

# # FIRST THINGS FIRST

## Yavapai 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 Yavapai Region, there are **12,661 children** (under age 6) with **25% living in poverty**.

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

“The importance of early childhood education cannot be overstated. The first five years are critically important for brain development and the development of social skills that enhance success in school and life. All children deserve to be healthy and ready to succeed in life.”



**Kathy Watson**

*Chair of FTF Yavapai Regional Partnership Council*

## FTF Yavapai Regional Key Impact Highlights [Fiscal Year 2020]



### Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

**1,456** Families of newborns received the Arizona Parent Kit, filled with tips and tools to help support their child's healthy development.

**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.



### Quality Preschool and Child Care

**1,951** Children attended preschools and child care programs participating in Quality First.

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

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



### Preventive Health

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

### Additional Strategies

**618** **Adults** attended parenting activities to learn more about the importance of early childhood development.

**267** **Professionals** received training so that they could make developmentally appropriate recommendations for children in out-of-home care.



## Early childhood teachers in Yavapai County learning ways to support social-emotional development of children

As an early childhood mental health consultant, every day can look different for Jodi Oen. Many days she's observing classrooms, watching how children interact and how the educators in the classroom are responding to the children.

"Pre-COVID, I would typically go into each classroom for three hours once a week to develop relationships of trust with the teachers and with the students," Oen said. "I am there as a resource for them."

Although the interactions may be different in the wake of coronavirus, the goal is the same: to work with early childhood centers and preschool teachers, students and families in the Yavapai region to provide support that benefits all children in the classroom.

The First Things First Yavapai Regional Partnership Council funds early childhood mental health consultation as a strategy to expand the skills of early childhood professionals to support the social and emotional development of the children in their care.

Oen is a consultant with Smart Support of Southwest Human Development. As a mental health professional with expertise in children's social and emotional development, she provides support in three different ways. Sometimes there's a plan focused on a specific child. Other times a plan is put in place that evaluates the classroom as a whole. With a programmatic plan, the consultant works with the center director.

Oen described helping a classroom of young children learn how to name and process their feelings by introducing a chart with words and pictures representing different emotions that had space for pictures of all of the students. The children could move their pictures to match the feeling words that best represented how they felt that day.

"One day I noticed one of the little boys had put his picture by the word, nervous," Oen said. "I asked him what he was feeling that made him want to put his picture there. He said that he knew his mother was not going to be able to pick him up from school that day so he would be riding home with someone else. He did feel nervous about that and having the chart helped him name that and be able to talk about it."

**"Having that person who can give an outside perspective makes a tremendous difference."  
- Sherry Birch, director**

For Sherry Birch, director of the Sonshine Learning Center in Black Canyon City, Oen has helped her teachers learn how to work with children with challenging behaviors.

"She helps teachers realize when their buttons are being pushed and know when to seek support from other staff," Birch said. "We learn what our triggers are so that when we get to them we know to grab another teacher and that helps alleviate and keep stress levels down, the feeling of being overwhelmed."

Mental health consultation is a must in child care centers, Birch said. "Having that person who can give an outside perspective makes a tremendous difference. She has been instrumental in sitting down with me and meeting with parents, giving parents the confidence to work with us as a team to help their child when there are concerns," she said.



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

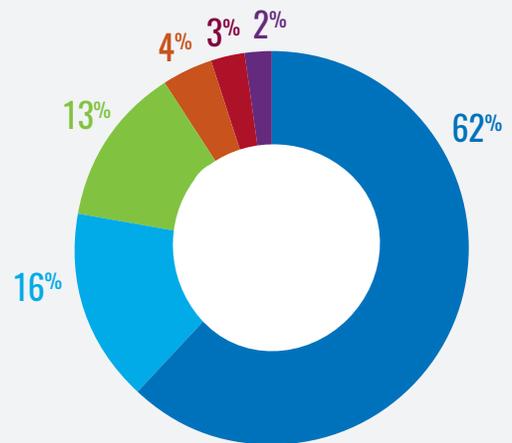
# FTF Yavapai Regional Partnership Council

The FTF Yavapai 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, Little Learners and Best For Babies.

## FTF Yavapai FY20 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool	\$2,045,898
Preventive Health	\$566,682
Strengthening Families	\$464,120
Parent and Community Awareness	\$135,927
Research and Evaluation	\$92,050
Workforce Development and Training	\$43,165
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,347,843</b>



## FTF Yavapai Regional Partnership Council and Staff

*Chair*  
**Kathy Watson**

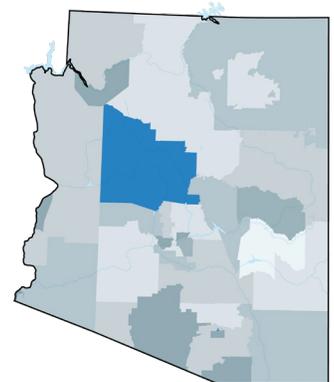
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*The FTF Yavapai Region covers all of Yavapai County, plus the part of the city of Sedona that lies in Coconino County. The Yavapai-Apache Nation is included in the Yavapai Region. With 38 percent of the land owned by the U.S. Forest Service, the FTF Yavapai Region is known for its four mild seasons, plentiful lakes, mountains and forest and small town atmosphere. The FTF Yavapai Region includes Legislative Districts 1 and 6. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)*

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