United Way of York County is committed to helping children and youth achieve their potential. Our Education Initiatives provide the support necessary for children and youth to achieve progress in every stage of development.

Research shows that 90% of the brain is developed by age five, demonstrating the importance of early efforts to lay the foundations of academic success. As a child ages, truancy is a leading factor in students being below grade level and not reaching high school graduation.

Thanks to your support, United Way of York County’s Education Initiatives ensure that every child has an introduction to reading, is ready for the transition to kindergarten, and is engaged in learning through truancy reduction.

By providing quality programs and partnering with others to support opportunities for education, United Way of York County is investing in youth today and in the next generation.
FOCUS works to improve the lives of children in York County by supporting quality early childhood experiences.

Since 1994, FOCUS has been responding to the community’s critical need for quality early childhood programs and experiences. FOCUS began as a community-wide initiative, convened by the York County Community Foundation in partnership with United Way of York County, Penn State York, and Child Care Consultants to improve the quality, affordability, and accessibility of child care for York County children from birth to 5 years.

With strong community connections and collaborations, in its first decade, FOCUS led to increased public and private financial resources, increased educational and training opportunities, increased availability of mentoring and technical assistance, and increased community awareness and involvement. Early efforts resulted in 10 nationally accredited child care centers, and 8 nationally accredited home-based programs.

FOCUS also has a longstanding history of implementing kindergarten transition and early literacy programs, along with providing resources, technical assistance, support, and opportunities for networking, collaboration, professional development, and advocacy. This rich history has created an impact in our community that ensures children are supported by quality early childhood experiences.

EITC PRE-K SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

To support families with the high cost traditionally associated with high-quality child care, United Way of York County accepts corporate contributions and donations that specifically go toward scholarships for pre-kindergarten students to attend high-quality programs. Contributions for the 2019-2020 year were provided by: PeoplesBank, A Codorus Valley Company, Avalon Insurance, and UPMC Health Plan.

18 children
5 early learning centers
$23,450 awarded

EARLY LEARNING ADVOCACY

FOCUS partners with two statewide campaigns, Pre-K for PA & Start Strong PA, to advocate for healthy child development and expanded access and affordability of high-quality early childhood education.
Ready Freddy works to ensure successful transitions to kindergarten for York County children. The program pivoted in 2020 by mailing home books and materials. Weekly emails included welcome videos from school districts, online story times recorded by Martin Library, and important information and resources for parents to support their children during their transition to kindergarten.

Ready Freddy

348 children
5 school districts
... plus Martin Library!

I have enjoyed getting to know other directors in the area through the virtual meetings. It is wonderful to share ideas and challenges and to support one another. During this COVID season, I was thankful to have this group so I did not feel so alone in the challenges of the pandemic.

— Pam French, Mountainside Preschool

FOCUS hosts monthly professional development and networking meetings geared toward private and parochial early childhood educators and community stakeholders.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Our Preschool Director meetings have become an invaluable tool to my job. The opportunity to meet and discuss a variety of day to day challenges is incredibly beneficial and appreciated. ... I feel like I have learned so much and I am eager to share my new knowledge with my staff.

— Trish Bowersox, Bethlehem United Methodist Preschool

Participating in the Ready Freddy program gave my daughter an opportunity to see first-hand the value of reading — and have fun while learning! The themed stories and crafts provided interaction and allowed her imagination to soar. Best of all, we got to keep the books so she could keep practicing reading long after the program was complete. Ready Freddy was the perfect bridge to kindergarten.

— Jessica Staub, parent, New Freedom
The Early Literacy Reading Challenges are pre-literacy programs that encourage families to read to their children birth to 5 years old every day. (Due to COVID-19 and the closure of early learning centers, our results have been conservatively estimated.)

EARLY LITERACY READING CHALLENGES

While targeted for our toddler, the entire family looks forward to the books Carly brings home for the challenge. Our older children enjoy reading the books provided to Carly; my husband and I enjoy watching our 2-year-old learn new words and amaze us with her already existing vocabulary.

— Brittany Deatrick, parent, Hanover YMCA Early Learning Center

We participate in United Way of York County's Reading Challenges because they encourage families to read with their children every night. Reading to young children helps them to learn to value books and stories and can spark children's imagination and curiosity.

— Tammy Golden, site director, York JCC School for the Early Years
Little Free Libraries are strategically placed freestanding book-sharing boxes in Dover, Red Lion, and York City, that are catalysts for improving reading and deepening community connections.

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**LITTLE FREE LIBRARIES**

- 5 libraries
- 1,037 books distributed
- 3 communities served

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I am so grateful to United Way of York County for providing a Little Free Library to Community Progress Council’s Community of Hope Family Resource Center at Hannah Penn K-8. I believe there is an assumption that ... there has been a loss of interest in reading. We see just the opposite every time the door to the library is opened. There is such positive energy — pure joy and excitement from children (and adults) of all ages as they select books.

— Kiersten Sutton, York City Community of Hope

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**REACH OUT AND READ**

During well visits at Family First Health York County locations, children aged 6 months through 5 years are issued a “prescription” from their pediatrician to read and are provided with a book to take home. (During the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of completed well-child checkups at the offices of Family First Health was reduced.)

- 4 sites
- Children 6 months to 5 years
- 959 books distributed

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**LEARNING CALENDARS**

In partnership with Kiwanis Club of Dillsburg, United Way of York County coordinates the distribution of over 1,000 learning calendars countywide. The calendar titles are Every Day I Learn Through Play, Learning is Everywhere, and Kindergarten Here I Come.

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**THANK YOU FOR THE GENEROUS SUPPORT PROVIDED BY**

- The Donald B. and Dorothy L. Stabler Foundation
- Program-specific support for FOCUS is provided by East York Rotary, Kiwanis Club of Dillsburg, York County Community Foundation, United Way of Pennsylvania, Rotary Club of York, and York County Early Learning Investment Commission.
The mission of the York County Truancy Prevention Initiative (YCTPI) is to reduce the truant population in York County. YCTPI is a partnership between United Way of York County and the York County Bar Foundation.

TRUANCY PREVENTION INITIATIVE

The Truancy Task Force convenes stakeholders every other month to address strategies for truancy prevention and intervention, and offers regular opportunities for professional development.

TRUANCY TASK FORCE

In collaboration with the nationwide effort to celebrate Attendance Awareness Month in September, we encouraged the community to get involved by donating supplies such as hygiene items, alarm clocks, and school supplies. Supplies were delivered to school districts and programs within schools to support students countywide. Thank you to Harley-Davidson Motor Company, Penn State York, and Servants, Inc., for your significant in-kind support.

ATTENDANCE AWARENESS MONTH

Thank you so much for your amazing donations. Our School Counselors have been able to get these donations into the hands of many youngsters in need, and the kids’ eyes light up with excitement each time! The bookbags and school supplies have been a huge hit, and many of the kids have been especially appreciative of the hygiene items like soap, deodorant, and toothpaste that they don’t have access to at home. One student literally clapped and cheered with excitement, and said he hadn’t had toothpaste in months! Thank you again for all that you do to support our students.

— Dr. Stacey Sidle, Northeastern School District
READING READY CORNERS

Reading Ready Corners are bookshelves that are placed and filled in offices where families may wait for an appointment of service. Reading Ready Corners encourage families to read together while they wait, and they can also take books home. With many offices' waiting rooms closed due to pandemic, FOCUS pivoted and distributed books through school districts and lunch programs.

All of the books were distributed and many, many parents and children were most appreciative. ... Parents were so excited to receive new books for their toddlers. They said that the new books would keep the little ones content while the parents helped the older children with schoolwork.

— Libby Stambaugh, Supervising Elementary Principal, Red Lion Area School District

YOUTH COURT ALLIANCE

The goal of Youth Court Alliance is to divert families from entering the Magisterial District Court for truancy citations and reengage truant students. Youth Court Alliance is a program of United Way of York County in partnership with the York County Truancy Prevention Initiative and the York County Office of Children, Youth, and Families.

78.4% of participants successfully completed Youth Court Alliance

95% of all successful cases had no unlawful absences while they were enrolled in the program

10,414 additional books given out

506 books distributed via Corners

10 Reading Ready Corners

87 trained student volunteers

307 students served

1,831 hours of community service

78.4%

95%