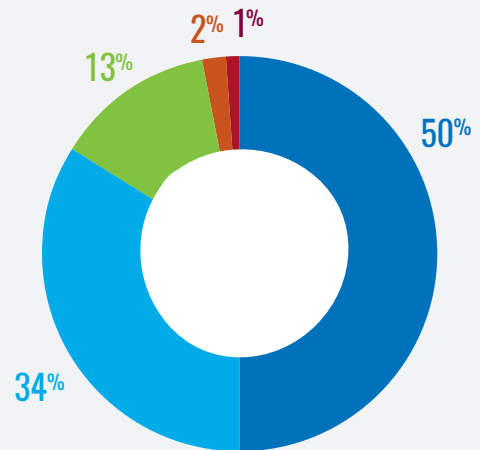
Research and Evaluation

\$37,073

Parent and Community Awareness

\$23,584

Total \$1,250,847



FTF Santa Cruz Regional Partnership Council and Staff

Chair

William Kirkpatrick

Vice Chair

Laura Monarque

Members

Chris Ciruli

Darcy Dixon

Ana Fukunaga

Melisa Lunderville

Patrick Maitrejean

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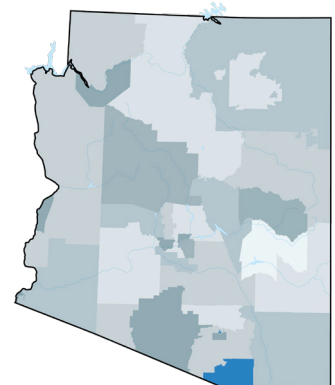
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The **FTF Santa Cruz Region** covers almost all of Santa Cruz County, the smallest county in Arizona. Situated in the Sonoran desert of southeast Arizona, Santa Cruz County and the Santa Cruz Region are home to six communities: Nogales, Patagonia, Rio Rico, Sonoita, Elgin and Tubac. Nogales is the county seat and is one of the largest ports of entry between Mexico and the United States. The area surrounding the Amado community in the northwestern corner of the county is assigned to the Pima South Region. The FTF Santa Cruz Region includes Legislative District 2. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)

Learn more at

[FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Santa-Cruz](https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/Regions/Santa-Cruz)