



## BOARD APPROVES SCHOOL READINESS INDICATORS

At its August 29<sup>th</sup> meeting, the First Things First Board approved ten school readiness indicators. Created by child development experts, and honed in consultation with early childhood stakeholders, tribal leaders and the general public, the indicators give FTF a unified, measurable way to gauge progress in its mission to ensure that all Arizona children reach their first day of kindergarten healthy and ready to succeed. (See box.)

"I'd like to extend my thanks to **Karen Woodhouse** and **Dr. (Pam) Powell** and all who participated in (the development of the indicators)," **FTF Board Chair Steven W. Lynn** said. "This is a difficult process of taking a tremendous amount of data and paring it down to information that ensures the most positive effect on the children we wish to serve."

The indicators evolved during an eight month process, where three separate advisory committees—Health, Early Literacy, and Family Support—explored useful ways to measure progress in the following four areas: a) *How much did we do?* b) *How well did do it?* c) *Are children better off?* d) *Are system supports in place?* Each advisory committee forwarded their recommendations to the board's Program and Policy Committee in June.

During the process, the committee examined the eight priority goals, covering health, family support and early learning, that FTF was tasked to address in its first 3-5 years. The committee proposed adding a ninth priority, related to nutrition and obesity, and this is reflected in indicator number seven, relating to body mass index, measured between the ages of 2-5. In addition, indicators relating the priority area of Building Public Awareness are contained in the FTF Strategic Communications Plan.

Progress of individual programs is monitored in much greater detail through grant reports. But the indicators

offer a broad snapshot of FTF's progress toward overall goals, and a shared reference point for local and state administrators as they examine past initiatives and construct a unified vision for FTF's future.

## SCHOOL READINESS INDICATORS

1. (Number/percentage) of children demonstrating school readiness at kindergarten entry in the development domains of social-emotional, language and literacy, cognitive, motor, and physical
2. (Number/percentage) of children enrolled in an early care and education program with a Quality First rating of 3-5 stars
3. (Number/percentage) of children with special needs enrolled in an inclusive early care and education program with a Quality First rating of 3-5 stars
4. (Number/percentage) of families that spend no more than 10% of the regional median family income on quality care and education with a Quality First rating of 3-5 stars
5. Percentage of children with newly identified developmental delays during the kindergarten year
6. Number of children entering kindergarten exiting preschool special education to regular education
7. (Number/percentage) of children ages 2-5 at a healthy weight (Body Mass Index – BMI)
8. (Number/percentage) of children receiving timely well child visits
9. (Number/percentage) of children age 5 with untreated tooth decay
10. Percentage of families who report they are competent and confident about their ability to support their child's safety, health and well-being

The indicators will be incorporated as part of the next statewide funding plan, and regional partnership councils will begin using them to inform their FY2013 planning.



FTF Board Chair Steven W. Lynn thanks Dr. Donald Bartlette for sharing his inspirational tale, "Macaroni at Midnight," with pre-summit participants.

## 2011 ARIZONA EARLY CHILDHOOD SUMMIT

The August board meeting anchored the first full day of the 2011 Arizona Early Childhood Summit, a three-day exploration of the science, practice and progress of early childhood development. Held this year in Phoenix, the summit became a conclave for FTF board and regional council members, grantees, advocates and others committed to improving outcomes for young children.

The summit began on Sunday, with an afternoon gathering that brought Tribal members from across the state together with FTF officers and national experts. **Albert Pooley**, President of the Native American Fatherhood and Families Association (NAFFA), spoke passionately about the sacred nature of fatherhood and the need to reach out and motivate fathers in Native American communities. Panels discussed literacy and health programs that work in Arizona and across the country and the challenges of service delivery to families on and off reservations. But the emotional high point of gathering came with "Macaroni at Midnight," speaker **Dr. Donald Bartlette's** harrowing account of his childhood as a Chippewa boy in 1930's North Dakota. Born with a severe cleft palate the rendered him mute, young Bartlette was shunned by his father, denied schooling and persecuted in the local community. The darkness of his life was broken by a wealthy Anglo woman, who spotted him living in despair and became his advocate. Bartlette found his voice and became valedictorian of his high school class, as well as a social worker, counselor, educator and father of eight.

"One woman, who decided to care, made all the difference in my life," he told the crowd. "I challenge each one of you to be that person for a child out there today."

**Susan Ochshorn**, of Early Childhood Education PolicyWorks, was the keynote speakers on the summit's first full day. The former manager of Columbia's Child Care Research and Policy Project gave a compelling presentation on how stakeholders can use system-building techniques to improve early childhood education in Arizona. **Dr. Dean Halfon**, Director of UCLA's Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities, carried the theme into the following day, discussing the fragmented nature of America's early childhood programs and the need for integration over invention: "We're making progress, but it's uneven and there's lots of reinventing the wheel, because we're not connected. All that innovation has to be shared in real time, in an ongoing way. We need a common agenda and a way of communicating. That's how we move forward."

The summit concluded with a celebratory lunch where Board Chair **Steven W. Lynn** praised stakeholders and urged them to build their early victories into a lasting legacy. "Every movement evolves in stages," he said. "Our progress in the last years has been remarkable. Now we have to redouble our efforts, sharpen our focus, ask ourselves: how can we leverage our early successes into a broader, longer-term success for all children in Arizona?"

Chair Lynn encouraged regional council members and staff to use the School Readiness Indicators approved earlier in the summit by the board as a guide to make tough decisions in their upcoming funding cycle. He also highlighted Quality First, FTF's comprehensive program to improve the quality of child care in Arizona, as one way to significantly impact six of the 10 indicators.

### ARIZONA EARLY CHILDHOOD SUMMIT MATERIALS WILL BE AVAILABLE ONLINE

Missed part of the Arizona Early Childhood Summit? Would you like access to the source material or speaker resources from the event?

These will be posted on the Arizona Early Childhood Summit Website: <http://azffsummit.com> by **Sept. 21<sup>st</sup>**.



FTF Board Member Nadine Mathis Basha and former FTF Executive Director Elliot Hibbs congratulate the Finance Team on being selected as the recipients of the inaugural J. Elliott Hibbs Award.

### **FINANCE TEAM WINS J. ELLIOT HIBBS AWARD**

The summit included a nod to exemplary service, with the announcement of the first annual J. Elliott Hibbs Award. Named for First Things First's founding executive director, the Hibbs Award honors individuals and groups on the FTF staff who "demonstrate exceptional teamwork, subject knowledge, perseverance and dedication on behalf of First Things First."

The inaugural Hibbs Award went collectively to the members of First Things First's Finance Team: **Sheila Hoppe, Todd Mason, Dana Browning, Lyra Contreras, Christine Cramer, Annette Garcia, Lindsay Kaid, Kristen Martin, Perla Renteria, Kathy Rice, Russell Spencer, Charlene Surber, and Jeanne Martin**. The team was lauded for its outstanding customer service, and tireless efforts to ensure that FTF funding is spent responsibly and effectively.

### **REGIONAL BOUNDARIES REDESIGNATION**

The board also unanimously approved a boundary revision that puts three Glendale ZIP code areas in the Northwestern Maricopa Region, effectively uniting the city of Glendale within one regional partnership council's jurisdiction.

The move is part of a bi-annual boundary reassessment, mandated by the First Things First

statute. It is designed to facilitate service delivery in all 31 regions, and to keep FTF current with population growth across the state. For this review, FTF contracted **Dr. Michele Walsh** of the Frances McClelland Institute for Children, Youth & Families at the John & Doris Norton School of Family and Consumer Science at the University of Arizona, to study its regional boundaries and how they affect services for families and young children. Her report recommended that FTF:

- *Maintain the current boundaries for 29 of the 31 regional partnership councils, excepting North Phoenix and Northwest Maricopa.*
- *Move the Glendale portions of ZIP codes 85302, 85304 and 85306 from the North Phoenix Region to the Northwest Maricopa Region.*

Bringing Glendale together under the Northwest Maricopa regional council would streamline procedures, the report concluded. Aligning FTF boundaries with municipal boundaries would make it easier for resident families to know where they can seek services, and allow for a more accurate collection of demographic data. The shift moves approximately 10,400 additional children 5 and younger under the Northwest Maricopa regional council jurisdiction, about 1,200 of whom live in poverty.

Dr. Walsh's report also recommended convening discussions between the regions, exploring collaborative programs and/or service coordination to resolve boundary issues. She also suggested the possibility of consolidating more regions in State Fiscal Year 2015. The board approved the creation of a statewide task force in 2012 to study the matter.

Chair Lynn thanked Dr. Walsh and **Michelle Katona** for their work. "Part of this discussion is: Are the program dollars used as effectively as possible? We hope that these changes will allow for more efficient and effective delivery of services."

### **QUALITY FIRST COST MODEL UPDATE**

FTF Chief Program Officer **Karen Woodhouse** provided an update on the revised cost models for the Quality First implementation that the board approved in June. While the actual cost of delivering Quality

First financing and coaching incentives did not significantly change, Woodhouse said the increase comes mainly from a new grant FTF issued to cover coaching and incentives management in the FY12 expansion.

The added financing—required to provide Quality First scholarships to every enrolled provider based upon their star rating—will increase the FY13 cost model by 26%. “This does impact cost a great deal,” Woodhouse explained. “But financing is not cheap, and we did want to provide that.” Changes being made to accommodate the increase include: 1) Assessments for all providers that use the Quality First model scales will be funded by the statewide funding plan. 2) Coaching caseloads will be decreased, from 1:12 to 1:9, and coaching intensity will increase for one and two-star providers. 3) Quality First will expand coaching and provider capacity to include the areas of health, mental health, inclusion of those with special needs and instructional support. These increases will be more than offset by a leaner, more targeted approach to Child Care Health Consultation for all providers. 4) Incentive packages will be reduced and/or provided through other channels, though they will still be substantial enough to incentivize program improvement. And, 5) Scholarship allotment will change to a tiered financing model. Providers will receive a set number of scholarships, based upon their size and their QF rating. Funding levels will vary, covering 70% of the median local tuition rate for one-star providers, escalating to 100% for four-star providers.

The new cost model does have implications for regional partnership councils. Beginning in FY13, Quality First will not distinguish between state-funded and regionally-funded providers. Regional councils that have not previously funded Quality First, and have a larger number of state-funded providers, will need to consider these increased costs in their strategic plans. In the new model, all enrolled providers will have access to scholarships. Regional councils that have not yet funded Quality First Scholarships must now consider the impact of this additional cost.

## FINANCIAL INVESTMENTS PLAN REVISED

FTF Chief Financial Officer **Josh Allen** outlined a proposed investment strategy to extend First Things First’s long-term sustainability. Working with the State

Treasurer’s Office, FTF has identified a series of additional state-managed investment pools that would diversify FTF’s holdings, establish laddered investment commitments and significantly increase its return. Under the proposed change, \$445 million in FTF funding would be segmented into a variety of investment tools that mature in 2014, 2015 and 2017.

“Under this plan, we would have earned about \$11.2 million, instead of the \$3 million we earned last year.” Allen said. The proposed investment plan would still leave FTF with enough capital to support its current operations while addressing issues of long term sustainability. “We have tried to make sure that [FTF] will never run into a cash poor position,” Allen said.

The Board unanimously approved the new measure, which Vice Chair **Gene Thompson** praised as “a good, careful, conservative investment plan.”



First Things First CEO Rhian Evans Allvin enjoys regional council members’ success stories at the 2011 Early Childhood Summit.

## CEO REPORT

First Things First Chief Executive Officer **Rhian Evans Allvin** reported that conversations between FTF and the Arizona Department of Health Services on child care center licensing are going “extraordinarily well.” She thanked DHS Director and board member **Will Humble** for his help in setting a productive tone.

Other CEO Announcements:

> Rhian asked board members to circle January 11-12, 2012 on their calendars. Dr. Kathy Hirsch-Pasek, a Temple University professor and a leading expert on early childhood literacy and language development,

will speak in Arizona. Her attendance will coincide with the start of the legislative session and the Governor's State of the State, "so having her there is extremely important, and having a board presence there is important, as well," Rhian said.

> Rhian has been invited to do a regular bi-weekly column for the *Arizona Republic*. "It's an opportunity for us to talk [with the public] to discuss why early childhood development matters in local communities." Rhian and Karen Woodhouse also did an interview with *Raising Arizona Kids* on the increased rigor facing Arizona's youngest students, and FTF is in discussion with the magazine for a possible series of articles on the components of quality early education programs. Rhian also mentioned a column co-authored by FTF and the Arizona Department of Education for the Arizona School Board Association's August *Journal*.

> Rhian reminded the board that the annual FTF Check Tour commences in October. "We distribute symbolic checks, for the commitment FTF has made, and it's a great opportunity to see the wonderful work going on in local regions."

> Rhian has asked Leslie Anderson Consulting to work with the board in September and December to review governance policies set in place in 2008. "This is to reinforce our common vision and the board's role in realizing that vision." Board discussion will focus on five system outcomes, identified for further study but held back until now.

> Rhian said she wants to launch a comprehensive review of FTF's approach on internal evaluation, and "what evaluation should look like, systematically and programmatically." In September, she will recommend that the board appoint a National Research and Evaluation Advisory Committee. Negotiations are underway to have Dr. John Love, who spent 18 years with Mathematica and led the early Head Start studies, to lead. The board can expect a comprehensive report on evaluation efforts to date by April 2012.

> FTF has had lengthy and ongoing discussions with the Governor's office on three important issues: 1) the child care subsidy program faces "devastating cuts that will do huge damage to the system as well as FTF." She should have more information on that for the Board in early September. 2) The Early Learning Challenge Fund application and guidelines have been released. It will be a highly competitive field. Arizona

will be eligible for up to \$70 million dollars and FTF is encouraging the Governor to apply on behalf of the state. Some good policy opportunities exist within the guidelines, such as comprehensive kindergarten assessment for the entire state, or aligning child care subsidy funding with quality improvement ratings. "We are anxious to move forward as a state and compete for the Early Learning Challenge Fund, and we look forward to the Governor's stewardship in this process." And, 3) FTF is anticipating four overdue board member appointments that still await the Governor's action.



First Things First Board Member Dr. Pam Powell gets some feedback from Coconino Regional Council member Noreen Sakiestewa.

## BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

**Mary Ellen Cunningham** informed the board on the status of the Early Childhood Incentives Programs. Eight applications are currently pending approval. "There has been a lot of outreach on these programs in the last quarter, and that has resulted in more applications. So we're very excited about that." The updated plan for the Maternal Infant and Child Home Visiting Grant plan has been accepted by the federal government, which released \$1.8 million dollars toward the effort earlier in August. DHS is working on an intergovernmental agreement with DES. They are also pursuing an RFP for Nurse Family Partnership as well as a project with the White Mountain Apache Tribe.

**Vivian Saunders** offered an update on the Communications and Government Affairs Committee meeting, held on June 30. The meeting included a presentation on the success of the Year 1 implementation of the First Things First Strategic Communications Plan. Committee members were also

asked to provide feedback on slight modifications to the plan to take in to account those successes, as well as the results of more recent research. The meeting also included a presentation on FTF's Tribal Affairs efforts, including a recap of the spring visit to Washington D.C. and the meetings with high-ranking officials there. Regional council members and board members will begin receiving email updates from Tribal Affairs each month. Committee members were also briefed on conversations with the Governor's Office concerning updates on child care subsidy and the Early Learning Challenge Fund.

**Dr. Pamela Powell** reported that in mid-August, she participated as a volunteer in Operation Childfind up in Havasupai. She wanted to thank FTF for its role in the endeavor. "FTF had a wide presence there. It was a great event and I felt privileged to be there."

**Board Chair Steven W. Lynn** represented FTF at a meeting of the Partnership for America's Economic Success in Boston in July. "It was national conference and provided the opportunity to talk about the things we were doing in Arizona. And people were amazed that we were able to make the type of progress we have made in spite of an awful lot of negative publicity for the state." The conference offered a lot of support for FTF's current and future efforts.

**NEW REGIONAL COUNCIL MEMBERS**

The board approved the following new regional council members at its August 2011 meeting:

**South Phoenix Regional Partnership Council**

- Karen Stewart, Faith-based

**Central Phoenix Regional Partnership Council**

- Jan Flaaten, Faith-based

**North Phoenix Regional Partnership Council**

- William "Billy" Thrall, At Large

**Colorado River Indian Tribes Regional Partnership Council**

- Monica Martinez, Health
- Jacqueline Flores, Child Care

**Save the date!** The next FTF Board meeting will be held September 26-27 in Phoenix.

