



Trying
together

Annual Report
2016-2018



*Supporting the work
of early childhood*

A man wearing a grey hoodie and a light-colored cap is sitting on the floor, focused on playing with a wooden train set on a table. The train set includes a yellow locomotive, a green passenger car, and various tracks and accessories. In the background, there are white lockers and a wooden chair. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

Vision

Trying Together envisions a future in which all caregivers feel valued.



Mission

Trying Together supports high-quality care and education for young children by providing advocacy, community resources, and professional growth opportunities for the needs and rights of children, their families, and the individuals who interact with them. Trying Together works regionally (in Southwestern Pennsylvania) and takes its expertise and models to statewide and national audiences.



A Message From the Executive Director



Dear Caregiver,
In case no one has said so lately, ‘thank you’. As someone who interacts with young children regularly, you may not feel like your efforts matter... trust me, they do. Research

continues to show that high-quality early learning experiences make a difference in the lives of young children now, and into the future.

This is why Trying Together exists.

When we started our work in 1963 as The Pittsburgh Area Preschool Association (P.A.P.A.), we were a small, but committed group of volunteers who cared about young children and wanted to do the right things for them. In 1983, we affiliated with The National Association for The Education of Young Children (NAEYC) to better support early childhood education professionals and became The Pittsburgh Association for The Education of Young Children (PAEYC). In the early 2000s, we moved from a volunteer-effort to a paid staff-model and expanded our footprint to include on-the-ground support for surrounding communities.

Throughout the 2010s, we have continued to expand our advocacy, community resources, and professional growth opportunities for the needs and rights of children, their families, and the adults who interact with them. In 2017, we finalized a five-year Strategic Roadmap that will guide our work on behalf of young children and their caregivers into 2022. In early 2018, our organization rebranded from PAEYC to a new logo and the name Trying Together.

As I reflect on all that has changed, particularly in the last two years, I am encouraged by what has stood the test of time: our commitment to *supporting the work of early childhood*.

By collaborating with you, we will create a future in which caregivers feel valued, children have access to high-quality early learning environments, and families have the resources they need to support their children’s early learning experiences.

I look forward to working together with you to make this vision a reality for all young children and their caregivers.

Like Fred Rogers said, “...trying together, just about anything can be possible.”

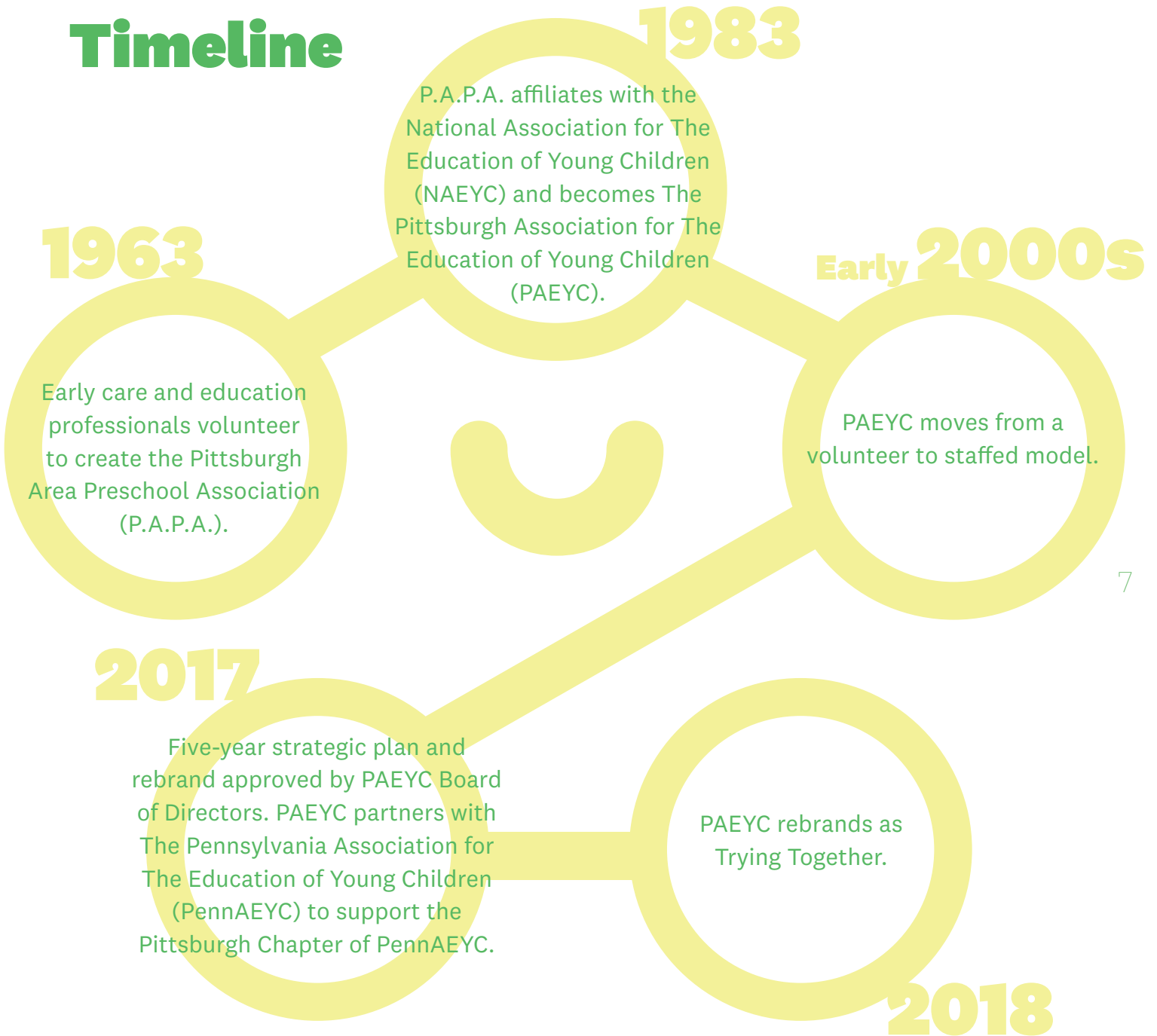
Trying Together,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cara Ciminillo". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional but personal style.

Cara Ciminillo EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Timeline



Strategic Roadmap

In late 2016, Trying Together (at the time PAEYC) and other affiliates of The National Association for The Education of Young Children (NAEYC) were presented with several options for continued engagement.

A decision was made that Trying Together would partner with The Pennsylvania Association for The Education of Young Children (PennAEYC) to support the Pittsburgh Chapter of PennAEYC and continue leading advocacy efforts in the southwestern region of the state. PennAEYC would therefore serve as the statewide NAEYC affiliate, providing a daily presence in Harrisburg on behalf of Trying Together and the other 'AEYCs' to strengthen the voice of the early childhood field and enable greater coordination throughout the Commonwealth.

In 2017, LaPiana Consulting guided the Board of Directors and staff through a strategic planning process in which they reflected on the organization's history and growth. The initial problem the organization sought to solve, the progress made, and what more needed to be done were all considered. With a refined mission and revised vision statement, four strategic goals for the organization were identified.

Engage, support,
and develop
early childhood
educators

Trying Together Strategic Goals 2018–2022

- A national leader offering its expertise in coordinating and connecting systems at the neighborhood, local, and regional levels to support early childhood development and early learning.
- The premier provider of in-person and online professional growth opportunities for home, center, and school-based professionals to ensure that every child has access to high-quality early childhood and early learning experiences.
- A 'go to source' for families to aid them in making well-informed decisions regarding their child's early experiences.
- An expert policy resource in Western Pennsylvania and a leading advocate for high-quality early care and education in the state, mobilizing its network to take action on issues important to young children and their families.

2
Educate and
inform families
and community
members

3
Create and
connect systems

4
Inform and
influence
policy



Rebrand

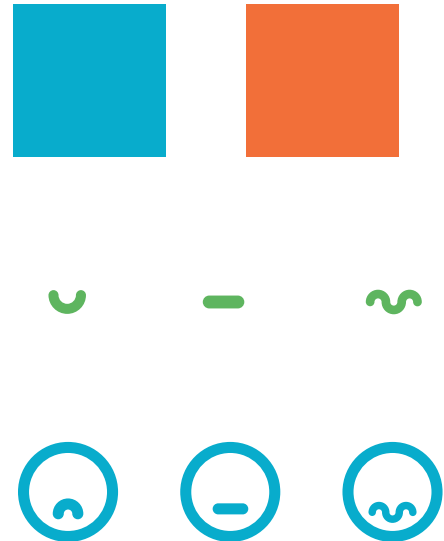
With the strategic plan in place, the organization reflected on its growth over the last 55 years, the strengths and challenges in the PAEYC name and logo, and changes in the structure of NAEYC. In consideration of these factors, a decision was made to rebrand to a name that more accurately depicted the organization and its work. Utilizing Little Kelpie, a communication design studio, multiple stakeholders were consulted to identify a new name and logo.

Inspiration for the name came from something Fred Rogers wrote in a column published on January 27, 1986 in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

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“We need to remember that children are trying too—trying to understand their feelings and their world, trying to please the people they love, trying to grow. When grownups and children are trying together, just about anything can be possible.”

The quote acknowledges the hard work that goes into being a caregiver for young children, and how hard those same children are working to develop and learn.





On January 29, 2018, PAEYC officially rebranded its name and logo to Trying Together.

Trying

/triiNG/

verb

1. making an attempt or effort to do something.
2. attempting to achieve or attain.
3. using, testing, or doing (something new or different) in order to see if it is suitable, effective, or pleasant.

synonyms: attempt, endeavor, venture, make an effort, exert oneself, strive, do one's best, do one's utmost, move heaven and earth, undertake, aim, take it upon oneself, have a go, give it one's best shot, bend over backwards, bust a gut, do one's damndest, pull out all the stops, go all out, knock oneself out.

Together

/tə'geTHər/

adverb

1. with or in proximity to another person or people.
2. in combination; collectively.
3. into companionship or close association.

synonyms: with each other, in conjunction, jointly, in cooperation, in collaboration, in partnership, in combination, in league, in tandem, side by side, hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder, cheek by jowl, in collusion, hand in glove, in cahoots.



Advocacy

Local, state, and federal government policies significantly affect how early care and education are funded, provided, and supported. These policies in turn impact the ability of communities to respond to the needs and rights of young children, their families, and the caregivers who interact with them. Trying Together regularly engages with policymakers to ensure they understand the importance of high-quality early care and education and the barriers to access and affordability that exist.

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LOCAL

Fellowship

Helping the early education field use its voice to effectively advocate on behalf of themselves, the children they care for and educate, and the families they serve has long been part of the mission at Trying Together.

Over a nine month period in 2017, more than 20 Fellows participated in the first Early Childhood Advocacy Fellowship program. Through monthly interactive workshops, they tackled topics such as *ECE Structures and Systems* and *A History of ECE Advocacy*. Through the Fellowship, these early care and education professionals developed skills and strategies to engage and educate policy stakeholders.

Early Childhood Education Task-Force

City of Pittsburgh Mayor William Peduto convened a group of diverse stakeholders who would work to develop an implementation plan for pre-k expansion.

As a member of the Early Childhood Education Task Force, Trying Together viewed information from other city pre-k expansions through a regional lens. Through research, Trying Together developed a comprehensive overview entitled, *A Review of Pre-Kindergarten Expansion in U.S. Cities*. The report highlighted opportunities, identified potential challenges, and provided recommendations for Pittsburgh to consider. The report is being used to inform the approach and process the City takes in moving forward to execute its pre-k expansion plans.



Research

As a policy expert in Western Pennsylvania, Trying Together relentlessly pursues available outcomes-based research to guide its mobilization efforts. In addition to the, *A Review of Pre-Kindergarten Expansion in U.S. Cities* report, the Advocacy team released its first white papers in spring and summer 2018.

Kindergarten Transition highlights successful regional and national efforts by child care centers, Head Start and pre-k teachers, and school districts to support young children and families in this critical milestone and provides researched recommendations and activities that other schools and districts can model. *Advance Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP): How Young Children Learn* was written to provide an overview on the framework and philosophy of DAP. A supporting one-page guide was also created so non-professional caregivers could learn strategies that support positive interactions with the young children in their lives.



STATE

Phone2Action

Through continued partnership with PennAEYC, Trying Together introduced a new advocacy tool called Phone2Action at the *Month of The Young Child Annual Celebration Dinner* in 2017.

A digital platform, Phone2Action allows individuals to sign-up for timely public policy alerts via e-mail or text. In one year, more than 600 advocates registered to take action and contact their elected officials to raise their voices for young children and families. Statewide, all AEYC Chapters are utilizing Phone2Action so policymakers throughout the Commonwealth receive consistent asks for early childhood.

Campaigns

Home visiting programs such as Early Head Start and the Nurse Family Partnership help meet the needs of at-risk infants, toddlers, young children, and their families through voluntary, evidence-based home visiting.

In 2017, Trying Together joined the Early Learning Pennsylvania (ELPA) Home Visiting Workgroup and collaborated on launching the *Childhood Begins At Home Campaign* to advocate for increased funding. Trying Together was also instrumental in the formation of a child care sub-committee within the larger ELPA

structure. This group is working on budget advocacy, responding to the state’s plan for Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds, and building towards larger plans to address issues of affordability, quality, and the child care workforce.

The Pre-K for PA campaign works to ensure that every child in Pennsylvania enters kindergarten ready to succeed. Since the Campaign launched in 2014, more than 130 Leadership Council members, 600 supporting organizations, and 16,000 grasstops advocates have joined the cause along with Trying Together and other principal partners. In the last two state budgets, Pennsylvania legislators approved increased

investments totalling: \$55 million dollars for pre-k, \$26.8 million for child care services, and \$11.2 million for home visiting.

During legislative meetings, Trying Together and its advocates discussed pre-k 90%, child care 77%, and home visiting 55% of the time. As a result of these meetings, policymakers agreed to 74% of Trying Together’s “asks”.

IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

			<p>11.2 million dollars for home visiting</p>
<p>72 capitol meetings with state legislators</p>	<p>45 in-district visits with state legislators</p>	<p>33 in-district tours with state and local elected officials</p>	<p>26.8 million dollars for child care services</p>
<p>22 voter registration and education events</p>	<p>21 inaugural Early Childhood Advocacy Fellows</p>	<p>20 meetings with city, school board, and local elected officials</p>	<p>55 million dollars for pre-k</p>

Community Resources

Trying Together has always supported families indirectly through advocacy and professional development for early care and education professionals to improve the quality of early learning. Through its Strategic Plan, Trying Together seeks to become a ‘go-to’ source for families to aid them in making well-informed decisions about their children’s early learning experiences. Through its presence in the Homewood neighborhood of Pittsburgh, Trying Together is taking a more comprehensive approach to improving early learning quality in the community by expanding services to all caregivers of young children including parents and family members.

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Families

In January 2016, Trying Together became the lead organization for Homewood-Brushton Family Support Center. Established in 1992 as one of the first four in Allegheny County, Homewood-Brushton Family Support continues to be an essential community resource. Utilizing programs and strategies that facilitate confidence and leadership skills-building, the Center assists parents by helping them to develop both so they can provide their children with caring and responsive interactions.

In late 2018, the Center will institute *The Family Check-Up* model to interact with caregivers. This family-centered approach aims to further strengthen

parenting practices thus positively affecting children’s behavior. With more than 20 years of research, positive outcomes have been documented for children, adolescents, and parents who participate in the program. Additionally, the Center hosts physicians from Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC weekly for *Community Check-Up*, providing free exams to family members 21 and under.

Early Childhood Education Providers

At The Homewood Early Learning Hub (a community resource of Trying Together), home-based early care and education professionals and families receive support through professional development and

programs so they can provide high-quality early learning experiences for the children in their care.

Utilizing *Everyday Interactions Matter* or *EIM* (a strengths-based model that supports early childhood professionals in learning and growing from their own practice), the Hub focuses on the everyday interactions between these adults and children.

Through professional growth opportunities such as *Come Play!* and family programs like, *Play Pop Ins* and *Raising Readers Together Club*, the Hub incorporates the *EIM* philosophy. The Hub consistently provides professional development to 20+ home- and center-based providers in the community and engages with more than 100 returning families through its programming annually.



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Playful Pittsburgh Collaborative

Founded in partnership with and facilitated through Trying Together, the Playful Pittsburgh Collaborative is a group of organizations dedicated to advancing the importance of play in the lives of children, families, and communities in the Pittsburgh region.

In fall 2017, the Playful Pittsburgh Collaborative hired its first full-time Director.

Working with the Remake Learning network and Trying Together, the Playful Pittsburgh Collaborative supported the development of the, *If Kids Built a City Report* in spring 2018. The report provides an overview of play spaces in the City and the ways that many Collaborative member organizations are maximizing them to build play awareness. Remake Learning also provided one of 66, *Great Remake* grants to the Collaborative for, *PLAY for All*. These funds will support activities that demonstrate the importance of play, highlight play facts, and connect participants to “PLAYers” who are also committed to building awareness for play.

By the end of summer 2018, the Elizabeth Street Parklet in Hazelwood will be reenvisioned as a green space for local youth to use as a venue for art, poetry, and music. Part of a larger effort known as the Hazelwood Play Trail, the completion of the Parklet will bring the Trail one step closer to its vision.





Professional Growth Opportunities

provided more than
1,800
hours of professional development

Trying Together is committed to supporting and valuing early care and education professionals. Support is provided through professional growth opportunities offered in person and online, shared services, and coaching and mentoring models. While Trying Together has worked primarily with home and center-based educators in the past, it aims to expand engagement with home visitors and school-based providers as part of its strategic goals through 2022.

Professional Development

Customized professional development offerings are targeted to the goals, interests, and needs of individuals, centers, and schools. In fiscal years 2017 and 2018, Trying Together provided more than 1,800 hours of professional development through a combination of contracts, grants, and innovative conferences.

Identifying and sharing resources such as websites, journal articles, early childhood education trends, and new research helps meet the needs of early childhood educators. In 2018, Trying Together along with its sister PennAEYC chapter First Up and statewide affiliate PennAEYC hosted the first-ever Pennsylvania Shared Service Conference in Harrisburg for nearly 100 early

childhood professionals. Attendees were able to connect with colleagues and learn about opportunities to build infrastructure, raise quality, and save time and money for their programs.

Coaching and mentoring services support awareness and strengthening of learning processes and professional practices for individuals and programs. In 2016, Trying Together broadened its relationship with Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) and Carlow University to formalize arrangements for the provision of credit hours which may articulate into a professional certificate, credential, or degree in early childhood. To date, more than 75 early care and education professionals have received intensive coaching and mentoring services from Trying Together.



Teacher Certification

In Pennsylvania, Pre-K Counts (state funded pre-k) teachers are required upon hiring to have a Level I teaching certificate after which they have six years to obtain a Pennsylvania Level II teacher certification.

To obtain Level II certification, teachers must meet several criteria including:

- Teach in Pennsylvania on a Level 1 certificate (for three to six years).
- Receive six satisfactory teacher evaluations on a Level I certificate.
- Earn 24 post-Baccalaureate credits.
- Obtain six credits associated with the teacher's area(s) of certification.
- Complete a Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) approved Induction program.

For seven years, Trying Together has provided an Induction program with qualified and experienced mentors and professional development.

Designed specifically for Level I Early Childhood Education certified teachers in Allegheny and surrounding counties, Trying Together's Induction program consists of: 12 hours with a mentor, 18 hours of professional development, and is provided to teachers in Pre-K Counts classrooms. In the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 school years, Trying Together provided the Induction program for 26 Level I teachers.

Trying Together also provides evaluators with early childhood experience that meet PDE requirements for Level I and Level II Early Childhood Education certified teachers in Allegheny and surrounding counties. In the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 school years, Trying Together conducted over 200 evaluations for Level I teachers and 40 evaluations for Level II teachers.

Trying Together provided
the Induction program for

26
Level I
teachers.

20





Message From Me

Message from Me is a digital tool which enables young children to better communicate their daytime activities in early care and education settings with their families. Developed by the CREATE Lab at Carnegie Mellon University, Trying Together has exclusively provided professional development instruction for its use in child care centers and schools to 1,000 early care and education professionals who now utilize this technology. As a result, 20,000 children have consistently communicated with their families about their activities at child care and school since *Message From Me* launched in 2012.

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Trying Together has also played a critical role in connecting this work with a national audience. In 2017, the CREATE Lab and Trying Together began marketing the tool outside of Western Pennsylvania. Currently, *Message From Me* is now being used in four states including Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Utah, and Georgia. With funding from PNC Grow Up Great, plans for a sustainable scale-up include developing an Advisory Board to bring *Message From Me* to approximately 40 additional PNC markets nationwide beginning in 2019.



20,000

children have consistently
communicated with their families

UnConference

12

UnConferences were
made possible by
PNC Grow Up Great

More than

40

corporate and
non-profits have
partnered

More than

1,100

early childhood
professionals
attended

Since 2013 Trying Together has hosted innovative, hands-on professional growth opportunities around particular themes as part of the *UnConference* series.

The 12 *UnConferences* were made possible by PNC Grow Up Great. More than 40 corporate and non-profits have partnered and more than 1,100 early childhood professionals have attended. Up to six (6) Pennsylvania Quality Assistance System (PQAS) hours are provided at each *UnConference*.

FISCAL YEAR 2017

Get Dirty!

September 24, 2016

Keynote Speaker: Michelle King, Learner, Teacher, & Instigator

“I plan to incorporate many natural/environment-based activities and explorations for my two-year-old group of children.”

GET DIRTY! ATTENDEE

Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood

October 22, 2016

Keynote Speakers: Diana Bucco, The Buhl Foundation and Dr. Junlei Li, Fred Rogers Center

“Dr. Li’s talk was inspiring as always. We have shared info from his talk with parents, as well as Fred Rogers’ goals for children.”

MISTER ROGERS’ NEIGHBORHOOD ATTENDEE

Fred Rogers—The Friend, Teacher, Advocate

October 21, 2016

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Junlei Li, Fred Rogers Center

“With a non-english speaking student I used the watch, learn, and repeat method shown in the video during the welcome speech.”

**FRED ROGERS—THE FRIEND, TEACHER
ADVOCATE ATTENDEE**

Maker Tots

May 20, 2017

Keynote Speaker: Maureen Frew, Maker Education Specialist, Avonworth School District and Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh

“I implemented coding with my kids using the PBS Kids app. They absolutely loved creating the code and watching their creations come to life.”

MAKER TOTS ATTENDEE

FISCAL YEAR 2018

Mindfulness

August 10, 2017

Keynote Speaker: Patricia Smith,
Compassion Fatigue Expert

“I used several of the yoga strategies to bring the students’ attention to the present and I’ve implemented a relaxing forest in my classroom. We feel happier in our space and more attentive.”

MINDFULNESS ATTENDEE

Friedberg-Segel Early Literacy featuring Hervé Tullet

October 14, 2017

Keynote Speaker: Hervé Tullet, Children’s Artist and Author

“I enjoyed Hervé Tullet’s strategy of ‘reading’ a book (any book, not only his) using sounds, expression, and gestures instead of words. I have used this strategy several times, with engaged responses from young children.”

FRIEDBERG-SEGEL EARLY LITERACY ATTENDEE

Get Dirty!

September 22, 2017

Keynote Speaker: Marijke Hecht, PhD student of Learning Sciences and Policy at University of Pittsburgh School of Education and graduate student fellow of the Center for Urban Education

“I have incorporated more outdoor activity and space into our current after-school programming. The kids love the opportunity to be outside and participate in both structured and unstructured activity.”

GET DIRTY! ATTENDEE





Hi5! Transition to Kindergarten



The Hi5! Transition to Kindergarten campaign is a collaboration of the Allegheny Intermediate Unit, Trying Together, and United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania.

The goals of the campaign are to engage all 43 public school districts in Allegheny County, provide best practices and support to these districts to develop and implement their own transition programs, and to build awareness on the importance of preparation and early registration for Kindergarten.

Trying Together supports the campaign by helping school district personnel identify and collaborate with early care and education providers in their district to plan and implement action plans to promote early registration and a smooth transition to Kindergarten for children and families.

There have been several advancements in the campaign in the last two years including the creation

of a transition team in each Allegheny County school district consisting of teachers, school administrators, parents, community partners, and early childhood educators. In fall 2017, Hi5! launched its first monthly newsletter produced by Trying Together to highlight best practices from school districts in Allegheny County and share professional development opportunities. In the fall of 2017 and spring of 2018, the Leadership team coordinated roundtable discussions for school district transition teams. Trying Together also released a white paper (*Kindergarten Transition*) which was exclusively shared with the Hi5! network prior to being released to the public.

As a result of the
Hi5! campaign,

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Allegheny County school districts
reported an all-time high
for on-time registration at

97%

for the 2017-2018 school year.



Trying Together Staff Representation

Through their work, Trying Together staff provide their expertise on boards and committees to support early childhood development and learning locally, regionally, and statewide.

REGIONAL REPRESENTATION



- Allegheny County Children, Youth and Family Advisory Board
- Allegheny Partners for Out-Of-School Time (APOST)
- Best Books for Babies Workgroup
- Bridges to Success for Young Homeless Children
- Carnegie Science Center STEM Advisory Board
- City Council Women's Caucus Child Care Sub-Committee
- Community College of Allegheny County ECD/EDU Advisory Board
- Digital Media and Learning Affinity Group of Remake Learning
- ECE Affinity Group of Remake Learning
- Greater Hazelwood Community Collaborative
- Hi5! Transition from Pre-k to Kindergarten Teams
- Homeless Initiative
- Kidsburgh Advisory
- Mayor's Blue Ribbon Panel on Early Childhood Education
- National League of Cities
- One North Side
- Project LAUNCH Early Childhood Mental Health Workgroup
- Project LAUNCH Family Engagement Workgroup
- Remake Learning Council
- Southwest Regional Key Higher Education Board
- Southwest Regional Key Leadership Council
- The Homewood Community Engagement Center Advisory Council
- Western Pennsylvania Early Literacy Team
- Westmoreland College ECE Advisory Council
- Westmoreland ECE Roundtable

STATEWIDE REPRESENTATION

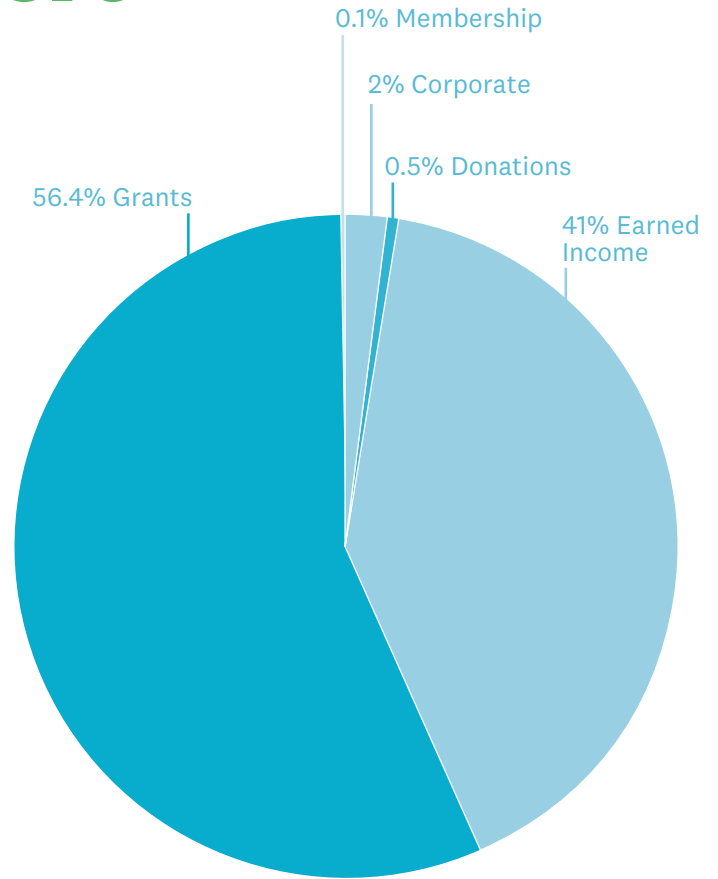
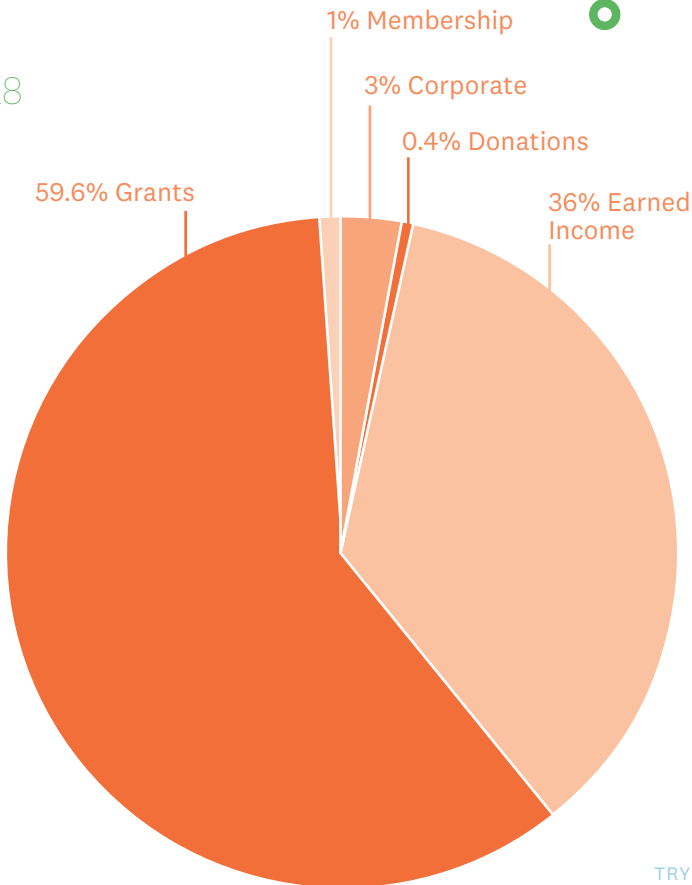
- BUILD Initiative
- Council of Chief State Officers, Family Engagement Coalition Workgroup
- Early Learning Council (ELC)
- Early Learning PA Child Care Committee
- Early Learning PA Childhood Begins at Home Campaign
- Early Learning PA Pre-K for PA Campaign
- Keystone STARS Stakeholders Group
- OCDEL Family Child Care Work Group
- PENN SACCA
- Pre-K Counts/Head Start Supplemental Advisory Committee
- STARS Revisioning Think Tank
- School Age Child Care Advisory Committee



Revenue & Support

FY 2017

28



FY 2018





Philanthropic Support

Pittsburgh is fortunate to have a dedicated and supportive corporate and foundation community.

Through the generosity of the following funders, Trying Together was able to support high-quality early learning experiences for young children throughout Southwestern Pennsylvania from 2016–2018.

HILLMAN FOUNDATION

McAULEY MINISTRIES

PNC GROW UP GREAT



THE BUHL FOUNDATION

THE GRABLE FOUNDATION

THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS

THE PITTSBURGH FOUNDATION

THE RICHARD KING MELLON FOUNDATION

UNITED WAY OF SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

WILLIAM PENN FOUNDATION



WOMEN AND GIRLS FOUNDATION OF SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA



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Best wishes and thanks to Board of Directors member Dr. Chuck Herring and Executive Committee members Melissa A. Kelley (Vice President) and Anne Sekula (President) whose terms ended in 2018.

And, for their tireless efforts on behalf of young children, we would like to thank ALL of our Board of Directors and staff without whom these achievements would not be possible.

Trying together



Supporting the work of early childhood

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Trying Together is
pleased to partner
with PennAEYC to
support the Pittsburgh
Chapter of PennAEYC.