



FIRST THINGS FIRST

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Rhian Evans Allvin

February 12, 2013

The Honorable Gregory Mendoza
Gila River Indian Community
Post Office Box 97
Sacaton, Arizona 85147

RE: Meeting Request

Governor Mendoza:

First Things First Chief Executive Officer, Rhian Evans Allvin, will be attending a meeting of the Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council on Thursday, March 28 in Sacaton.

I am writing to inquire about the possibility of scheduling a meeting with you and if you wish the members of the Gila River Indian Community Council and Director Allvin during her visit. The potential meeting date is Thursday, March 28 from 2:30 to 3:30 pm. If your schedules permit, Director Allvin would like to brief you on the First Things First Evaluation Plan and share some updates related to the First Things First Tribal Consultation Policy.

I will also invite the First Things First Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council Chair, Pricilla Foote, and Vice Chair, Dale Enos to this meeting to share some highlights of the great work that is happening in the region. Thank you for your time and your consideration of this request. I will follow up with your office to further discuss this meeting request.

Sincerely,

Beverly Russell
Senior Director of Tribal Affairs

This Memo page should be placed on Tribal Education Department Letterhead before submittal to Committees.

Second Page of this Document is beginning of the supporting documents for the Pre-k Expansion proposal.

The Tribal Education Department believes that high quality early preschool experiences support children's school readiness upon kindergarten entry. Therefore, the Tribal Education Department would like to put forward a 50/50 match proposal for "school based" pre-k funding which would continue and expand access to high quality early care for our youngest children.

Funding for school based pre- school 50/50 match is requested for the following (2) schools:

School	Tribal Funding Requested	FTF Match	Details
Gila Crossing Community School	\$105,000	\$140,000	Continuation of Fiscal year 2013 Tribal/FTF match for Pre-k
Sacaton Elementary School	\$100,000	100,000	Expansion to create inclusion pre-k
Total Requested	\$205,000	\$240,000	

Currently there are 1,530 children 0-5 living within the Community, with total number of 0-5 early care slots equaling 500 this number includes, Early Education Center, Head Start, Early Head Start, FACE, Baby FACE and School Based Pre-k. Across the Community all early education programs are full and the waiting list for early care remains constant at around 300 children. This means 80% of children in the Community must seek care outside of the Community or are cared for by family, friends or neighbors.

Expanding access to high quality early care across our Community can be done through blending and partnering of funding. Tribal Education Department would like to request the Gila River Indian Community consider a continued partnership with the First Things First to expand school based pre k funding in fiscal year 2014. The expansion of this partnership with the Tribe and First Things First will ensure that the Community's youngest children receive the supports they need to arrive at school healthy and ready to succeed.

The Tribal Education Department, School Boards, and First Things First Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council support this partnership because it:

1. Leverages limited funding and will potentially blend IDEA special education funding with Tribal and FTF funding.
2. Double the number of preschoolers who have access to high quality preschool at Gila Crossing Community School and Sacaton Elementary School.
3. Would allow for the creation of an inclusion pre-school at Sacaton Elementary. *Evidence has found that mixing developmentally delayed children with typical developing children benefits all children in these types of learning environments.
4. Reduces high number of children on waiting lists for preschool in the Community.

The First Things First Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council will proceed with the 50/50 match proposal upon support and guidance of the Tribe.

**Gila River Indian Community
School Based Preschool Expansion Proposal
Four Year Strategic Direction
SFY 2013-2017**

- I. Current Summary of Early Childhood System in the Community**
- II. School Based Pre-School within the Community**
- III. Four Year Strategic Direction: SFY 2013-2017 Pre-k Funding Plan**
 - A. Overview: Setting the Strategic Direction
 - B. Community Priorities, and Pre-K Expansion to Address Needs and Achieve Outcomes
 - C. Pre-K expansion Description including Target Populations and Funding Levels
 - D. Proposed Funding 50/50 Pre-K Tribal and FTF Match.
 - SFY 2013-2015 Pre-k Tribal Council Budget
 - SFY 2013 -2015 Pre-k Regional Partnership Council Budget

Appendix A: Description of first year 50/50 match assessment data and financials fiscal year 2013.

Section I. Current Summary of Early Childhood System in the Community

Demographic Overview:

Between 2000 and 2010, the number of children aged 0 to 5 years in the Gila River Indian Community increased by approximately 7 percent, from 1,429 to 1,530. A majority of the young children (64%) live in households whose annual income is lower than the federal poverty threshold. A large percentage of young children in the Community (58%) were not living with either parent, but with another relative, such as a grandparent. (First Things First, Gila River Indian Community, Needs & Assets Report, 2012). Continuous, parent and community feedback indicates that there is limited access to high quality early care but a high demand for childcare.

The increasing population of children aged zero to five has implications for all programs that have been designed to serve young children and their families. Attention should be paid to the capacity of programs to cope with greater numbers of young children in the future; this includes the elementary school system in the Community.

Early Childhood System:

Across the Gila River Indian Community there is a need for access to quality early care centers especially in the region's far eastern and western areas. There are approximately 1530 children 0-5 living in the region but only 500 early care slots available. Across the region all centers are full and the waiting list for early care remains constant at around 300 children.

There are a variety of early care and education options available to parents of young children in the Gila River Indian Community, including Early Education Childcare Center, home-based care, school-based preschools, Family and Child Education (FACE) programs and Head Start programs. These options can be separated into four types: School-based preschool, Family and Child Education (FACE) Programs, Head Start Programs, and On/off-Tribal Early Education services.

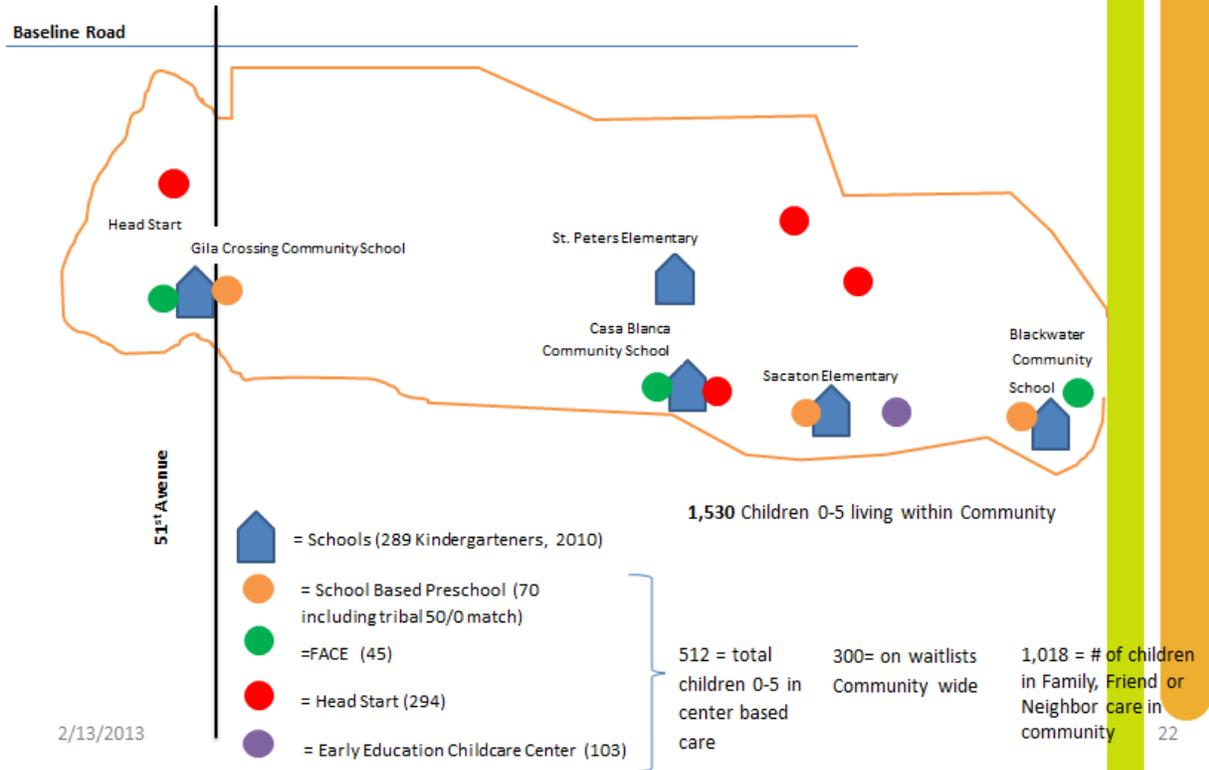
Below is a list of the Community's early education programs which are important asset for families with young children in the Community:

1. **School-Based Preschool**
2. **Early Education Childcare Center**
3. **Head Start/ Early Head Start**
4. **FACE-** Blackwater, Casa Blanca, Gila Crossing

The table on the following page lists a number of characteristics of child care and early education programs available for children under age six in the Region.

Visual Early Childhood System 2010/2011

What does the early Childhood System look like in Gila River Indian Community 2012?



Early Childhood System 2011/2012

*Center-Based **Home-Based

Sources: Arizona Childcare Resource and Referral (CCRR) Southern Arizona, April 2010, and FTF Gila River Indian Community Needs and Assets Report 2008.

The Community's early care and education system represent a weaving of Tribal, State and Federal funding to increase the capacity of early care and support children from both working and non-working families.

Section II. School Based Pre-School within the Community

Where Are We Now & Where Do We Want To Go?

In the 2011/2012 school year 289 kindergarteners were enrolled in community, parochial and public schools within the Gila River Indian Community. The First Things First Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council believes it is important for at least **75%** of these kindergarteners to have a high quality preschool experience in order to support school readiness and parent/caregiver involvement. Currently only about 42% of four year olds attend preschool within the community.

Thoughtful Investment in Quality and Access to Early Learning Programs:

Investing in an early childhood system takes thoughtful planning, community input, and policy alignment. Additionally, data collection systems should be in place to ensure that programs are doing

what they say they will do, are meeting Community goals and providing high quality early care to our youngest children. Building a strong early childhood system is complicated and takes community initiative and partnerships to leverage funding.

Over the past 4 years the First Things First Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council has worked to establish a Community vision for early childhood, and outline what our current early childhood system looks like. This foundational understanding is vital in order to build an early childhood system which supports and nurtures our youngest children. It is with this guide that the below strategic direction is proposed to the Community Councils, Education Standing Committee and Government and Management.

Section III. School Based Pre School Expansion- Three Year Strategic Direction: 2013-2015

	Fiscal Yr. 13 School Based Pre-K	Fiscal Yr. 14 School Based Pre-K	Fiscal Yr. 15 School Based Pre-K	Fiscal Yr. 16 School Based Pre-K
Pre-k Expansion	70	92-107	107-122	137
Early Education Center	16	16	16	16
Head Start	66	66	66	66
FACE Programs (Combined)	40	40	40	40
Total # of 4 year old children served	192	214-229	229-244	259
Percent of 4/5 year olds served by Pre-k programs	%	%	%	%

Four Year School Based Pre- K Enrollment Goals:

Gila River Indian Community	# of 4/5 year olds served by Pre-k programs	Percent of 4/5 year olds served by Pre-k programs
Fiscal Yr. 2012	128	42%
Fiscal Yr. 2013	192	66%
Fiscal Yr. 2014	214-229	74%
Fiscal Yr. 2015	229-244	79%
Fiscal Yr. 2016	259	89%
Where we want to be	216-289	75%-100%

Appendix A. Description of First Year 50/50 Match Assessment Data and Financials Fiscal Yr. 2013

Proposal for Continuation of our Preschool Background:

During this current school year (SY 2012-13) Gila River Indian Community council and First Things First office agreed and approved a budget of \$210,865 in a 50%-50% shared cost setting. The past year's proposal and subsequently approval thereof gained community-wide support and praise from all Districts and also was well supported by the GRIC Education Director Mr. Molina. Mr. Molina also shared his views and demonstrated a full support for a long term commitment to the preschool funding on shared cost model. This long term financial support idea was also well received and supported by both GRIC committees (ESC & G & M) at the January 2012 meeting that was hosted at Gila Crossing Community School-North Campus.

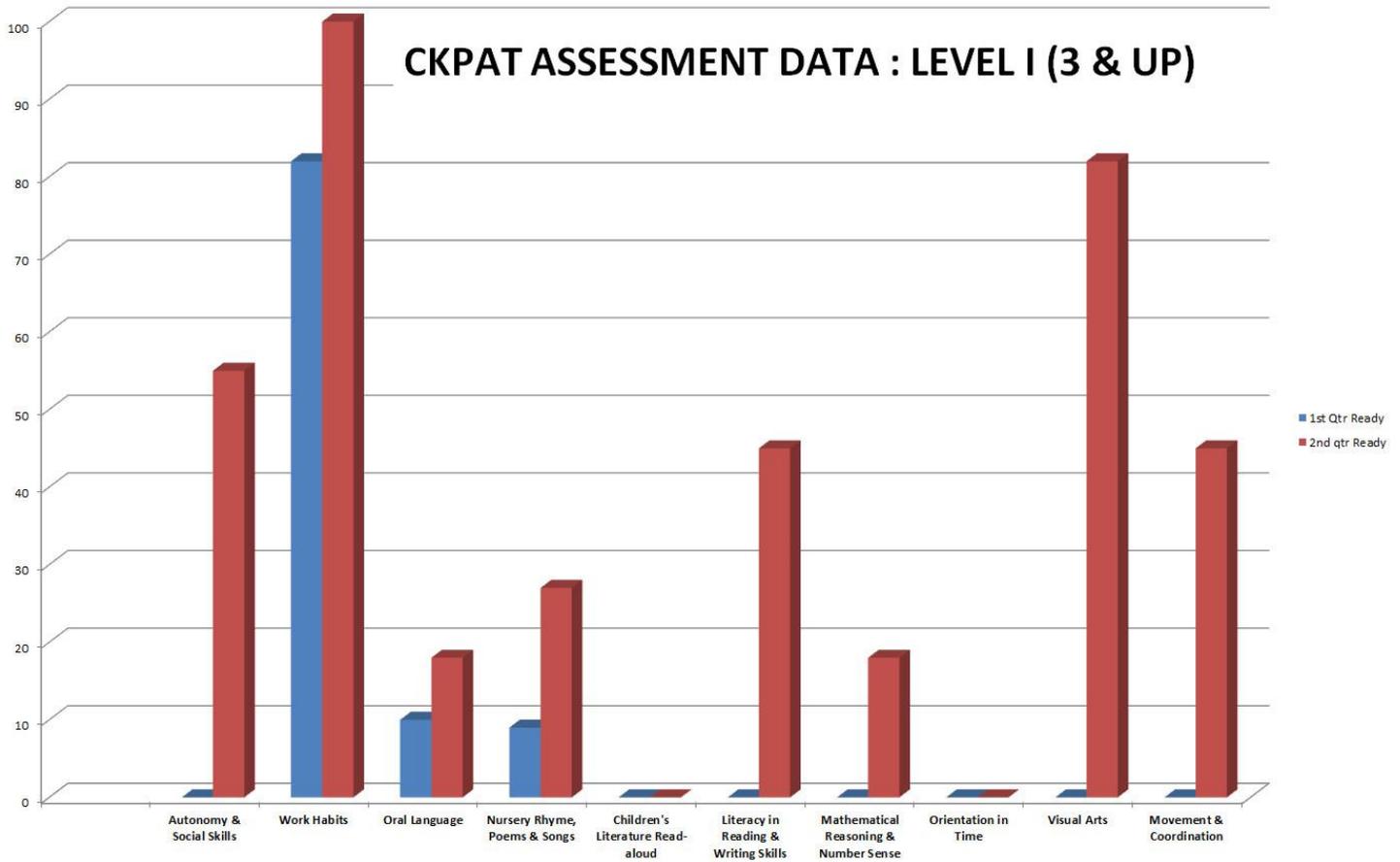
With the understanding and a strong commitment from both funding sources GRIC Council and FTF Regional Partnership Council, Gila Crossing Community School re-opened the preschool program to our children of District Six and District Seven. There were about 48 children on the list originally, we enrolled 30 children filling two classrooms and put the remaining children on the waiting list. We were able to accommodate two additional students from the waiting list since couple of our students moved out of our service area. Currently, there are 16 children in our preschool program turning 4 years old by the end of current school year they will still be below 5 and therefore, cannot enroll in our regular Kindergarten program. In addition, there are other students on the waiting list who will be in the same situation.

Gila Crossing Community School has been working closely with First Things First office regarding the current Preschool and future funding for our program. FTF office has been very responsive and has shown a strong commitment towards multi-year funding proposal. On behalf of the children, community, and parents, we would like to request a continuation of funding stream from the Gila River Indian Community Council and Education Standing Committee. The multi-year funding could be established based on the current model of 50%-50% matching (shared cost) or with any new options as the Council deems appropriate. The preschool program will provide two classrooms equipped with two highly qualified certified teachers and three teacher aides to meet the diverse needs of our children. This low student to teacher/aide ratio will ensure that all of the children are receiving the care and attention necessary to thrive academically, emotionally, socially and linguistically.

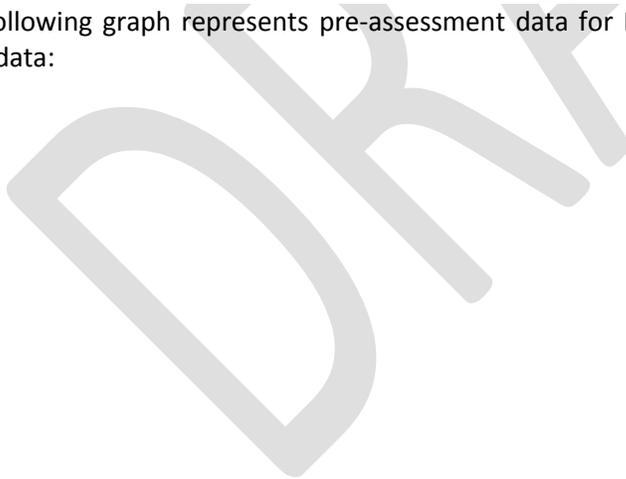
ASSESSMENT DATA FISCAL YEAR 2013:

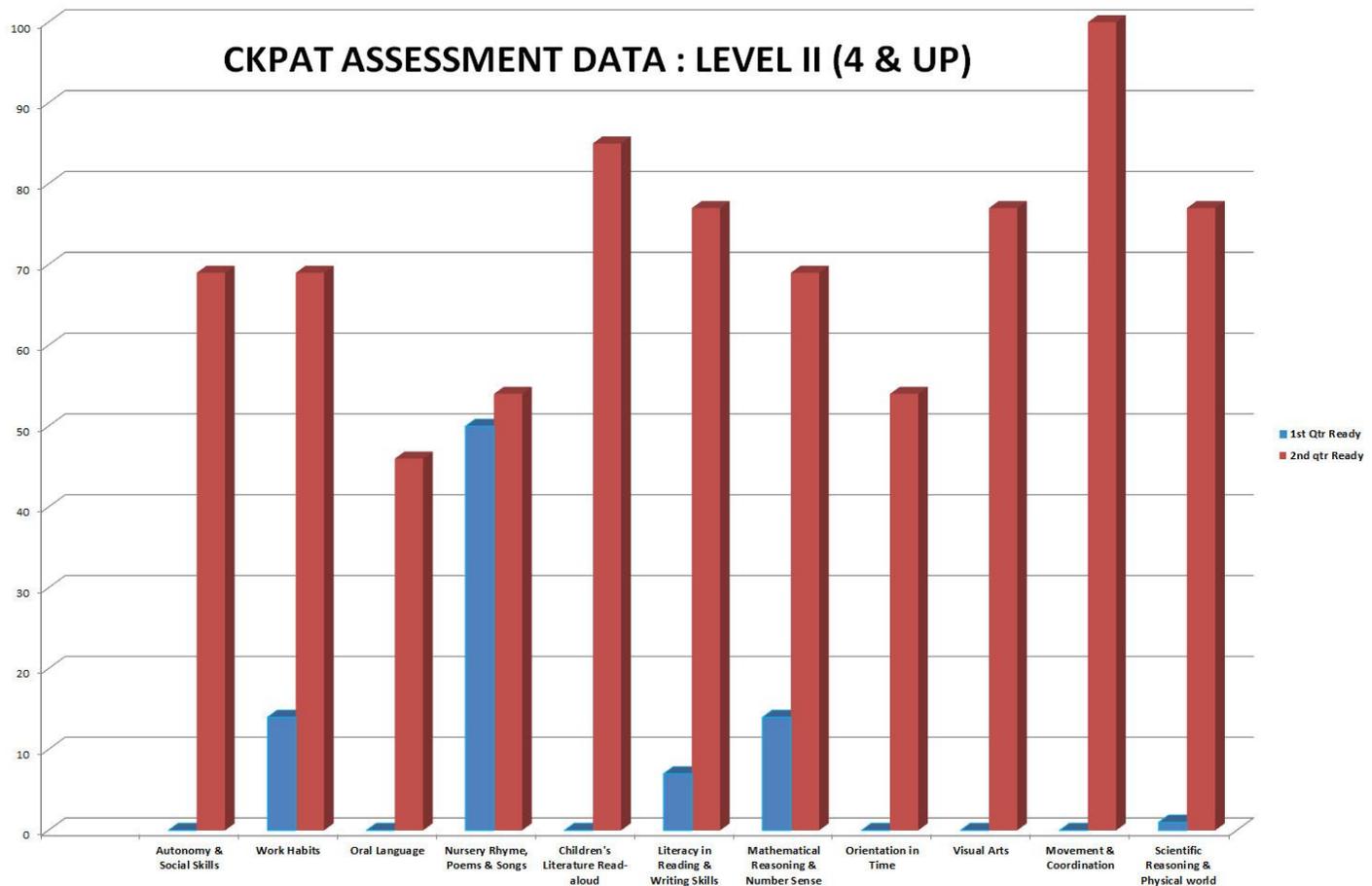
Our Preschool uses Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence Curriculum for 3 & 4 years old students. The curriculum comes with its closely associated assessment called CKPAT which is administered three (3) times during the school year: (a) Beginning of the School Year (pre-assessment), (b) Middle of the Year, and (c) End of the Year. Following graphs show a clear upward progression of skills & knowledge that the students (both 3 & 4 year olds) acquired during the first half of the current school year:

The graph below represents pre-assessment data for Level I (3 year olds) & their 'middle of the year' data



The following graph represents pre-assessment data for Level II (4+ year olds) & their 'middle of the year' data:





As above graphs indicate, there is a clear upward and adequate progress made by all children enrolled in our preschool within the first half-year of the school. This must be borne in mind that it is not the entire academic year's data; a more detailed data report (summative) will be submitted to all funding authorities and stakeholders. The data represented by the graphs above indicates a very positive trend and speaks for itself about the tremendous success these children have been experiencing at our school.

QUALITY FIRST ENROLLMENT:

To ensure that Gila Crossing Community School provides the best possible and highest quality preschool experience to all its students, we have taken another positive step towards enrolling our preschool into First Things First *Quality First* program. A formal enrollment application for *quality first* has been submitted as of February 12th, 2013. This enrollment process will not only help establish the standards of all aspects of our program but will also assist us to meet and or exceed those standards by providing additional resources and training opportunities to our staff, assist our center in getting accreditation, additional scholarships to our children, and technical & financial assistance in the areas of facilities.

BUDGET:

Gila Crossing Community School as a hosting site and fiscal agent for this project will be providing in-kind contribution including but not limited to Facilities and related ancillary services, transportation, food services, and administrative support services. Tribal Early Childhood Special Services (ECSS) under the supervision of Ms. Aurora Nevarez (an active partner) will be providing services to those young children with special needs.

Regional Director of 'First Things First' Ms. Cathy Thornton will work with the Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership to provide funding at the fifty percent level (50%) if the Gila River Indian Community will provide the remaining fifty percent (50%) matching funding.

FISCAL YEAR 2013 FINANCIALS:

DRAFT