Impact In Action: EducateNYC®

Louis Bruschi is the principal of Staten Island’s P.S. 78 elementary school—one of United Way of New York City’s Attendance Intervention Dropout Prevention (AIDP) Community Schools.

P.S. 78 is located in a low-income community, on the same block as the largest housing project in Staten Island—where the average annual income is only $14,000. Neighborhoods of concentrated poverty, like this one, often create challenges for students both in and out of school, requiring school leadership to address needs beyond education—including mental and physical health, social and emotional learning, basic needs, and enrichment activities.

When Principal Bruschi first came to P.S. 78, they were in the bottom 20 schools—ranked 580 out of 600—in New York City for attendance in an elementary school. “There was a lot of
work to do around instruction, formal systems, and attendance improvement,” said Principal Bruschi. “None of which could happen without our partner’s support.”

Thankfully, UWNYC partnered with P.S. 78 through our EducateNYC program. As a result, students received the critical social/emotional resources, more families were welcomed into the school community, and students learned to make school a regular part of their day.

United Way’s EducateNYC helped with more than just attendance. It empowered students to get involved in spelling bees, robotics, and athletics. Through regular school assemblies, students are recognized for their improvements in attendance and participation in activities. “They now understand that when you go to school you can be acknowledged for other successes,” said Bruschi.

All of this helped change the culture of the school. Today, P.S. 78 has increased 180 ranks for elementary school attendance—moving from 580 to 400 across New York City—and continues to improve.

“My favorite part about being principal is morning arrival,” said Bruschi. “I get to shake the hands and see the smiles of each student as they walk into school every day.”

**Moving low-income New Yorkers from barely surviving to thriving.**

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