

# PEEPS

## Pima Early Education Program Scholarships



## FY 2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT



**PIMA COUNTY**  
COMMUNITY & WORKFORCE  
DEVELOPMENT



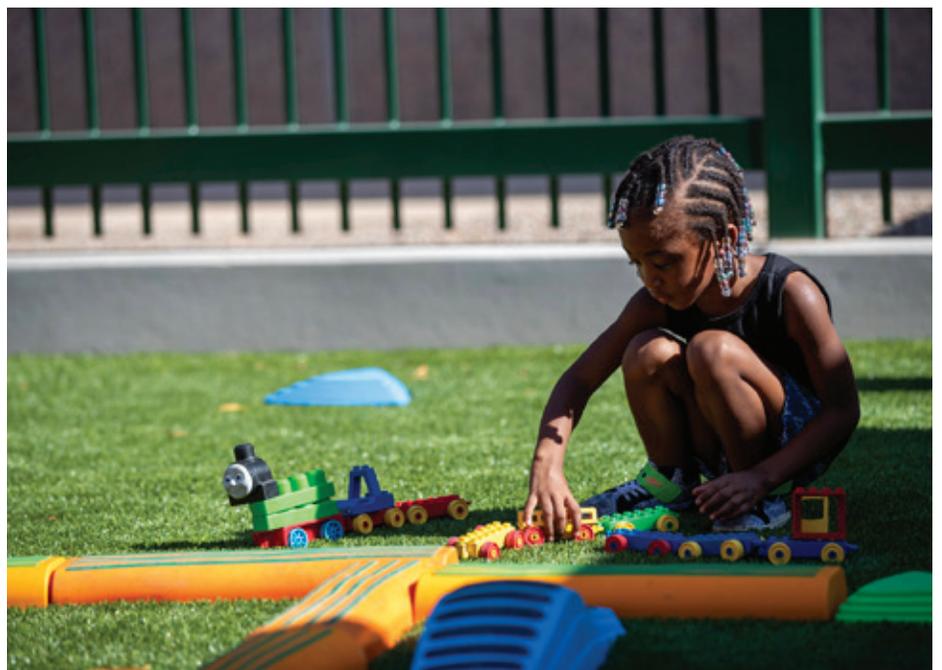
# PEEPS

## Pima Early Education Program Scholarships

*"It has given my preschooler independence and has brought him closer to being ready for kinder. PEEPs is an extra helping hand for our family."*

*"I am happy because thanks to the support provided to families while our children are in school, we can work or tend to other activities that would not be possible while our children are at home."*

*"We are able to go to work stress free that no one has to miss school/work to stay home."*



## OVERVIEW

# Growing by Leaps and Bounds

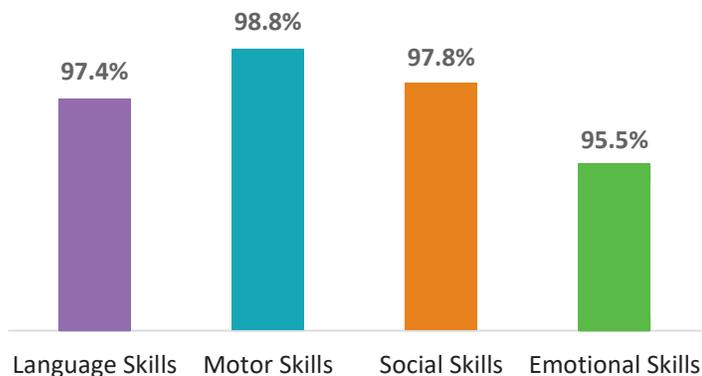
The Pima Early Education Program (PEEP) grew by leaps and bounds in its second year, **servicing 1,356 children**. This is a **63 percent increase** from the first year of the program! In all, classes nearly tripled, growing from 11 in the 2021-22 school year, to 28 in 2022-23, and to 34 at the beginning of the 2023-24 school year. Pima County continues to fund individual scholarships at Quality First centers and homes, as well as extended day Head Start throughout the region. In total, PEEPs preschool classes and scholarships were available at **187 participating preschool locations**. We couldn't do this alone. This report is dedicated to our school district partners, Pima Community College and Child-Parent Centers for making tremendous investments and working creatively to open so many additional PEEPs classes.

## Parent Satisfaction Survey

Between November 2022 and February 2023, PEEPs and Pima County Grants Management & Innovation (GMI) Department's Research and Analysis Division staff developed and administered a PEEPs Parent Questionnaire to families of scholarship recipients.

A total of 491 PEEPs Parent Survey Questionnaires were collected, with 87 completed via the Spanish language form. According to the survey, over 95% of parents were "Very Satisfied" with improvement in their child's developmental skills.

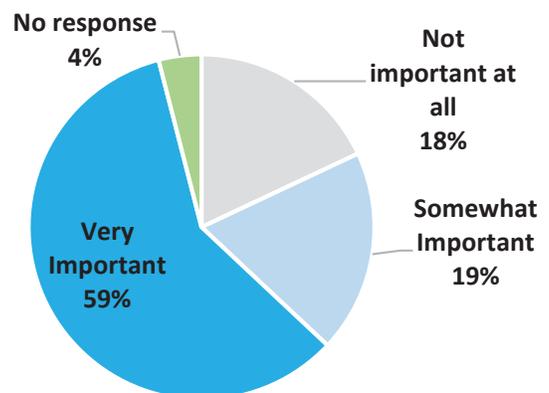
### Percentage of PEEPs Parents Who Are "Very Satisfied" with Improvement in Child's Skills



**59% of parents indicated that going back to work and/or increasing their work hours was "Very Important" to their decision to enroll their child in preschool.**

Additional results show parents wanted preschool to be a source of enjoyment, safety, skill development and socialization for their children. For most parents, enrolling their child or children into the program has provided employment opportunities they may not have otherwise had. Overall, the survey responses show that parents are highly satisfied with their experience with PEEPs, and that both parents and children have benefitted from PEEPs.

### Importance of PEEPs for Parent Employment



## BY THE NUMBERS

# Kids & Preschools!

The two primary goals of the Pima Early Education Program are to:

- Increase the number of 3 to 5-year-old children from low-income families attending high-quality preschools in Pima County
- Increase the number of high-quality preschools in Pima County serving low-income families.

This is achieved by entering into local funding partnerships with the City of Tucson and towns of Marana and Oro Valley, allocating a portion of the County's federal pandemic recovery funds to the program, contracting with those already in the business of providing high-quality preschool and scholarships, and coordinating at a statewide level.

Pima County measures progress at both the program level (PEEPs) and the system-level (combined with others that fund preschool for families in need). At the program level, **PEEPs served 1,356 children from income-eligible families during the second year of the program.**

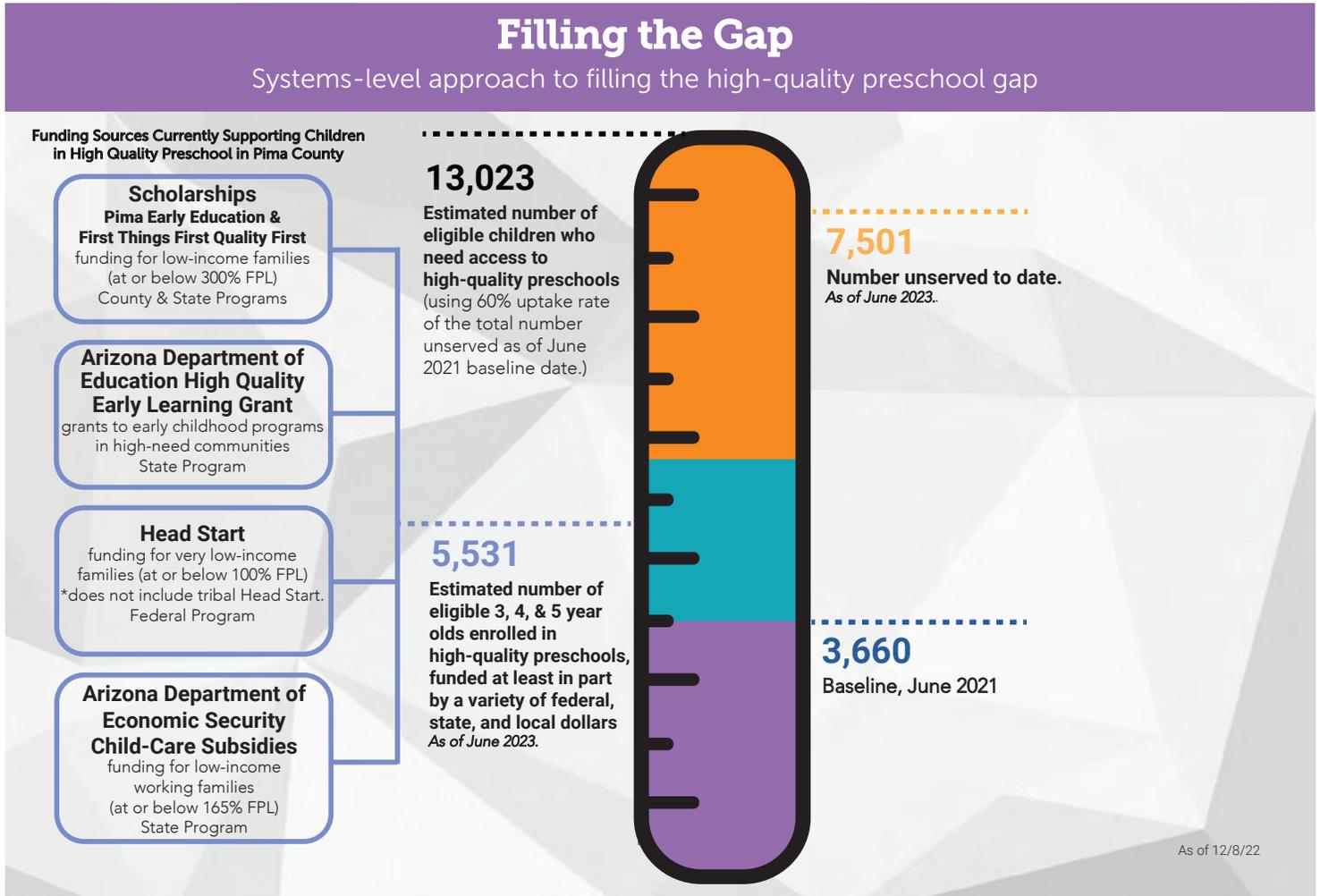
PEEPs Contracts by Type	Total # of Students Served	Year 2 Contracted Max Students Served	% of Contracted Max Served Total
Pima County Funded Quality First Scholarships*	687	600	114%
Pima County Funded School District Expansion Classes**	482	560	86%
Pima County Funded Head Start Extended Day Classes	187	205	91%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1356</b>	<b>1365</b>	<b>99%</b>

\*The 687 unique children served exceeds the 600 scholarship slots allocated as some scholarships are used as half scholarships, and turnover occurs through the year.

\*\*This includes the Pima Community College Desert Vista class operated by Child-Parent Centers

School District	# of PEEP Classes	# of Students Served
Amphitheater Unified School District	10	172
Flowing Wells Unified School District	2	38
Marana Unified School District	2	37
Pima Community College Desert Vista	1	20
Sahuarita Unified School District	1	20
Sunnyside Unified School District	4	79
Tucson Unified School District	8	116
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>482</b>

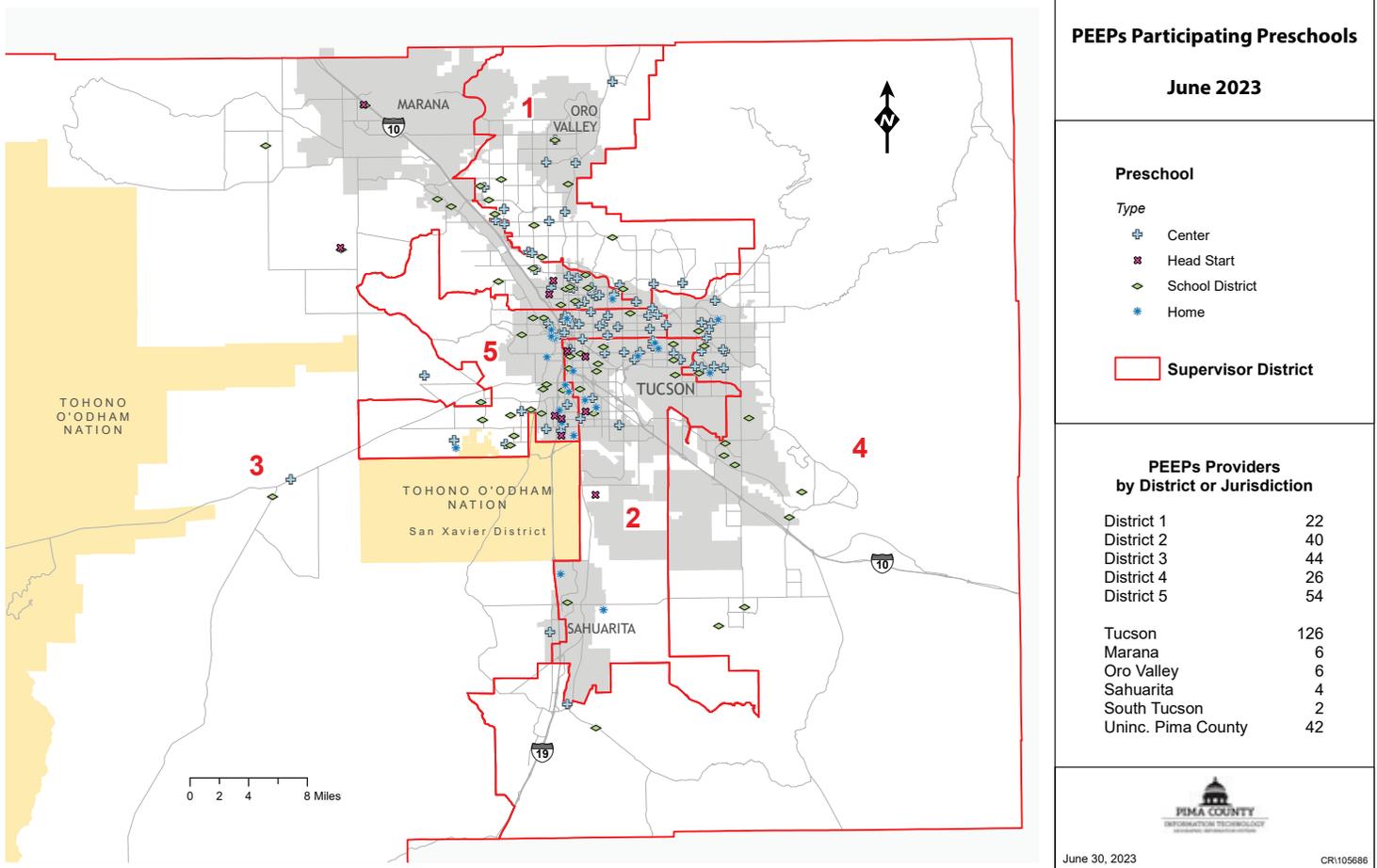
At the system level, PEEPs and other programs assisted 5,531 children from families with incomes at or below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level in attending high-quality preschool programs in Pima County. This means that collectively **PEEPs and our partners are serving about 42% of the need** (5,531 out of 13,023).



To continue to increase the number of eligible children attending high-quality preschool we must also increase the number of high-quality rated and accredited preschools, which is the second goal of PEEPs. In June 2021, **at the beginning of the first year of the program, there were 199 high-quality preschool providers** recognized by the Arizona Department of Economic Security Child Care Administration (DES CCA). **Now there are 285!** This is due to the County’s collaborative partnership with school districts that opened 17 additional high-quality PEEPs preschool classes this year, DES and First Things First partnerships that increased the number of Quality First rated childcare programs statewide and in Pima County, and the United Way of Tucson Southern Arizona’s Accelerate Quality program that prepared preschools and childcare providers for the Quality First rating assessments.

Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) recognized high-quality providers	June 2021 Baseline #'s	FY22 Total # HQ Providers	FY23 Total # HQ Providers
HQ Providers	142	170	230
Head Start centers and Early Head Start programs	50	50	50
Nationally Accredited preschools (Not in QF) contracted with DES	7	17	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>285</b>

**PEEPs participating providers increased to 187 for year 2, up from 176 in year 1.** In year 2, 48% of PEEP's participating preschools were private childcare centers, 34% were operated by public school districts, 12% were private home-based childcare providers and 6% were Head Start operated.



The State of Arizona recognizes high-quality preschools as those participating in the State's First Things First Quality First Program with a rating of 3-5 stars, those participating in the Federal Head Start program, and those with certain national accreditations. **Ninety-six percent of the preschools participating in the PEEP's program met this high-quality definition.** Two-star providers were included in these initial years of the program because of the impact the pandemic had on reducing the supply of preschool and childcare across the community.



*"My child loves all her teachers. My child's skills have improved greatly. This makes her feel and act more confident around other people, and when she is trying to learn something new, she will enjoy it instead of getting frustrated like she did before getting into this program."*

Pima County may choose to discontinue allocating scholarships to two-star providers in the near future. First Things First and the United Way’s Accelerate Quality Program provide support and coaching to improve ratings over time.

**Of the Quality First PEEPs participating preschools, the average Quality Rating is 4 stars, and 94 percent have a three-star rating or above.**

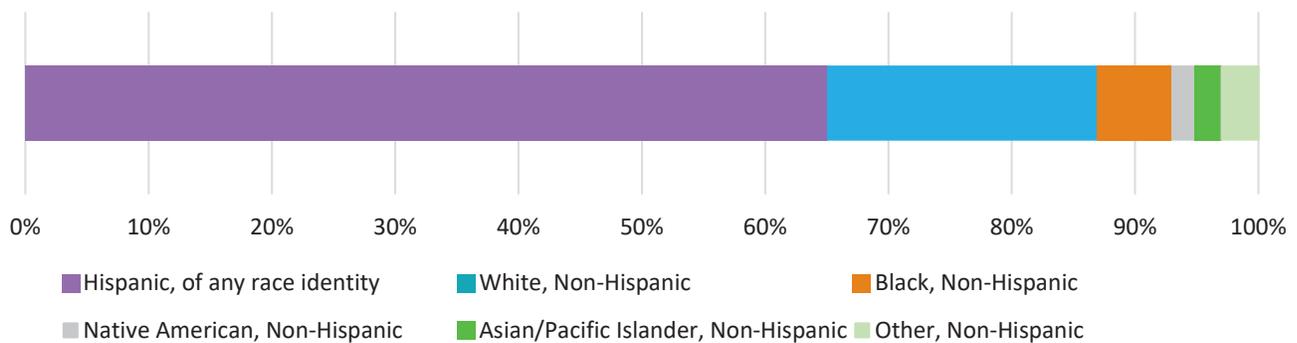
Jurisdiction	Number of Quality First PEEPs Preschools by Rating				
	2-Star	3-Star	4-Star	5-Star	Total
Town of Marana	1	1	3	0	5
Town of Oro Valley	0	1	3	2	6
Town of Sahuarita	0	2	1	0	3
City of South Tucson	0	0	1	1	2
City of Tucson	3	49	39	21	116
Unincorporated Pima County	3	14	14	8	39

**Research continues to show that high-quality early childhood care and education is one of the most effective ways of reducing poverty and improving the health, safety, and wealth of individuals and communities. Those who benefit the most from high-quality preschool are children from economically disadvantaged families, children of color and dual-language learners.** While all PEEPs children had to be from economically disadvantaged families with incomes below 300 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, data on race, ethnicity and dual-language learners was collected for PEEPs school district expansion classes and PEEPs extended day Head Start classes.

Demographic data was collected on 635 of 1,356 children (47%) this year, up from 330 children (39%) in year 1. In both years the **data shows that children identified as belonging to a racial or ethnic minority accounted for 78% of the total group, with 69% and 65%, respectively, identified as Hispanic of any race.** Additionally, 117 of 635 (18%) children were recognized as dual-language learners, up from 68 in year 1.

The graph below presents the demographic information of children enrolled in PEEPs school district expansion classes and Head Start extended day classes.

**Demographic Information of PEEPs-enrolled Children in Pima County (n = 635)**



For the first time since First Things First started the Quality First Scholarship program, race and ethnicity questions have been added to their scholarship application. Next year, similar demographic data will also be available for children participating in PEEPs through Pima County funded Quality First scholarships.

# PEEPS

## Pima Early Education Program Scholarships

*"We are able to go to work knowing our kid is safe and learning."*

*"Thank you for providing support to make preschool more manageable and accessible to families. Preschool should be accessible for every family as it is so beneficial for a child's developments, coexistence and empathy."*



*"Having my child on the scholarship it gives me peace of mind knowing that my child is getting the learning that he is going to be used in kinder."*

*"PEEPs helped us keep our business going and has improved our child's social skills and outlets."*

*"I'm glad my child can feel welcome and feel safe/cared for; that is my top priority."*



# Expenses, Budgeting, and Future Funding

The Pima County Board of Supervisors allocated \$30.2 million of Federal American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funding over four years to PEEPs. In year 5, the program will be funded primarily through Pima County’s Library District. Over the past three years of the program, the City of Tucson and towns of Marana and Oro Valley have contributed over \$3.2 million for PEEPs. Over the last two years private funders have contributed \$189,068 to the United Way’s Accelerate Quality Program which complements PEEPs by expanding preschool capacity and improving quality. Not reflected in these dollar amounts are Department of Economic Security (DES) childcare subsidies for eligible children in PEEPs school district classes, and contributions from school districts for facility improvements and administrative overhead, all of which increase the number of children served in the PEEPs program.

### FY23/Year 2 PEEPs Budgeted and Actual Expenses

IGAs & Contracts	Budgeted Expenses	Actual Expenses
First Things First Quality First Scholarships	\$2,201,167	\$2,190,653
Child-Parent Centers, Inc. Head Start Extended Day	\$877,595	\$877,595
School District IGAs Expansion Preschool Classes	\$4,521,080	\$4,455,752
PEEPs Administration	\$311,302	\$258,213
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$7,911,144</b>	<b>\$7,782,213</b>

Actual expenses for PEEPs for year 2 were close to budgeted expenses. For year 3, \$10.5 million is budgeted for PEEPs. Increased expenses are based on school districts opening more PEEPs classes and greater utilization of Pima County funded Quality First Scholarships. Long-term state and federal funding for childcare and preschool continues to be of concern. Consistent with PEEPs’ guiding principles, Pima County’s legislative agenda includes lobbying for the restoration of State General Funds for State DES childcare subsidies to maintain cost of quality reimbursement rates to providers, as well as funding for full day kindergarten.

*“PEEPs has allowed us to have a better work schedule and spend more time with the family. My child is in a safe place when we go to work.”*



*"I'm infinitely grateful for the assistance that ensures a safe enriching place for him and an opportunity for me to work."*

*"PEEPS is allowing me to go back to school to finish my degree. Financially, pre-K for both would not be possible without the scholarship. Thank you."*



## Facility Improvements

As new preschool classes and spaces were created within school district settings, many school districts realized that facility improvements were necessary. With the increased reimbursement rates this year from Pima County, our school district partners were able to make necessary playground improvements, including adding shade structures, creating trike paths, and purchasing materials for children's large motor development. Some district sites were even able to increase materials and purchase new curriculum to enhance their indoor classroom environments as well.

Amphitheater Unified School District, which added the most new PEEPs classes in year 2, was allocated funding from the Town of Oro Valley's contribution to PEEPs to create inclusive outdoor play spaces at Canyon Del Oro High School (CDO), Painted Sky and Copper Creek elementary schools, as well as an indoor STEAM preschool space at CDO. The STEAM classroom at CDO will serve as a high-quality environment for preschool students to play and learn, and will be an extra opportunity for high school students enrolled in the Early Childhood Education Career Technical Education (CTE) classes at CDO to engage in in depth activities with preschoolers.

Flowing Wells Unified School District spent District funds to construct two new PEEPs classrooms that just opened!

*"So grateful for this program. Without it my son wouldn't be able to attend PreK and preschool. Attending PreK has prepared him more than I would have been able to do on my own."*



## Teacher Compensation

High-quality childcare and preschool is a labor-intensive business. It takes highly qualified and committed educators to be in classrooms full of preschoolers and be able to engage and make connections with 18 to 20 children who are 3 to 5-years-old. In alignment with similar increases for DES childcare subsidies, Quality First scholarships, and workforce retention grants, **Pima County increased class reimbursement rates to our school district partners with the primary goal of improving teacher compensation.**

All PEEPs school district partners were able to provide stipends to PEEPs teachers and teaching assistants between \$500-\$8,100 and some were even able to increase teacher salaries on top of that! Other forms of teacher compensation included covering costs for teachers to travel to State and National Early Childhood Education conferences, covering costs related to continuing education and hiring more staff to support PEEPs programming.

# Workforce Connections/ Addressing the Preschool Teacher Shortage

**On-the-Job Training programs are evidence-based workforce development approaches that are proven to increase employment and wages for low-income job seekers and those with other barriers to employment.** Pima County's On-The-Job Training (OJT) program, facilitated by Community & Workforce Development (CWD), works with employers to develop employer pre-approved OJT opportunities for job seekers that includes wages and benefits. When CWD partners with an employer to fill open positions, the posting is highlighted with the 18 case managers who identify existing clients that may be able to fill the position. Candidates receive Employability Skills training before their resume goes to employers and commit to long-term employment (at least 12 months) after the training period. If the employer is interested in hiring a candidate, a training plan and contract are put in place before the new hire begins work. A CWD Workforce Development Specialist will regularly touch base with the employer and the trainee during the training period. Once the training is concluded, the employer has a competent employee and receives reimbursement (50% of training-period wages) for having hired and trained them.

This year, PEEPs staff connected with the OJT

program to engage a PEEPs participating provider to take part in this opportunity. **Small Miracles Education, which operates nine preschools in Pima County, was able to partner with CWD's OJT program to train and hire up to 10 preschool teachers.**

Amphitheater Unified School District was highlighted in the news this year for their Early Childhood Education (ECE) internship programs available at two of its high school campuses, Canyon del Oro and Amphitheater. There are two preschool internship programs available in Amphitheater; one program consists of students who have completed the first two courses of the ECE program, while the other includes students who show a strong interest in working in a preschool setting. Students can choose to fulfill the internship by earning an elective course credit or as a paid internship earning minimum wage for hours worked. In the 2022-23 school year, there were 37 preschool interns in the two programs, and 241 students enrolled in the ECE classes offered at the high school campuses. In the 2023-24 school year, **Amphitheater is looking to expand their ECE classes and internship opportunities to Ironwood High School. PEEPs preschool classes at Amphi serve as learning classrooms for these ECE students.**

## Pima County Employee Story

Shawnee, a Pima County Community & Workforce Development employee, shares her story of PEEPs and how it helped her family: "In the past my other childcare program set the hours of operation to end at 4 p.m. This was an issue due to my work schedule. There were times I would try to work around it by skipping my lunch so I could leave early to get my child on time. Those days were stressful. Then I was introduced to PEEPS, a program I learned about from Amber Wells (a fellow CWD employee). One year later, I must say PEEPS is an excellent program! As a full-time working parent, I really love this program because it allows me to work and not worry about safety and transportation for my child. I also love that my child learned new social skills and basic skills while having fun."



## PEEPS

# Guiding Principles

1. Increase high-quality preschool capacity while addressing existing need for financial aid.
2. Distribute scholarships efficiently and effectively through existing programs and partners.
3. Do not supplant existing public assistance for preschool and utilize local funding as a “last dollar in” approach.
4. Coordinate with existing agencies that provide public assistance for high-quality preschool to establish baseline need and simple system-level benchmarks, monitor progress and refine collaborative efforts to improve the system as a whole.
5. Establish scholarship rates that cover the full cost of providing high-quality preschool per child, based on accepted cost of quality and local market rate studies, considering wages necessary to attract quality teachers, and accounting for current DES subsidy rates and school district in-kind contributions, and pandemic-related increased costs.
6. Ensure participating preschool providers are geographically dispersed, with priority given to preschools serving lower income/higher need neighborhoods, tribal and rural areas.
7. Connect eligible families to high-quality preschools and financial assistance, including parents in local workforce development programs.
8. Collaborate with partners to connect participating families with other community resources to accelerate family and community wide benefits.
9. Maximize multi-year partner contributions to make the program more sustainable.
10. Advocate with partners for a long-term state-wide solution.
11. Remain flexible as providers and families recover and rebuild from the pandemic.
12. Review, reevaluate, revise, and report regularly with input from stakeholders.



*"Being a single mom with no family around, I now have more time to focus on finding regular work."*



*"My wife is going to college and I work a lot and the only other help is our other kids, so PEEPs makes it possible for us to work on (being) successful."*

*"It has helped us keep up with our employments and attendance."*

*"We greatly appreciate this support. It has made a significant impact to our financial stability, but most importantly our child is in a program run by professionals who are able to foster his talents and creativity."*



*"PEEPs has given the family the ability to get back to work and address important health concerns."*

*"It helps with being able to work and get things done that benefit family."*



**Pima Early Education  
Program Scholarships**

**PEEPs Multi-Departmental Oversight Team**

- Dustin Williams**, Superintendent of Schools
- Francisco Garcia**, Deputy County Administrator
- Daniel Sullivan**, Community and Workforce Development Director
- Amber Mathewson**, Library Director
- Theresa Cullen**, Health Department Director
- Heath Vescovi-Chiordi**, Economic Development Director
- Jenifer Darland**, Community and Workforce Development Deputy Director
- Deborah Bryson**, Deputy Superintendent of Schools
- Patrick Cavanaugh**, Economic Development Deputy Director
- Nicole Fyffe**, County Administrator's Office Senior Advisor

**Program Staff**

- Nicole Scott**, Program Manager
- Irene Moreno**, Program Coordinator



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**Board of Supervisors**

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- Rex Scott, *Vice Chair*, District 1
- Dr. Matt Heinz, District 2
- Sharon Bronson, District 3
- Steve Christy, District 4

**Pima County Administrator**

Jan Leshner

