

# Kinder Prep Academy

## A Provider Success Story from Graham County



### Kinder Prep Academy

- Opened 2015
- ADHS Licensed Child Care Center
- For ages 3-6 years
- Safford, Graham County
- \$200,000 Grant

[facebook.com/KinderPrepKids](https://facebook.com/KinderPrepKids)

**“When you build a name for yourself, it’s near and dear to you. With this grant, our environment now matches our reputation.”** — Loretta Desaulniers

As a child care business owner, Loretta Desaulniers wears many hats. Loretta chuckled, “I am the owner, director, teacher of 4- and 5-year-olds, and the cleaning and laundry crew.” She opened Kinder Prep Academy in 2015 after teaching kindergarten for 23 years in Graham and Greenlee counties. Loretta and her daughter cared for 10 children that first year. As a testament to her strengths as an educator, half of the kids were from families Loretta had previously taught.

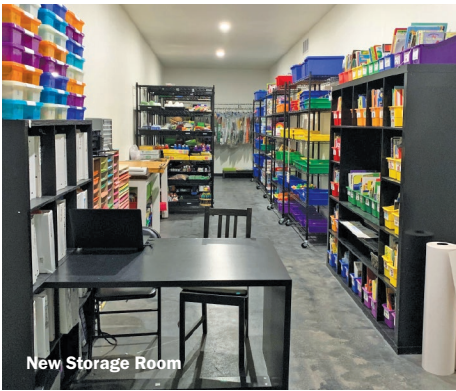
Commitment to quality care helped Loretta grow her child care center to serve 39 children in a low-to-moderate income community with limited access to child care. Kinder Prep Academy focuses on literacy development and provides a comprehensive music and art program to allow children to express themselves in creative ways. The open-concept floorplan of the center encourages student interaction and movement, but there was a real opportunity to make Kinder Prep even better with a \$200,000 grant.

Families now walk into a welcome area with bright colors, chairs and a small table inviting children and parents to visit. Fresh paint on the walls brightened the space. By reimagining the flow of the open concept center into the teachers’ workroom, Loretta created a new exit with a more secure door where teachers safely lead the kids to the play area instead of walking near the main road to enter the play space.

The kids love the completely overhauled outdoor space—now double its original size and an ideal place to learn, play and relax. Loretta also addressed licensing concerns, adding new fencing around the play area, removing weeds and the old brick and gravel surfacing, and installing beautiful new turf. Previously, with the gravel, children would come inside dusty.

Loretta used the grant to install permanent shade awnings made of concrete and steel to withstand Safford’s powerful storms and wind gusts. The shades allow the children to utilize the whole play area, even when it rains, and they protect the outdoor furniture and play equipment. These outdoor improvements will increase Kinder Prep Academy’s Quality First score. Loretta shared, “For safety reasons alone, this was money well spent.”

Renovations inside improved program support spaces—replacing fluorescent light fixtures and updating electrical outlets. Using the existing plumbing, Loretta created a laundry room onsite and purchased a washer and dryer. This saves her precious hours each week previously spent at the laundromat. Now, staff can wash bedding and clothes on the fly. The revamped storage room is clean and bright, everything has a place and toys and books are easily traded out. Before, the teachers’ break area lacked heating and cooling, but now it is a relaxing, temperature-regulated space that is comfortable for teachers to recharge.



New Storage Room



New Welcome Area

## Arizona Child Care Infrastructure Grant

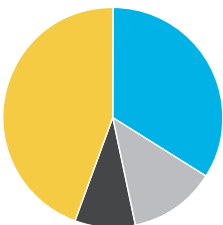
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) is one the country’s largest community development organizations, helping forge vibrant, resilient communities across America. In 2022-23, the Arizona Department of Economic Security (ADES) and First Things First (FTF) awarded \$65 million to LISC Phoenix for child care infrastructure grants, training, and technical assistance. This funding came from the Child Care Stabilization Grants appropriated in the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021. Child care providers received nearly \$60 million to rapidly improve and expand their facilities increasing access to high-quality early childhood learning environments statewide.

The need was substantial: Arizona providers submitted 969 applications requesting more than \$176 million in funding in just two weeks. Providers from 14 of Arizona’s 15 counties applied.

Equity was a focus: Child care providers located in low-to-moderate income areas with limited access to child care were the first priority. Additional priorities included providers caring for infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children who receive child care assistance through the ADES, as well as providers with waitlists and those open nights and weekends.

Ultimately, 478 sites received grants with an average award of \$124,750.

### Statewide

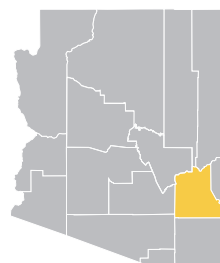


#### Grants Awarded by Provider Type

- 323 ADHS Licensed Centers received \$52,615,115
- 88 ADHS Certified Group Homes received \$4,312,397
- 63 ADES Certified Family Child Care Homes received \$1,600,000
- 4 Tribal Providers received \$1,103,048

**Total: \$59,630,560**

### Graham County



#### Highlights

- 3 applications requesting \$650,000
- 1 grant awarded totaling \$200,000
- Located in an area with limited access to child care, grantee:
  - Improved quality of outdoor play space
  - Improved quality of program support space
  - Addressed licensing concerns