



Trying
together

2018–2022

**Trying Together Strategy Roadmap:
Midway Report**

Never has there been a better example for why Trying Together embarked on real-time strategic planning, than these past couple years. As the organization is acutely

aware of how quickly the world is changing and the importance of having charted a long-term direction with the flexibility to respond rapidly, Trying Together now finds itself at the midway point of this journey.

Since these strategic goals are being prioritized through 2022, Trying Together has highlighted within this midway report its success in meeting these, and others that require continued perseverance and reconsideration.



Background

Since launching its Strategic Roadmap in 2018, Trying Together has developed a community within its organization that is reflective of the diverse communities it serves and believes it has a responsibility to actively work to eliminate racism and address the inequities in systems. Unfortunately, the roots of racism are deep, so Trying Together also recognizes that this work will not end this year or the next; undoing systemic racism is something that will need to be actively attended to as individuals and as an organization for years to come. Now with an explicit focus on justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout its work, Trying Together calls upon all caregivers, community members, and early childhood educators to embrace the responsibility to ensure that each child and family is safe from racism and discrimination, and has equitable opportunities to thrive.

Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Statement

Trying Together envisions a future in which all caregivers of young children feel valued for their work. When we inspire belonging among caregivers, we inspire belonging within them. Our inclusive approach to advocacy, community resources, and professional growth opportunities strives to place diversity, equity, and racial justice at the core of everything we do. We encourage our team, our partners, and our communities to interact compassionately and honor the range of cultures,

ideas, and identities that root us. Young children develop and learn by example; this means that children whose early learning environments reflect just actions, equitable opportunities, diverse representation, and inclusive approaches experience healthier interactions and build relationships that enable them to thrive.

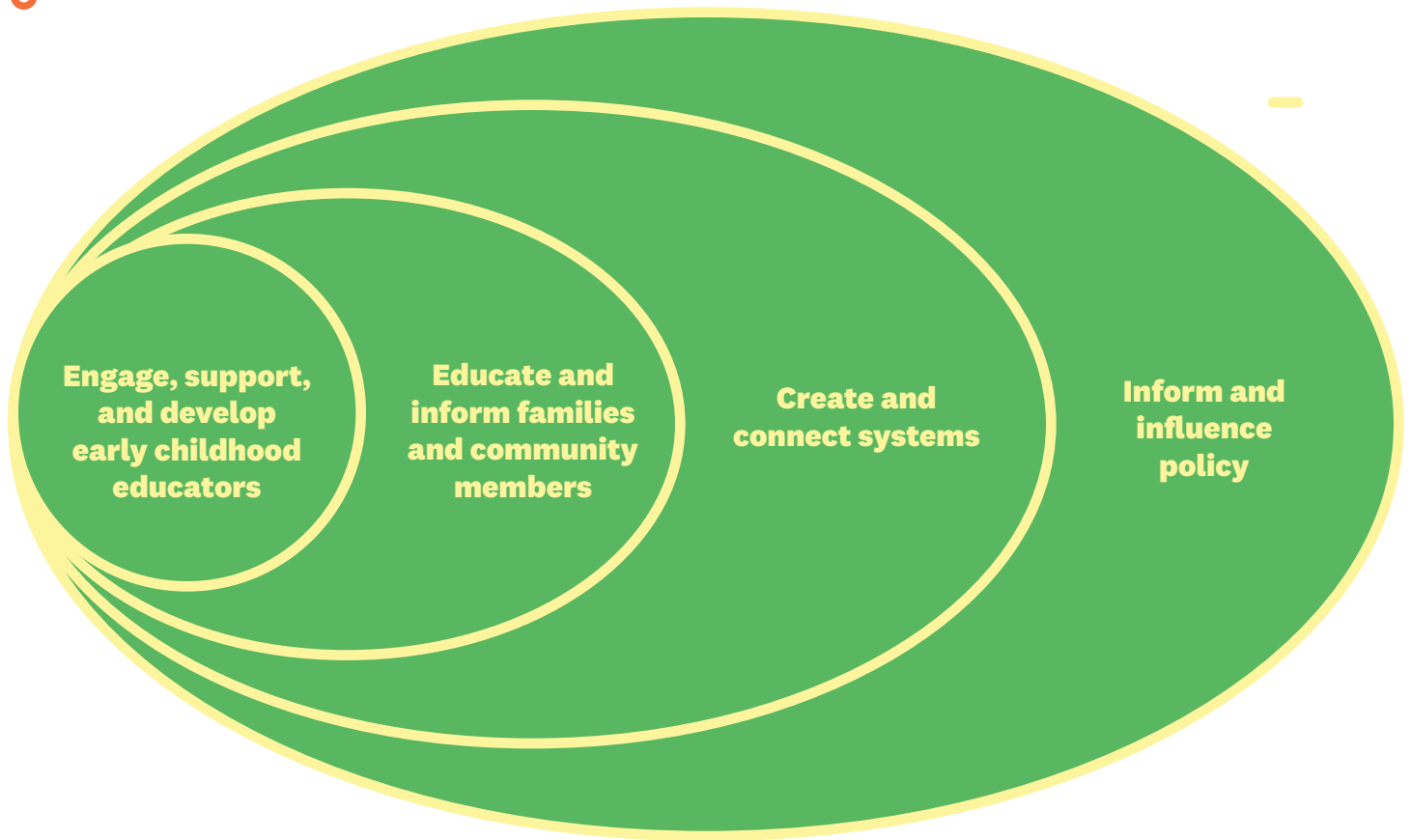


A green-tinted photograph of a group of people working together at a table. In the foreground, a woman with long dark hair is focused on a task, possibly using a glue stick. To her right, a man with curly hair and a beard is also working. The background shows other people, slightly out of focus, suggesting a collaborative workshop or meeting environment. The overall mood is one of teamwork and productivity.

*“Our capacity to care
for someone else is rooted
in our self-worth.”*

Fred Rogers

Organizational & Programmatic Strategies



Trying Together's organizational strategy catalyzes and delivers a range of solutions to influence and improve early childhood care and education while its programmatic strategies connect and build upon one another to achieve this strategy. To support the awareness, measurement, and ultimate achievement of these strategies, Trying Together has significantly invested in its data and communications.

Through the hiring of additional staff, the implementation of a customer relationship management system, expanded presence on social media, and the use of a texting platform, Trying Together is poised to continue growing its audiences to serve more children, families, and educators.

Create and Connect Systems

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 Homewood Early Learning Hub & Family Center

- In 2020, Trying Together merged the operations at the Homewood-Brushton Family Center and The Homewood Early Learning Hub under one roof at 7219 Kelly Street. This change mirrors Pennsylvania's move to consolidate educator- and family-serving programs to better support children and their caregivers. The Hub & Family Center has served hundreds of children, families, center-, family- and home-based early learning programs, and relative-providers since opening its doors in 2013.

One Northside

- The One Northside initiative shares the vision that all of its eighteen neighborhoods' children are nurtured, and that all their families have access to high-quality early learning experiences. As a supporting organization of this initiative, Trying Together works collaboratively with the center- and home- based early learning programs to support professional growth for early educators, and their shared service alliance. Additionally, Trying Together also partners with Northside families, Pittsburgh Public Schools, and community groups to foster positive transitions from early learning programs to Kindergarten including increased on-time registration.


Recess Advocacy Team Toolkit

- Co-led by Trying Together and Playful Pittsburgh Collaborative, the Recess Advocacy Team's mission is to: educate and advocate for the importance of recess; engage with students, families, and educators on recess experiences; and to engage stakeholders to support recess advocacy work. Integral to meeting this mission, the Team will release its Recess Advocacy Team Toolkit in April 2021. With this Toolkit, the Team will establish a resource for recess-related advocacy, policy, and practices for both families and educators.





Engage, Support, and Develop Early Childhood Educators

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.



Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) Region 5

- In spring of 2018, the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) announced that the state was moving towards a new service model called an Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC). This change was made to consolidate family and early learning provider services to better meet the needs of young children, their families, and the early childhood professionals who interact with them. Since summer 2019, the Allegheny County Department of Human Services (ACDHS) has partnered with OCDEL to support ELRC Region 5 in partnership with The Alliance for Infants and Toddlers to serve families, and with Trying Together to serve early educators. In this role, Trying Together provides quality support to more than 600 licensed early learning programs and hundreds of relative-providers throughout Allegheny County.
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Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential

- As the most widely recognized national credential in the early childhood field and a key stepping stone on the path to career advancement, the CDA Credential is based on a core set of competency standards that guide early learning professionals in their work to build on their professional experience and expertise. Achieving a CDA Credential enables early learning professionals to work in Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms, in addition to early learning programs across the United States. Trying Together now offers three CDA programs that include individualized support for professionals in Pennsylvania including the CDA Credential Preparation, Community of Practice, and Renewal programs.

Continuing Education Credits or Units (CECs) (CEUs)

- Since 2018, Trying Together has established articulation agreements with Carlow University and Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC.) Through these agreements, early educators may apply credits that they receive through Trying Together professional development offerings as CECs/CEUs at these institutions of higher education. Trying Together is also working to establish agreements with Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) and others throughout Pennsylvania.

Everyday Interactions Matter (EIM)

- EIM is a professional development initiative designed to help early childhood educators learn and grow from their own practice. In 2021, Trying Together will expand this offering outside Pennsylvania to infant-toddler teachers in Michigan and New York. EIM, the early childhood arm of Simple Interactions, was developed in partnership with Trying Together and the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media and is rooted in the work of Fred Rogers and Dr. Junlei Li.



Educate and Inform Families and Community Members

A 'go to source' for families to aid them in making well-informed decisions regarding their child's early experiences.


Allegheny Child Care

- From the COVID-19 crisis, Allegheny Child Care was a unique pilot project developed to support the care and education needs of families, and to assist providers with marketing and promoting their programs to fill vacant spots. Beginning in May 2020, families can now search availability at all early learning, after school, summer camp, and virtual programs in Allegheny County in real time with the finder tool. Trying Together developed this tool in partnership with the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, and Allegheny Partners for Out-of-School Time (APOST), an initiative of the United Way of Southwestern PA.









Developmentally Appropriate Parenting (DAP) Resource Series

- The DAP Resource Series is a family-focused content series developed by Trying Together as an effort to empower caregivers to create high-quality experiences at the earliest stages of their child's life. As of April 2021, Trying Together has developed digital and print content focused on six critical early childhood topics including: developmentally appropriate practice; childhood physical health; child care; early intervention; safety, and social-emotional development. Through 2022, Trying Together plans to focus on six additional topics.
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Family Resources

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- There have been numerous recent events which have deeply impacted the early learning environments and experiences of young children, their families, and their educators. In response to these challenges, Trying Together curated several thematic resource pages on its website to assist families in navigating the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19), anti-racism movement, and remote learning experiences with several hundred families having viewed these webpages in the last year. As current events may arise, Trying Together will continue to curate and develop resources to assist families.

Parenting Together Pathway


- The Parenting Together Pathway is a video-based learning series to provide high-quality information on early childhood development to parents and caregivers in Allegheny County and surrounding areas. Launched in April 2021, the Parenting Together Pathway provides families the opportunity to learn more about: brain development; play; interactions and relationships; technology; child care; and advocacy to better support their children's healthy growth. Additional videos will be released through 2021.
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Inform and Influence Policy

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.



Allegheny County Children's Fund Working Group

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- Trying Together served as part of the steering committee in 2018 for “Our kids. Our commitment.”, a ballot initiative that sought to change the way the county funds efforts that are proven to ensure the health and wellbeing of kids across the county. While the initiative did not pass, it elevated discussions of local and regional revenue streams for early childhood education. In March 2019, Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald convened a 26-member Allegheny County Children's Fund Working Group—including Trying Together—to look at the creation of a potential children's fund which recommended the creation of a new county department dedicated to children, as well as an annual investment of up to \$20 million to support high-quality learning and out-of-school-time programs. This department has since been created with the passing of the 2021 budget and a Director will be hired soon.
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Early Childhood League

- In January 2021, Trying Together launched the Early Childhood League project to empower families to work with local organizations and other community partners to advocate for positive changes in early learning policies that affect them and their children. In order to achieve improvements in local early learning environments, members of the League are receiving training from Trying Together staff and other experts. The League is currently developing tools and resources to support other families who wish to advocate for increased access to and the affordability of high-quality early learning programs.

Public Policy Agenda

- Every two years, Trying Together releases a new public policy agenda. The 2021-2022 Trying Together Public Policy Agenda released in March 2021 took into consideration the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which further exposed the fragility of and inequities in the child care system. To address these exacerbated constraints to high-quality early learning, the 2021-2022 agenda prioritizes fair, just, and inclusive policies and procedures that address the inequities impacting children, families, and educators.






Conclusion

In order to achieve this future, Trying Together must continuously consider the current barriers that impede caregivers from accessing Trying Together services. These may include hurdles such as ease of access, affordability, awareness of resources, and more. As the Board of Directors and staff continue working together to meet the organization's strategic goals, addressing these impediments will be prioritized.

These are not small tasks, and Trying Together does not claim to have all of the answers. But, by tackling together the challenges that early learning faces, it is possible to get closer to solutions. Trying Together looks forward to working together with its stakeholders to make this vision a reality as it continues to prioritize the goals listed above through 2022.

To view the 2018–2022 Trying Together Strategic Roadmap, visit tryingtogether.org.



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Trying together

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