

2014 Community Report Card on Danbury's Young Children



Our Promise:

All Danbury children aged birth through eight are healthy and ready for school and lifelong learning.

Why a Community Report Card on Young Children?

Each year since 2012, Danbury's Promise for Children Partnership has released a Community Report Card on Danbury's Young Children. Why? Because extensive research shows that the early years of a child's life are most important for his or her growth and development. Children who are given the skills they need to successfully enter kindergarten are more likely to be reading well by age 8, less likely to drop out of high school, and more likely to attend higher education and eventually become productive citizens.

Learning Begins at Birth

We can't wait for Danbury's children to enter our school system before we, as a community, begin to support their learning. Parents are a child's first and most important teachers, and the home environment provides the foundation for language and early literacy. Parents must be connected with the resources they need to provide loving, nurturing, literacy-rich homes. Our community must also offer opportunities for children to have early learning experiences, through programs such as School Readiness and Head Start. And, of course, children must be healthy—both physically and emotionally—in order to participate productively in a classroom. That's why our Partnership focuses on three areas: **Parenting, School Readiness/Early School Success, and Health.**

The Danbury City Office of Early Childhood

The future of our city depends on the future of our children. That's why, this year, Mayor Boughton created the Danbury City Office of Early Childhood. Danbury's Promise for Children Partnership was designated to operate that Office. In the coming year, we will be working to create a Single Point of Entry System for Danbury families. This System will help to connect parents of young children with the services they need to support their child's growth and development. The Partnership will also stay connected with the new State of Connecticut Office of Early Childhood to make sure our parents have access to state supports and services.

A Community-Wide Effort to Improve the Lives of Children

Our Partnership enjoys the support of more than 20 community organizations and agencies. Our lead Partners are United Way of Western Connecticut as our fiscal sponsor, the Danbury Public Schools, the Danbury School Readiness Council, Danbury Children First, and Families Network of Western Connecticut. Our working teams and supporters include parents, educators, health providers, non-profit service providers, business people, and members of the faith community. The Partnership would like to thank the many, many volunteers who donate their time and talents to improve the lives of our children. Please join us! To find out how, contact Caroline LaFleur, Partnership Director, at 203-300-1486.

Indicators of Success

On the following pages, you will see **Key Indicators**, chosen by members of our Partnership as the most important data to track to assess the early education, health, and well-being of our children. **Secondary Indicators** are also present as data that are also of interest to the community regarding young children. New programs, initiatives, and strategies will be highlighted in the text.



Office of
Early Childhood



The **Snapshot of the Danbury Community and Its Families** below paints a picture of an extremely diverse, multicultural and hardworking city.

Danbury has the lowest crime rate for any major city in Connecticut, and its unemployment rate (8.1%) is lower than the state average (9.2%). This makes it a safe and thriving city in which to live. But many families face challenges in raising their children and preparing them for success in school.

As the data below shows, most parents are working. Yet more than 14% of families require some form of public assistance to make ends meet, and more than 17% of children under age 5 are living in poverty.

Parents are giving their children the benefit of the cultures they were raised in, and often the languages they spoke in their home countries. But many parents do not have the advantage of a formal education, and are therefore frequently unable to support their children's learning at home. Homework help can be a real challenge for many of Danbury's families!

The data depicted in the graphs and charts on the following pages reflect both the challenges and the advantages Danbury and its families face in supporting early learning.

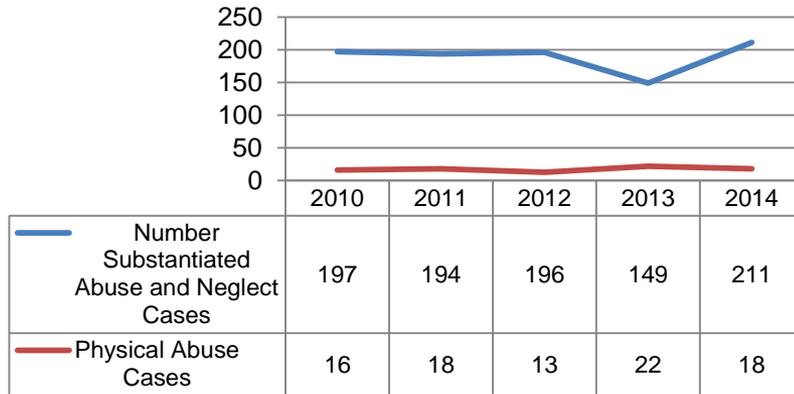
A Snapshot of the Danbury Community and Its Families	
Total population	83,684
Number of children under age 5	5,850
Population 3 and older enrolled in school	18,770
Children under 6 with all parents in family in labor force	70.8%
Families with children under age 5 living below the poverty level	17.4%
Households with children under age 18 that received public assistance in the past 12 months	14.6%
Percent of population foreign born	34.2%
Percent of population speaking a language other than English in the home	42.1%
Percent of population with less than a 9 th grade education	9.1%
Children under 18 who are of Hispanic or Latino origin	35.2%
Children under 18 who are Black or African American	8.5%

Source for all data above: U.S. Census Bureau

Parenting That Supports Healthy Development and Learning

Key Indicator:

Number of Children Substantiated as Abused/Neglected/Uncared For in Danbury



Source: CT Dept. of Children and Families

As the chart above indicates, the number of physical abuse cases is small compared to all cases handled by the Dept. of Children and Families; however, the sharp increase in total substantiated abuse and neglect cases is disturbing. Parents who are living in stressful, “toxic” environments are more likely to abuse and/or neglect their children.

Parents who are connected with services and supports are much less likely to commit neglect and abuse.

In the coming year, Danbury’s Promise for Children Partnership will be working to develop a **Single Point of Entry System** for services for families with children under age 5. The purpose is to connect parents with services beginning at birth, and make sure that parents are aware of, and are able to access, the supports they need. The ultimate goal is to give parents the tools needed to create stable, nurturing home environments that promote early learning.

Secondary Parenting Indicators

Births to Mothers Less Than 20 Years Old	68 ¹
Late or No Prenatal Care for Mother	20.5% ¹
Births, Weight Under 2500 Grams	71 ¹
Number of Children on Temporary Family Assistance	371 ²
Households with SNAP Benefits in the Last 12 Months	7.9% ³

¹ CT Dept. of Public Health, 2010

² 2013 Connecticut KIDS COUNT Data Book

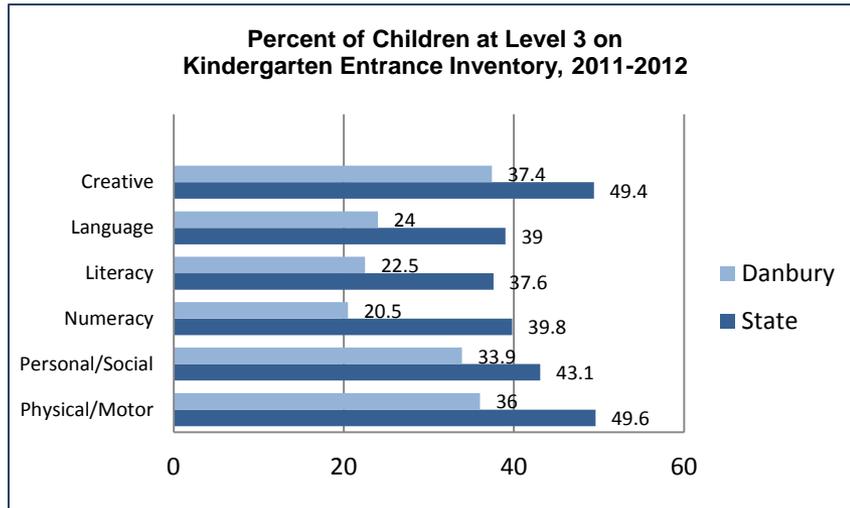
³ U.S. Census, 2008-2012 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimate

New in the past year...

- Through generous funding from a private foundation, the Partnership, working with Families Network of Western CT, was able to provide home visiting services to 51 at-risk families, using the **Parents As Teachers Model**, an evidence-based home visitation program. This represents a dramatic increase in the number of families who received home visits prior to 2014.
- As part of a statewide **Help Me Grow Campaign**, the Partnership registered 143 parents for the **Ages & Stages Program**. Those parents will now receive questionnaires in the mail to help them track their child’s growth and development.
- All mothers who give birth at Danbury Hospital now receive a binder of information that includes **Resources for New Parents in Danbury**, a new one-page guide to local and state-wide child care, child development, health and literacy resources, as well as information on local playgroups and parent activities.
- The Partnership has formed a **Latino Parent Advisory Board** to explore ways Latino parents can be involved in our work and to make parents of young children aware of the resources available to them.

School Readiness in Danbury

Key Indicator:



Source: CT State Department of Education

Students who are performing at Level 3 on the Kindergarten Entrance Inventory are considered to be the most prepared to succeed in school. The above chart shows that Danbury's children are not as prepared as they should be to enter kindergarten. In some domains, such as Numeracy and Literacy, they are more than 15 percentage points below their peers across the state.

Why are some Danbury children behind when they reach kindergarten? Many low-income parents cannot provide high-quality preschool experiences for their children. The programs are too expensive, and the waiting lists for more affordable options (such as the School Readiness Program and Head Start) are long. Instead, low-income working parents rely on a network of neighbors and friends to care for their children while they work. In some cases, their children may not acquire the fundamental skills needed to function well in a classroom.

Secondary School Readiness Indicators

Number of Children Attending Preschool, Nursery School in Danbury	1,089 ¹
Percent of Kindergarten Children Who Attended Preschool, Nursery School or Head Start in Danbury	74% ²
Number of Children in Danbury's School Readiness Program	400 ³
Number of Children Attending Head Start in Danbury	267 ⁴
Families Receiving Care4Kids Childcare Subsidies	557 ⁵

¹ U.S. Census, 2008-2012 ACS 5-Year Estimate

² CT State Dept. of Education

³ Danbury School Readiness Program

⁴ Connecticut Institute for Communities

⁵ 2013 Connecticut KIDS COUNT Data Book

New in the past year...

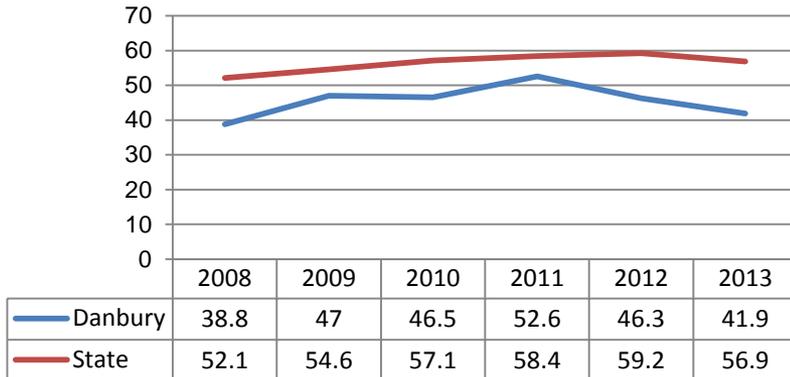
- Through funding acquired from a private foundation, the Partnership, working with Education Connection, trained 19 preschool teachers working in School Readiness and Head Start Classrooms, using the **Training Wheels** model. Training Wheels improves the quality of teaching through coaching and mentoring, and results in preschool children with improved basic literacy and school readiness skills.
- Work over the past three years has resulted in new programs and materials that help children transition from preschool to kindergarten. **Kindergarten Here I Come** is now available in English and Spanish for parents, as well as for preschool and kindergarten teachers.
- For the first time since 2001, reimbursement rates under **Care4Kids**, the state's child care subsidy program increased. Licensed providers will receive a 12% increase.



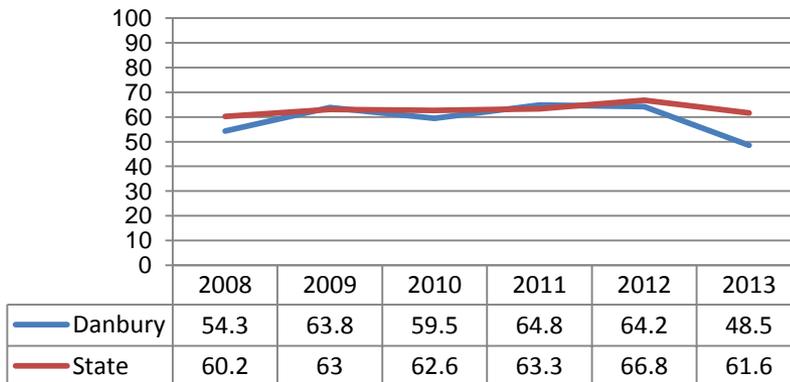
Early School Success in Danbury

Key Indicators:

Percent of Danbury Students Performing At Goal on the 3rd Grade Reading Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT)



Percent of Danbury Students Performing At Goal on the 3rd Grade Math Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT)



Secondary Early School Success Indicators

Number of Students in Danbury Public Schools	10,842 ¹
Danbury 3 rd Graders Who Are Substantially Deficient on the Developmental Reading Assessment	25% ²
Eligibility for Free or Reduced Lunch, Grades K – 3	51.6% ³
English Language Learners, Grades K – 3	28% ³

¹ Danbury Public Schools, 2013

³ CT State Dept. of Education, 2013

² CT State Dept. of Education, 2012

New in the past year...

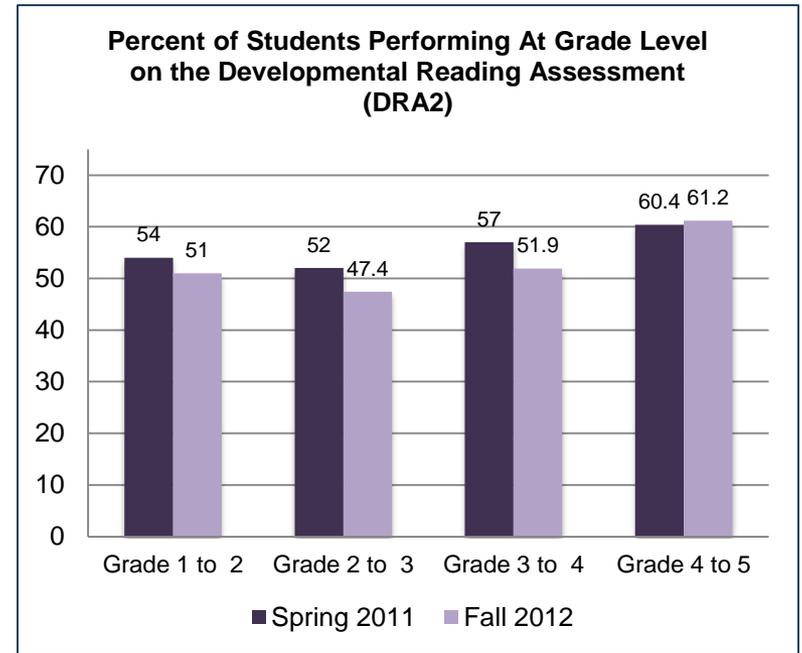
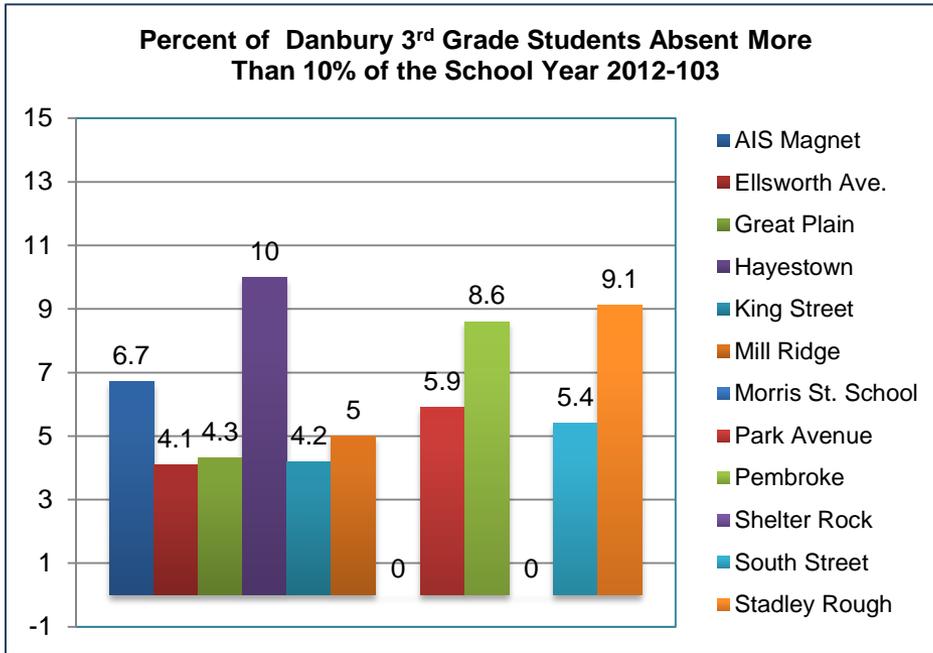
- For the first time, in 2014-2015, Danbury will be offering **full-day kindergarten** in all of its elementary schools.
- Danbury Public Schools' Literacy Team has been aligning instruction to the **Common Core Standards** since their adoption in 2010. Students develop skills through partner talk, small group discussions, and collaborative exploration of a variety of texts. Written work focuses on narrative, informational, and opinion writing.

Beyond the CMT and DRA...

- Danbury administered the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) in 2014, but it was not required to do so. The state is shifting to the **Smarter Balanced Assessment System**, aligned to the Common Core. The first "operational test" will be in the Spring 2015.
- The **Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)** is a diagnostic measure of reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. In 2014-2015, districts must choose from a new menu of approved K-3 reading assessments. They can continue to use the DRA, but they must also choose one of the other assessments, which are research based, considered to be less subjective, and have high predictive validity (meaning they can predict a child's future success in reading).

Chronic Absenteeism and Summer Learning Loss

Key Indicators:



Source for All Data: Danbury Public Schools

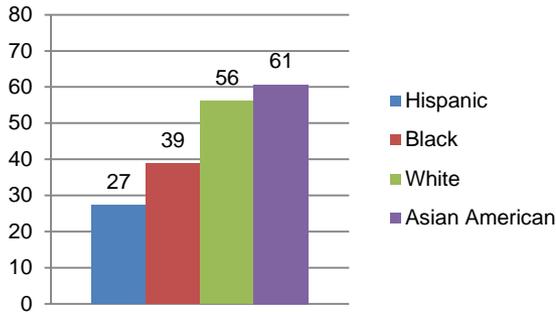
Students who are absent more than 10% of the school year (or about 18 days) are considered chronically absent. Those students are in danger of falling behind academically. Chronic absenteeism in the early grades is especially damaging, as those are the foundational years when children acquire the skills they need to read. National studies show that children living in poverty are more likely to be chronically absent. In Danbury, however, some of our elementary schools with the highest Free or Reduced Lunch and ELL populations (Morris St. and Shelter Rock Schools) have NO chronic absenteeism in 3rd grade. Efforts are being made district-wide to reduce chronic absenteeism at all grade levels.

Research spanning 100 years shows that students score lower on standardized tests at the end of the summer than at the beginning of the summer. Most students lose two months of grade level equivalency in mathematical computation over the summer. Low-income students lose more than two months of reading achievement. The chart above shows that while reading loss as measured by the DRA is not dramatic over the summer months in Danbury, it does exist, especially in the earlier grades. More summer enrichment programming will prevent summer learning loss.

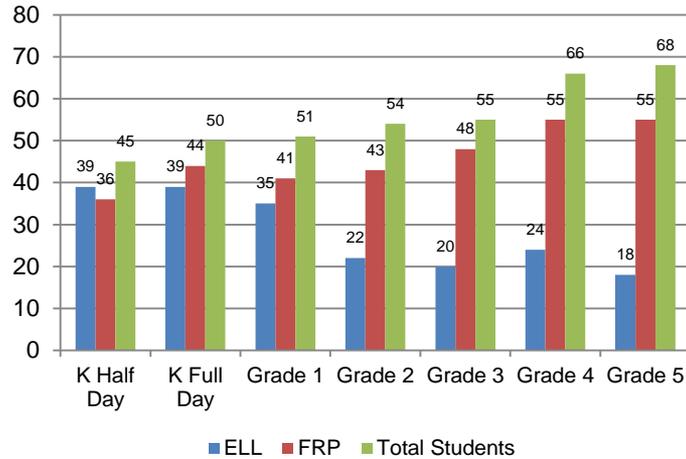
The Achievement Gap in Danbury

Key Indicators:

Percent of Danbury Students Performing At/Above Goal on the 2012-13 Third Grade Reading CMT by Ethnicity



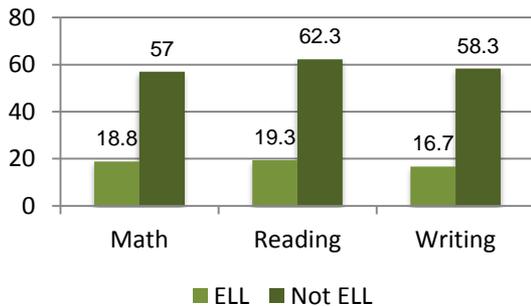
Percent of Danbury Students At or Above Grade Level on Spring 2013 DRA



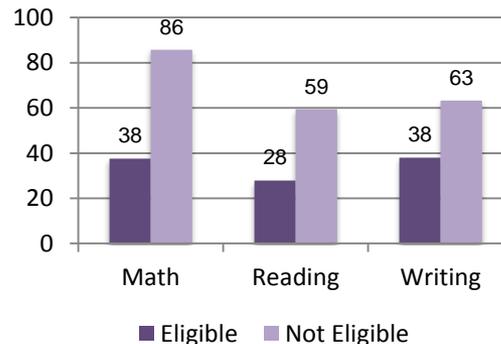
Danbury is similar to other communities across the state and the nation in that lower-income children, children of color, and ELL children score lower than their peers on standardized tests. The DRA data depicted to the left shows that the gap tends to widen in Danbury as children progress through the elementary grades.

The chart below shows that Danbury's School Readiness Programs can close the gap in Literacy Skills before children enter kindergarten.

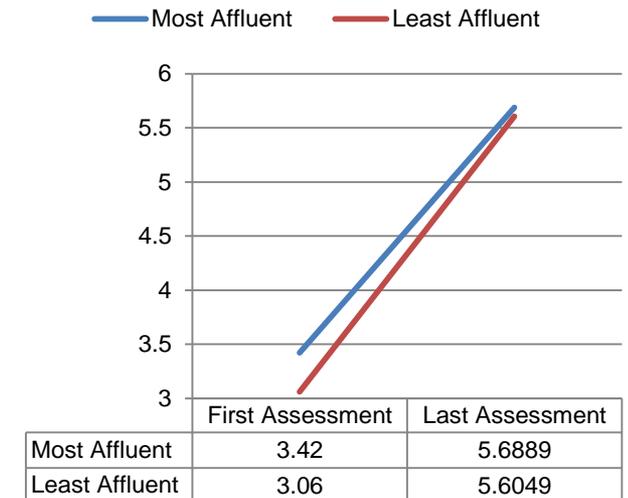
Percent of Danbury English Language Learners Performing at Goal on the 2012-2013 Third Grade CMT



Percent of Students Performing at Goal on the 2012-2013 Third Grade CMT by Eligibility for Free Lunch



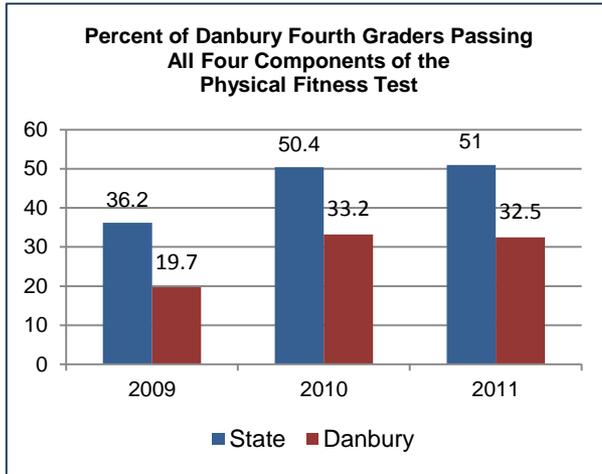
Literacy Scores of Children in Danbury School Readiness Programs



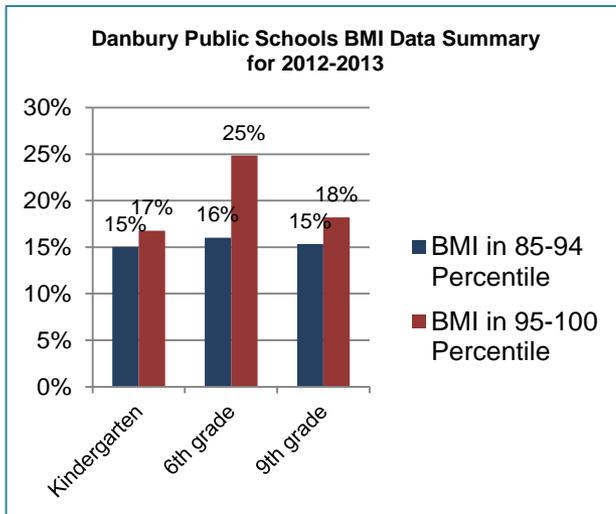
Source for All Data: CT State Dept. of Education

Physical Health of Danbury's Young Children

Key Indicators:



Source: CT State Dept. of Education



Source: Danbury Public Schools

As the charts to the left indicate, Danbury's children are facing many physical fitness challenges. Less than one-third of fourth graders can pass all four components of the state's physical fitness test.

Perhaps more concerning is the fact that the Body Mass Index (BMI) for many students is in the overweight and obese range. A full 25% of Danbury's 6th grade students are obese.

The older children get, the harder it is for them to change eating and lifestyle habits. The Centers for Disease Control reports that children who are obese are more likely to be obese as adults, putting them at greater risk for diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and a myriad of other health problems.

Secondary Health Indicators

Children Enrolled in HUSKY A & B	8,294 ¹
Children Enrolled in HUSKY Who Had at Least One Well-Child Visit (ages 0-8)	83% ²
Children Enrolled in HUSKY Who Had Dental Care (Ages 0-8)	71% ²
Children Enrolled in HUSKY Who Had at Least One Developmental Screening (Ages 0-8)	18% ²

¹ 2013 Connecticut KIDS COUNT Data Book

² CT Dept. of Social Services, 2011

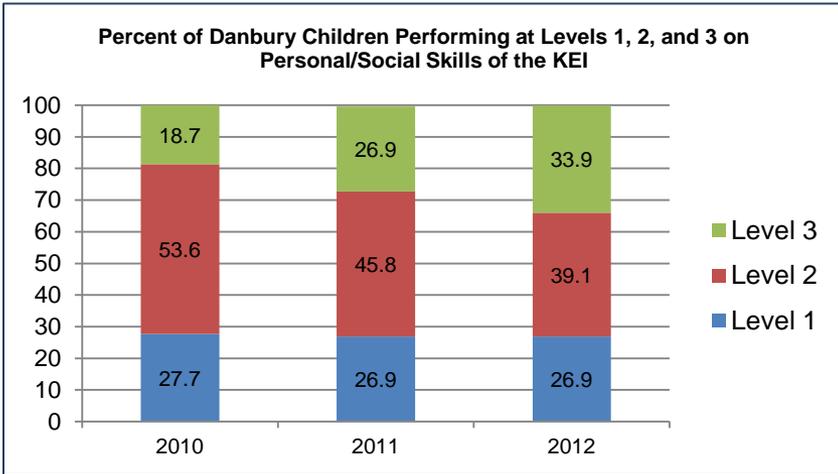
New in the past year...

- The **Students Can Run And Move (SCRAM)** program, operated by the Regional YMCA and the Coalition for Healthy Kids, served 378 children at Hayestown, Park Avenue, South Street, and Ellsworth Elementary Schools. A grant has been received to expand to another school for the 2014-15 year.
- During National Nutrition Month in March and into early June, the Coalition for Healthy Kids spread the **5-2-1-0** healthy lifestyle message at 14 locations (schools, agencies, and community health fairs) serving children and families. More than 400 brochures encouraging eating 5 fruits and vegetables, getting 2 hours or less of recreational screen time, getting 1 hour or more of physical activity, and drinking 0 sugar sweetened drinks were distributed. Sugar demonstrations also promoted awareness about the amount of sugar in popular beverages. The **5-2-1-0 Brochures** are available in English, Spanish and Portuguese.



Social , Emotional, and Behavioral Health of Danbury's Young Children

Key Indicator:



Source: CT State Department of Education.

- Level 1: Students demonstrate emerging skills in the domain and require a large degree of instructional support.
- Level 2: Students inconsistently demonstrate the skills in the specified domain and require some support.
- Level 3: Students consistently demonstrate the skills in the specified domain and require minimal instructional support

Children's social and emotional health significantly affects their ability to learn. The tragic events at Sandy Hook in December of 2012 put a special focus on children's mental health and had a unique impact on the Greater Danbury region. In the wake of Sandy Hook, the Dept. of Children and Families was directed by the CT Legislature to develop a children's mental health plan for the state by October of 2014, with an emphasis on early identification and intervention. In the Greater Danbury region, we have seen heightened awareness and greater attention and resources dedicated to this crucial issue.

Secondary Social, Emotional and Behavioral Health Indicators

Number of PreK to Grade 3 In-School and Out-of-School Suspensions and Expulsions	70 ¹
Number of Danbury Students in Special Education Due to Emotional Disturbance	61 ¹

¹ CT State Dept. of Education, 2011-2012

² CT State Dept. of Education Strategic School Profiles, 2011-2012

New in the past year...

- Over the past year, 33 School Readiness Teachers, 4 Head Start personnel, and 4 Danbury School District personnel were trained in the **Solid Ground Program**, which helps preschool staff work with children with challenging social/emotional issues. The program is based on the Pyramid Approach and was developed by Wheelock College's Aspire Institute. As a result, classrooms are calmer, children are better able to learn, and there are fewer expulsions and referrals to special education. Danbury's Kindergarten Teachers will receive the training next year.
- Family and Children's Aid continues to serve families who have children with behavioral health issues through **Child First**, a home visitation program designed to reduce "toxic stress" home environments. Twenty-two families are currently being served in Danbury by two teams.
- The **Family Focus Partnership of Greater Danbury** has been revitalized and meets monthly. It brings together providers of behavioral health services and parents to solve problems related to children's mental and behavioral health and share resources and information.



Early Literacy Supports and Services in Danbury

Danbury's Promise for Children Partnership is a member of the **Campaign for Grade Level Reading**. The premise of the campaign is that reading proficiently by the end of third grade is a key predictor of high school graduation and career success. Because half of the school achievement gap starts before kindergarten, it's important to promote reading in the home and early literacy in preschool classrooms. The programs highlighted on this page help to foster early literacy.

Imagination Library

Imagination Library is a free book program through the United Way of Western Connecticut that provides a book in the mail to every registered child from birth to age 5. Children enrolled at birth will receive 60 books before they enter kindergarten.

Imagination Library Facts:

Number of children currently enrolled in Danbury	1,728
Number of books mailed in Fiscal Year 2013-2014	20,385
Total children served	3,877
Total books delivered since program began in 2008	91,062

Reach Out and Read

Reach Out and Read works with medical providers to promote early literacy and school readiness in medical exam rooms by giving books to children and advice to parents about the importance of reading aloud.

Reach Out and Read Danbury Enrollment :

Community Health Center of Danbury (Delay Street)	297
Danbury Hospital Pediatric Health Center	617
Samaritan Health Center	87
Total	1,001

Family Learning Center

Operated by the Danbury Public Schools, the Family Learning Center provides free resources and programs to Danbury families to promote literacy and prepare children for kindergarten.

Family Learning Center Facts:

Newly enrolled families in the 2013-14 school year	188
Total children served	504
Hours of playgroups offered weekly	12
Total families served since 2010	417

Lee y serás

Lee y serás is a 6-week family literacy program that empowers and supports Latino parents as their children's first teachers and gives them the tools they need to create literacy-rich home environments. Danbury Children First has been conducting Lee y serás since 2006.

Lee y serás Facts:

Number of parents attending in 2013-2014 school year	37
Total children served in 2013-2014	63
Total graduates of program since 2006	297

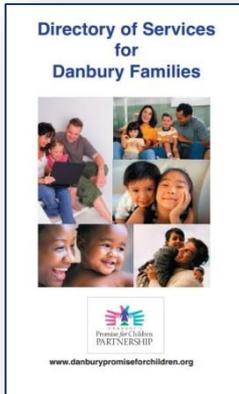
Ready, Set, Let's Read!

Ready, Set, Let's Read! is an initiative of the United Way of Western Connecticut in partnership with local school readiness preschool sites in which volunteers read to children once a week.

Ready, Set, Let's Read!

Number of volunteer readers	22
Total children served in 2013-2014	360
Books distributed to children in classrooms	320

Directory of Services for Danbury Families



The Directory of Services for Danbury Families is available in both English and Spanish and provides information about health care, child care, and family support services. The Directory also provides contact information for providers of basic needs services, the Danbury Public Schools, and City of Danbury services. An online version, with live links to agency websites is available at www.danburypromiseforchildren.org.

Resources for New Parents in Danbury



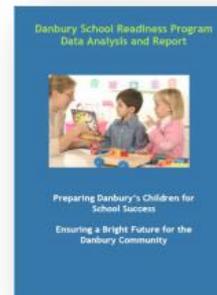
This one-page sheet provides at-a-glance information for parents who have just had a baby. Contact information for health insurance, childcare resources, home visitation services, playgroups, support groups, and free books and literacy resources are provided in both English and Spanish. The sheet can be downloaded from www.danburypromiseforchildren.org.

Support and Information on Facebook



If you "like" Danbury's Promise for Children Partnership on Facebook, you'll receive a wealth of information about community events, activities, and resources for families with young children. You'll also get useful parenting tips and the latest research on early brain development and the importance of early childhood care and education.

School Readiness Data Report



Working together, the Danbury School Readiness Council and Danbury's Promise for Children Partnership published a groundbreaking report that shows how School Readiness Programs are closing the Achievement Gap in Danbury. The full report is available at www.danburypromiseforchildren.org, under "Strategies."

For more information about Danbury's Promise for Children Partnership and to find out more about our Strategic Plan to improve the lives of Danbury's young children visit: www.danburypromiseforchildren.org or visit us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/promise4children

