



HELPING ALL THRIVE THROUGH SCHOOL READINESS

JANUARY 2026 EDITION



UNITED WAY
Capital Region

SCHOOL READINESS



Issue

Children who are not proficient in reading by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school than proficient readers.



Solution

United Way of the Capital Region's **School Readiness Program** strives to improve reading proficiency by preparing children for kindergarten.



Results

58% of participants in kindergarten are proficient in reading versus **36%** of their peers not in the program.

57% of participants in first grade are proficient in reading versus **36%** of their peers not in the program.

55% of participants in second grade are proficient in reading versus **35%** of their peers not in the program.

56% of participants in third grade are proficient in reading versus **28%** of their peers not in the program.

49% of participants scored proficient in reading* on the PSSA test versus **20%** of their peers not in the program.

* PSSA data is for eight reporting districts (Cumberland Valley, Greenwood, Harrisburg, Mechanicsburg, Newport, Steelton-Highspire, Susquehanna Township and West Perry).

Preparing Children for School



We engage families to prepare children academically and socially for kindergarten by:

- Connecting families to affordable preschool (if available).
- Helping families needing tuition assistance.
- Connecting families with early intervention and support services.
- Holding free education workshops.
- Registering students for kindergarten.

PROGRAM OUTPUTS

1,056 children enrolled in preschools

72,179 individuals have participated in **4,874 workshops**.

1,142 students were registered on-time for kindergarten.



YOUTH OPPORTUNITY

Through our work with community partners, we work to increase the number of children ready for school, and the reading proficiency of third grade students, which increases their chances of high school graduation.



CORE SOLUTION PARTNERS AND ROLES

Backbone Organization and Funding Source



Lead Service Provider

- Capital Area Intermediate Unit employs the education liaisons which are funded by United Way.

Partner Schools

- Central Dauphin School District
- Cumberland Valley School District
- East Pennsboro Area School District
- Greenwood School District
- Harrisburg School District*
- Mechanicsburg Area School District*
- Newport School District*
- Steelton-Highspire School District
- Susquehanna Township School District
- Susquenita School District
- West Perry School District
- West Shore School District

**Original Partner School districts.*

Support Service Provider Receiving Funding from United Way

- CONTACT Helpline, Inc. – 211 Information and Referral Services

Subject Experts

- Bright Futures Learning Center, Inc.
- Capital Area Head Start
- Catherine Hershey Schools for Early Learning
- Community Connections for Children
- Dauphin County Library System
- The Foundation for Enhancing Communities
- Mechanicsburg Area School District Pre-K Counts
- Office of Child Development and Early Learning
- Penn State Harrisburg
- Perry County Literacy Council
- PNC
- Safe Kids Capital Region
- South Central PA Highway Safety

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Race of participants:

- 57% identify as White
- 19% identify as Black/African American
- 14% identify as Multiracial/Other
- 10% identify as Asian

Ethnicity of participants:

- 96% identify as not Hispanic/Latino
- 4% identify as Hispanic/Latino