

United Way's SmartStart prevents at-risk children from giving up on school.



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Children who are not connecting with school begin to show behaviors early on that teachers dread. Their trajectory becomes sadly predictable as they struggle with self-esteem, alienation, disruptive behavior and poor grades.

United Way's **SmartStart** focuses on at-risk children from kindergarten through fourth grade, tackling the barriers that prevent them from joining their classmates in academic achievement. Safeguarding a child during these first impressionable years in school can mean the difference later on between a youth going on to college or dropping out before graduation. >>

Parents are essential partners in helping a child with difficulties. SmartStart guides parents with parenting groups and support, family meetings and counseling, behavior plans for the child and referrals to additional community and mental health resources.



Truancy Intervention When a young student is truant for a total of 10 days in Yonkers, SmartStart partners intervene to discover and address the cause. Attention to truancy early on prevents major problems later.

Academic Support In Mt. Kisco, with a diverse, 45% Hispanic population, SmartStart's focus is making sure that kids K-4th grade stay on track academically – which includes helping their families be a support. A child can easily get derailed by difficulties keeping up with schoolwork, language and cultural barriers or a lack of support or understanding at home. SmartStart offers children afterschool bilingual tutoring, academic support, homework help, reading and discussion groups and ESL supports. Tech programs, music, web, movie and art classes keep young children engaged and excited about learning.

Parents are also provided with learning opportunities. Skills that could stabilize their home situation, such as financial management and computer skills training are offered, as well as ESL support.

Positive Role Models In Yonkers, SmartStart provides Saturday tutoring and activities to African-American and Hispanic boys in 3rd and 4th grades. The boys are mentored by high school youth, who along with schoolwork help, provide positive role models and messaging about the benefits of keeping on track in school. SmartStart also helps parents navigate the school system to best advocate for their own children.

Standing Up for Homeless Children The most critical of all at-risk kids are the homeless. SmartStart advocates to get these children stabilized in a school by tackling the many barriers haunting them because they don't have a steady residence, such as delays in registration, poor attendance, unidentified special education needs and many other issues. SmartStart works with shelter operators to help homeless children; advocates for the children in case meetings and provides volunteer tutors and mentors, and counseling and referrals. The parents, often disenfranchised, are encouraged to advocate for their children.

Mental Health Issues In Peekskill, SmartStart's focus is making sure that kids are not left behind because of emotional, social or learning issues. Getting to the heart of each child's challenge can require help on a variety of fronts. These roadblocks to a child's successful participation in school are tackled with comprehensive assessments and individualized plans, counseling, case management, in-class help, advocacy and crisis management.

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 Boys and Girls Club of Northern Westchester
 Nepperhan Community Center
 Student Advocacy
 Urban League of Westchester
 Westchester Jewish Community Services