



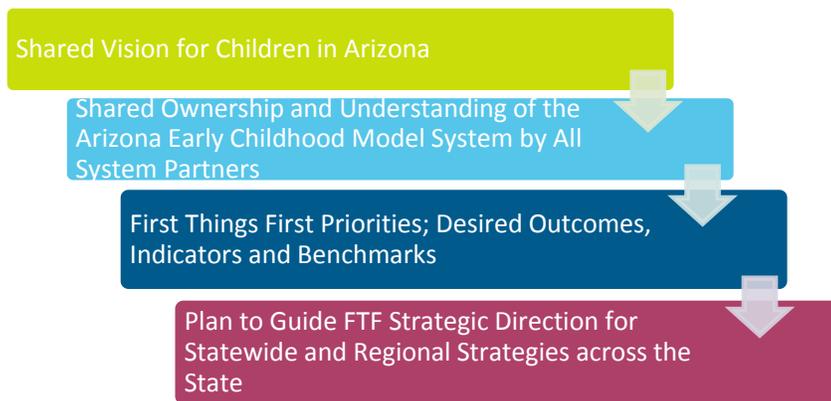
## FIRST THINGS FIRST

*Ready for School. Set for Life.*

# State and Regional Benchmarks for School Readiness Indicators

## Introduction

Building on the work of the Arizona Early Childhood Task Force, and the First Things First Policy and Program Advisory Committees, FTF is continuing to develop a strategic framework around the nine priority roles that will guide our work for the next 3 – 5 years. In 2011, members of the Advisory Committees for Early Learning, Health, and Family Support and Literacy developed School Readiness Indicators in order to provide a snapshot of progress. These indicators were approved by the FTF Board in August 2011, and used by FTF Regional Councils in their funding plans for FY2013. They provide a comprehensive composite measure for young children as they prepare to enter kindergarten, and give us the opportunity to focus on achieving measurable and real long-term results for children and their families.



**Advisory Committees for Early Learning, Health, and Family Support and Literacy are now asked to develop achievable benchmarks (targets) to show FTF progress on the School Readiness Indicators**

## School Readiness Indicators

1. #/% children demonstrating school readiness at kindergarten entry in the development domains of social-emotional, language and literacy, cognitive, and motor and physical
2. #/% of children enrolled in an early care and education program with a Quality First rating of 3-5 stars
3. #/% of children with special needs/rights enrolled in an inclusive early care and education program with a Quality First rating of 3-5 stars
4. #/% 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. % of children with newly identified developmental delays during the kindergarten year
6. # of children entering kindergarten exiting preschool special education to regular education
7. #/% of children ages 2-5 at a healthy weight (Body Mass Index-BMI)
8. #/% of children receiving timely well child visits
9. #/% of children age 5 with untreated tooth decay
10. % of families who report they are competent and confident about their ability to support their child's safety, health and well being

## Implications of Using School Readiness Indicators and Benchmarks

Indicators are important planning tools because while they don't replace more comprehensive evaluation, they will help us know if we are moving in the right direction, making progress toward, or have ultimately achieved the desired result. As recommended by the FTF Policy and Program Committee, FY2013 funding plans at the state and regional levels are aligned to the School Readiness Indicators. Regional Councils selected a minimum of three highest priority School Readiness Indicators based on their community data to develop their funding plans. Moving forward, School Readiness Indicator data will be tracked annually and achievable benchmarks (targets) will be identified for the year prior to the end of each three-year funding plan cycle, so that benchmark data is available for planning the next three-year funding cycle.

One issue that will have both short-term and long-term implications is data collection for tracking and developing baselines and benchmarks at both the state and regional levels. This will be especially challenging for some of the recommended indicators because the data has never been collected in a systemic manner before. For any School Readiness Indicators that will not have available data in next few years, Advisory Committees will be looking at interim measures that may be used until the School Readiness Indicator data is available. The fact that a recommended indicator requires a new data collection may prove beneficial in effecting long overdue policy changes and practices related to a comprehensive statewide, longitudinal early childhood data system.

Finally, several Councils have inquired about the consequences of not achieving a designated benchmark on selected School Readiness Indicators in the next three or four years. First Things First staff is committed to providing as much support as requested and necessary to assist Regional Councils in achieving the progress results they have identified for their work in their community. There will be further policy discussion and decisions related to the development of benchmarks in time for FY 14 planning.

## Development of Benchmarks for School Readiness Indicators

Monthly communication will be provided to all Regional Council members related to the development of benchmarks in 2012. Council members and community partners and stakeholders will also be asked to provide feedback on draft and near final benchmarks prior to the Policy and Program Committee forwarding their recommendations to the Board.

