



**strongstart**  
SCHOOL READINESS

For every dollar  
invested in  
quality preschool,  
Connecticut  
saves nearly \$20.

[KidsforCT.org](http://KidsforCT.org)

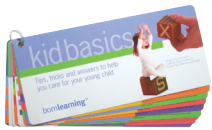
The early years  
of a child's life  
significantly  
impact language  
skills, social  
and emotional  
development, and  
school readiness.  
All children should  
start kindergarten  
ready, equipped to  
succeed to the best  
of their abilities.

#### UNITED WAY WORKS TO ELIMINATE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP BEFORE KINDERGARTEN

Every child deserves a strong start. Yet almost half of America's kindergartners enter school unprepared, with at-risk & impoverished children already 1-2 years behind.

The positive significance of a high quality early childhood experience to a child's future success is well documented.

United Way is targeting resources to improving quality early childhood learning in the region. We are investing dollars, taking a leadership role and finding creative ways to partner with others to ensure all children are ready for school in our region.



#### IT'S ALL ABOUT THE WAY THE BRAIN DEVELOPS

Infant and toddler brain nerve cells are formed and connected every time the child is exposed to a human interaction or event in the environment. We literally have the ability to shape a child's brain for success.

A child's first teacher is family. That's why United Way supports Born Learning, a public engagement campaign helping families, caregivers and communities build early learning for young children. When adults interact with children—talking, singing, and playing rhyming games—they stimulate language and vocabulary development and build important foundations for learning to read. Born Learning offers fun activities for parents and caregivers to engage their child.

#### COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS LEADING THE WAY

United Way is actively involved in early childhood and educational aspects in all of our communities. Community plans have been developed in Stamford and Danbury to ensure that all children are ready for school, and United Way has been a key partner and leader in this process. Plans include a broad range of strategies such as improving literacy among children and their families, ensuring that the transition to school is successful, and encouraging participation in high quality preschools.

The annual Early Childhood Fair has become an event families look forward to Stamford. United Way installs a Born Learning Trail that gets children moving and learning in a fun way.



#### IMAGINATION LIBRARY PUTS BOOKS INTO EVERY CHILD'S HANDS

Graduating from high school can be predicted reasonably well by the level of reading skills at the end of grade 3. That's why Imagination Library is such an important program under our strongstart initiative.

This innovative partnership with the Dollywood Foundation offers free books every month to children under five years old.



United Way  
of Western Connecticut

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