



FIRST THINGS FIRST

2019 IMPACT REPORT

Santa Cruz Region



Early experiences build the foundation for a lifetime



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.

“Young children are this country's greatest resource! Assisting them in entering school ready to learn will impact their long term school success and thus provide a significant return on investment. Supporting young children and their families in early childhood development clearly makes business sense.”

Karen Woodford

Chair of FTF Santa Cruz Regional Partnership Council

Fiscal Year 2019 Santa Cruz Region Impact Highlights

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



Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

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

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



Quality Preschool and Child Care

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

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



Preventive Health

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

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

Additional strategies:



51 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.



1,402 Activities

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



3-year-old boy gets prepared for kindergarten at family resource center in Rio Rico

At age 2, Santiago seemed anxious around adults. Whenever his mom, Kristina Luna, would interact with strangers, Santiago would cry and yell.

“Our son was a little developmentally delayed,” said Luna. “His speech was really delayed, so we got him into speech therapy. I was also looking for additional support to help him develop social skills that he would need for kindergarten.”

As Santiago is Luna’s first child with her husband Hugo, she wasn’t sure where to look for help.

Luna was invited to a Learning Fair at the local middle school. She was searching for a preschool that could help him feel more comfortable around adults and new situations, but after interviewing five private preschools, none of them had the capacity to address Santiago’s needs.

“The fifth preschool I talked to was near the table for the Rio Rico Family Resource Center,” Luna said. “Bernadette approached me and said she overheard the conversation I was having and thought some of the classes at her center could help Santiago.”

Bernadette Hernandez, a senior instructional specialist for the center, told her that the center provides free classes and other activities to help children from birth to age 5 prepare for kindergarten. The First Things First Santa Cruz Regional Partnership Council funds the center with local school district and the University of Arizona Cooperative in charge of operations.

Hernandez invited Luna and Santiago to go to their baby gym class to work on coordination and social skills. Soon Santiago was learning to interact with other children and adults and having fun. Luna also put him into an arts class, so he could learn how to hold a paint brush, crayons and pencils.

“He’s more confident and friendly in everything he does,” said Luna. “Now he has more language skills and plays with children better. It’s not so hard for him to communicate. He’s learned to feel comfortable in new places. That transitional skill in his brain was hard to develop but after working with Bernadette and the other teachers, he’s better at it. Santiago is learning how to have a student-teacher relationship. He’s receptive to being taught.”

Now 3, Santiago’s next big step is preschool. Hernandez is working with Luna and the preschool that works with the family resource center to create a plan to help Santiago succeed and get prepared for his first day of kindergarten.

“In a year, he’s really made a lot of progress,” said Luna. “Speech therapy and the family resource center have helped a lot with interacting with teachers and other children.”

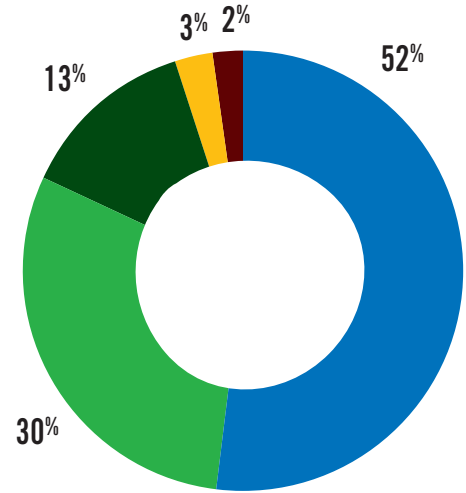
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FTF Santa Cruz Regional Council

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 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

● Strengthening Families	\$670,574
● Quality Child Care and Preschool	\$33,924
● Preventive Health	\$157,632
● Research and Evaluation	\$33,924
● Parent and Community Awareness	\$25,420
TOTAL	\$1,267,420



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Chair
Karen Woodford

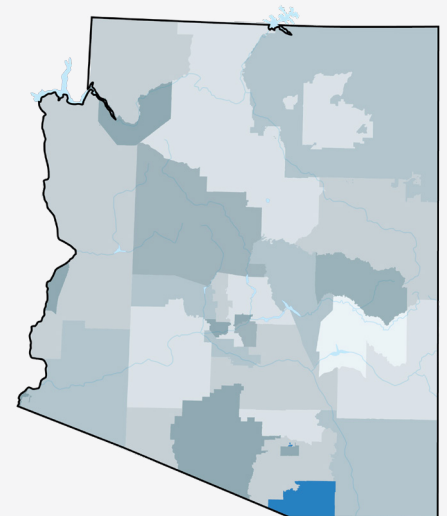
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The Santa Cruz Region covers almost all of Santa Cruz County, the smallest county in Arizona. Situated in the Sonoran desert of southeast Arizona, Santa Cruz County and the Santa Cruz Region are home to six communities: Nogales, Patagonia, Rio Rico, 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 Santa Cruz Region includes Legislative District 2. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)



Learn more at: FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Santa-Cruz