

## **2011 Annual Report: Transforming the System. Changing the Culture.**

A new Helios Education Foundation and University of Arizona (UA) collaboration is generating system change in early childhood education. CREATE (communities as resources in early childhood teacher education) is shifting the way educators learn about their students and is adding a stronger emphasis on early literacy and language acquisition that incorporates the community's culture and voice into the classroom. The Foundation will invest over \$1.5 million into this effort over a five year period.

CREATE represents a fundamental redesign of UAs Early Childhood Education Teacher Preparatory Program with particular emphasis on the literacy needs of English Language Learners, their families and communities. Some of the concerns the initiative is working to address are that educators are often divorced from their students' communities and that the assets and resources families can bring to the classroom are often unknown or ignored.

The initiative is sparking new partnerships between birth-to-K-3 centers and better engaging families and communities in improving the literacy and language learning of southern Arizona youth.