FIRST THINGS FIRST

2019 IMPACT REPORT

Yuma Region

Early experiences build the foundation for a lifetime

90% of a child's brain growth happens before kindergarten

From birth to age 5, a child's brain develops more than any other time in life. Research shows that the quality of a child's early life experiences shape how their brain develops.

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

"As both a mayor and a father, I believe it is extremely important to ensure our youngest in the community have every opportunity to succeed in life. Actively participating in early childhood development and education from day one is key to building strong families, and strong families are a vital component to building strong communities."

Mayor Douglas Nicholls
City of Yuma

Fiscal Year 2019 Yuma Region Impact Highlights

Here are a few highlights of the proven programs and innovative strategies from this region.

Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

3,108 Families of newborns received the Arizona Parent Kit, filled with tips and tools to help support their child's healthy development.

335 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 socio-emotional development.

Quality Preschool and Child Care

1,662 Children attended preschools and child care programs participating in Quality First.

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

Preventive Health

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

2,480 Children received a screening to detect tooth decay, which left undetected and treated could cause damage to permanent teeth, impaired speech development and failure to thrive.

Additional strategies:

105 Parents and other caregivers participated in evidence-based trainings designed to improved knowledge of parenting practices and children's development.

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

Quality First preschool setting helps calm Yuma boy's social anxiety

Anahi Sanchez was feeling overwhelmed.

She and her son's father didn't know how to help 4-year-old Manny.

"He had no social skills," Sanchez said. "When someone would approach him, he would avoid all contact, close his eyes and freeze. Other times, he would go into a rage and scream and cry. In order to avoid upsetting him, the family would stay away from him."

Manny would not talk or engage with any adults, but his parents. They knew this wasn't normal, but didn't know what was wrong. It took years for his family to realize he had selective mutism, a complex childhood anxiety disorder characterized by a child's inability to speak and communicate effectively in select social settings. These children are able to speak and communicate in settings where they are comfortable, secure and relaxed.

Manny was attracted to dinosaurs, sharks, whales and octopuses, he could name them all, but only to his parents.

Sanchez didn't know whether preschool could help Manny, but thought they would give it a chance. The parents reached out to the First Things First Yuma Regional office. The staff there helped the family find a preschool participating in Quality First, First Things First's signature program, which works with child care centers and preschools across Arizona to improve early learning.

Immediately, Manny was attracted to the classroom and the students at Preschool Express in Yuma, but was reluctant to talk to his teacher. But his teacher, who had received training with a Quality First coach, knew that she would need to encourage him to talk by asking open-ended questions that led to back-and-forth conversations. She also made sure she was the first person he saw when he came to school every day and welcomed him with a hug. They bonded quickly, and after a few days, he began talking to her.

His teacher made it a priority to get him up to speed with the rest of the class. She provided consistency and routine to encourage good behavior, self-regulation and increase social and emotional skills. Manny was encouraged to join peer groups and activities as well as leading the activity. His teacher soon saw his growth in multiple areas including social emotional, learning to hold a pencil, recognizing the alphabet, colors, numbers and writing his name.

Soon, he was participating in all the lessons, enjoying the playground activities and playing with his classmates. By the end of the school year, Manny was on top of his class, had many friends and talking to everyone. He was ready for kindergarten.

Now Manny is 8 years old and in the third grade in Gary Knox Elementary School, where he continues to excel. Manny tells everyone he plans to become a scientist or an oceanographer.

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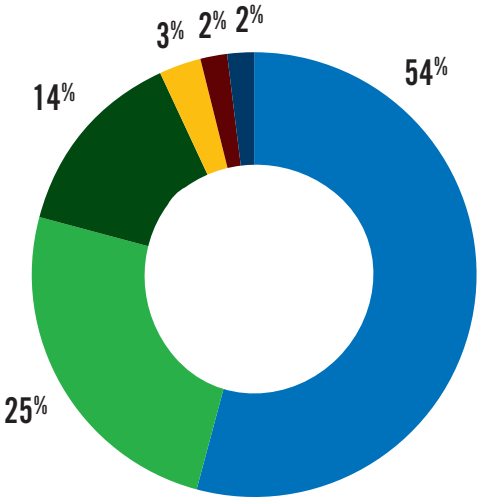
FTF Yuma Regional Council

The FTF Yuma Regional Partnership Council is made up of volunteers who study the unique needs of the local community and decide how funds will be used to best support the development, education and health 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.

FY19 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool	$2,735,558
Strengthening Families	$1,288,445
Preventive Health	$618,564
Workforce Devlopment and Training	$618,564
Research and Evaluation	$133,134
Parent and Community Awareness	$111,473
TOTAL	$5,053,252



FTF Yuma Regional Partnership Council

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Alma Barrandey
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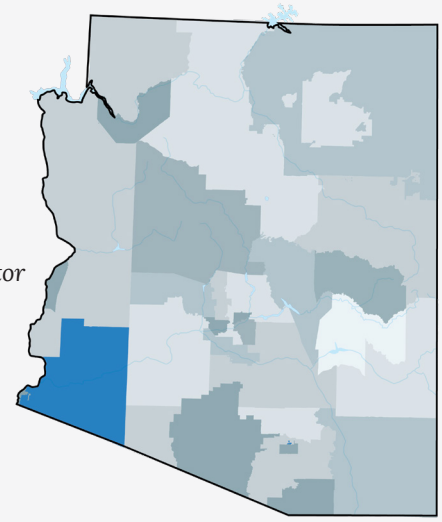
Deborah Guerrero
Irish Holtry
Ricardo Perez
Rebecca Ramirez
Veronica Shorr
Donald Vickers
Mario Ybarra

Rudy J. Ortiz,
FTF Regional Director
rjortiz@firstthingsfirst.org
928.343.3020

Nena Garcia,
FTF Community Outreach Coordinator
mgarcia@firstthingsfirst.org
928.343.3020



The Yuma Region is defined as Yuma County, not including the lands belonging to the Cocopah Indian Tribe. The Arizona portion of the Fort YumaQuechan Reservation is also located within the region along the Colorado River near the city of Yuma. The Yuma Region includes Legislative Districts 4 and 13. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)

Learn more at: FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Yuma