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Nonprofit Helps Arizona Children Avoid “COVID Slide” and Enter Kindergarten Prepared
Results from the Waterford Upstart pilot show the average Arizona graduate entered kindergarten at a “Kindergarten Intermediate” level.

(Phoenix, AZ) October 20, 2020 — This year created unprecedented issues in education, especially for the state’s youngest learners. However, nearly 700 Arizona children across Arizona and nearly 200 children of the Navajo Nation were given the opportunity to avoid the “COVID Slide” and prepare for kindergarten thanks to an at-home summer learning program administered by education nonprofit, Waterford.org.

“When schools, preschools and childcare centers closed, I knew it would be hard for parents to ensure that their little ones were ready for kindergarten. That’s why I’m so pleased Upstart stepped up in such a big way. Their proven early learning program is just what we need, especially in this new learning environment,” said **State Representative Michelle Udall**.

The Waterford Upstart Summer Learning Path provided children personalized early literacy instruction and gave families the tools they needed to work with their children offline, including a program coach, push notifications, and social-emotional training. Thanks to philanthropic donations, more than 13,000 children in nine states and the Navajo Nation were able to participate in the program *at no cost*. A computer and internet access were also provided to families that needed it.

In Arizona, nearly 70-percent of participants were from low-income families (below 200 percent of the federal poverty level) and nearly 40-percent of families received a computer as part of the program.

“Upstart not only helped hundreds of Arizona children prepare for kindergarten, they helped bridge the digital divide. The summer learning program gave so many families the tools they need to keep their child learning from home,” said **State Representative Regina Cobb**.

On the Navajo Nation, nearly 91-percent of children were from low-income families, while nearly 89-percent of families received a computer as part of the program.

“I’m grateful Upstart brought its program to the Navajo Nation. The children who use the program are ready for kindergarten and many of them, along with their families, now have a computer and access to the internet. Ahéhee’ for the opportunity and partnerships made,” said **State Representative Arlando Teller**.

The Waterford Upstart curriculum is aligned to Arizona Early Learning Standards and children were assessed at the beginning and end of the program to track their progress. Waterford.org has detailed information on counties, cities, ethnicities, and socioeconomic statuses at a reporter’s request. Waterford.org is encouraged by the success of this program and the impact it will have on Arizona children for years to come. Waterford.org will continue working with policymakers and education leaders to implement the Waterford Upstart program with state support so more children in Arizona enter school ready for success.

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About Waterford.org

Waterford.org is an education nonprofit with a mission to achieve universal literacy for children through equity, access, and parent empowerment. Waterford develops educational tools that guide students along adaptive, individualized learning paths toward fluent reading and lifelong learning. Waterford empowers parents as a child's first teacher and supports teachers in taking the right actions at the right time for their students. Currently, Waterford.org serves over 300,000 children across 43 states every year.

Waterford.org is a BBB Accredited Charity with programs supported by a variety of governmental and philanthropic organizations, including support from a federal EIR grant, The Studio @ Blue Meridian, and TED's Audacious Project.

About Waterford Upstart

Waterford Upstart helps four-year-old children prepare for school at home and at no cost. Children develop foundational reading and social-emotional skills, and parents are empowered to become their child's first and most influential teachers. The children use adaptive software just 15 minutes a day, five days a week in the year before they start school. Waterford Upstart also fuels family involvement in their child's early education through program coaches and fun educational activities parents can complete with their children offline. Waterford Upstart has been rigorously tested and proven, earning the program a [federal EIR grant](#) and the title of a [TED Audacious project](#). [Independent research shows](#) the average Waterford Upstart graduate enters kindergarten reading at nearly a first-grade level and maintains those gains through the fourth grade.