

# EARLY CHILDHOOD MATTERS TO FAITH COMMUNITIES



Communities of faith have a powerful impact on the lives of young children and families. First Things First values the role that those of all faiths play in nurturing the health, learning and well-being of Arizona's infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Why is this so important?

## Strong families are the building blocks of a strong society.

Getting kids ready for school means more than packing their lunches, filling their backpacks, and getting them to the bus on time. It's crucial that families have the tools they need to support children with stable, nurturing environments in their earliest years.

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## A child's early years lay the foundation for a lifetime.

90% of a child's brain develops by age 5. It's in these early childhood years, well before kindergarten, that the skills critical to success in school and in life begin to take root. Skills like:

- Motivation
- Self-esteem
- Creativity
- Self-discipline
- Focus
- Getting along with others



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## We all have a shared responsibility for making our communities stronger.

First Things First partners with communities across Arizona to strengthen families and help more kids arrive at kindergarten prepared to succeed. Because all children deserve the opportunity to reach their full potential.

"We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It's easy to say, 'It's not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.' Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes."  
*Fred Rogers (aka Mr. Rogers, an ordained minister)*

“There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.”  
*Nelson Mandela*

## What can you do?

Faith communities are crucial in supporting Arizona’s youngest children and their families. Here are some ways you can take meaningful action:

1

### SPREAD THE WORD

- Use your voice to communicate that experiences in a child’s first five years lay the foundation for a lifetime.
- Visit [FirstThingsFirstAZ.gov/Take-Action](https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/take-action) to subscribe to FTF’s newsletter and follow us on social media. Then share information on child development, parenting and local resources for families in your bulletins, newsletters, electronic communications, etc.
- Invite First Things First to speak to members of your faith community about the importance of early childhood.

2

### OPEN YOUR DOORS

- Provide time and space for workshops on early childhood development and parent education.
- Organize a community fair for families with children ages birth to 5 and invite First Things First and our community partners to share information.
- Promote training in early childhood education for caregivers and volunteers that work with young children in your nursery, child care or preschool programs.

3

### GIVE TIME AND SERVICE

- Connect with early childhood or family support programs in need of focused volunteer efforts — to read with young children, organize book drives, refurbish classrooms or playgrounds, etc.
- For longer-term impact, encourage your members to serve on committees and boards of early childhood and family support programs; sharing their talents, skills and expertise — in accounting, management, communications, construction, technology and more — will help early childhood programs serve more young children and families.

4

### LIFT UP YOUR VOICE

- Stay informed of policies impacting young children and families.
- Let policymakers know about your constituency’s strong support of early childhood.

Find your local First Things First regional partnership council at [FirstThingsFirst.org](https://www.firstthingsfirst.org).

 **FIRST THINGS FIRST**

*A statewide organization created by Arizona voters,  
First Things First partners with communities to give all Arizona children  
the opportunity to arrive at kindergarten healthy and ready to succeed.*

To learn more, visit us at [FirstThingsFirst.org](https://www.firstthingsfirst.org)

**READY FOR SCHOOL. SET FOR LIFE.**