

# QUALITY FIRST

  
FIRST THINGS FIRST

## QUALITY MATTERS IN CHILD CARE AND PRESCHOOL

90% of a child's critical brain development happens before kindergarten, and research shows that the experiences young children have with their caregivers and teachers in their first five years shape their learning now and throughout their lives.

Quality First – a signature program of First Things First – partners with child care and preschool programs across Arizona to improve the quality of early learning they provide in ways proven to help children learn, grow and thrive.

### Benefits for Children and Families

Studies show that quality early learning settings for children from birth to age 5 help develop skills that are crucial to success in school and life, producing strong, positive effects on:

- Kindergarten readiness
- Language, math and social skills
- K-12 test scores
- High school graduation
- College enrollment

## QUALITY FIRST PARTNERS WITH PROVIDERS TO HELP CHILDREN THRIVE

Quality First supports child care and preschool providers in making quality improvements that research proves help children thrive, such as training for teachers to expand their expertise in working with young children, and coaching to help providers create learning environments that nurture the emotional, social and academic development of every child. Programs enrolled in Quality First are committed to quality improvement, going beyond regulatory requirements to help the infants, toddlers and preschoolers in their care be ready for success in school and beyond.

### The Components of Quality

Quality child care and preschool settings build on basic health and safety to include:

- Teachers and caregivers who know how to work with infants, toddlers and preschoolers;
- Positive, nurturing relationships that give young kids the individual attention they need;
- Learning environments that encourage creativity and imaginative play;
- Hands-on activities that stimulate and encourage positive brain connections in children; and,
- Caregivers who provide regular feedback to parents on the development of their child.

All of these elements combined make a child care environment that prepares children for success in kindergarten and beyond.



For more information, contact us at  
602.771.5019 or [qualityfirst@azftf.gov](mailto:qualityfirst@azftf.gov)



## QUALITY FIRST BUY-IN OPTIONS

Child care and preschool programs are able to purchase the following components:

### Assessment/Rating

Ongoing assessments provide objective, reliable measures of the everyday experiences of the children in each program and provide a guide for achieving best practices. Assessments of various aspects of each program — the environment, curriculum, teacher-child interactions and more — occur on a regular basis to provide information about each program's areas of strength, opportunities for growth, and plans for improvement. For every official assessment, a report is written for each tool and each classroom observed, including scores and justification from the observation. A Quality First Rating is calculated using the scores from the assessments conducted at the site.


Quality First utilizes the following valid and reliable assessment tools:

1. **Environment Rating Scales – ERS** (Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale, Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale)
2. **Classroom Assessment Scoring System – CLASS** (Toddler, Pre-K)
3. **Quality First Points Scale**

### Coaching

A Quality First coach offers personalized guidance and support through regular and ongoing visits, training and mentoring is provided with the Assessment/Rating + Coaching package. This partnership helps establish a strong foundation for all quality improvement efforts and provides added value to each program, staff and administration. While the quality improvement process is driven by the participant, the Quality First Coach can bring additional insights to the program practice and support movement toward quality goals. Coaching consists of four hours of on-site service per month.

## INVESTMENT COSTS OF PARTICIPATION IN QUALITY FIRST\*

	CENTER			HOME
	Small (0-50 children)	Medium (51– 150 children)	Large (151+ children)	
Assessment/Rating Only	\$5,900	\$7,200	\$9,800	\$3,300
Assessment/Rating + Coaching	\$10,900	\$12,200	\$14,800	\$8,300

*\* Annual costs are indicated. Programs that achieve a Quality First Rating of 3 - 5 are rated every other year, so costs would not be incurred annually.*