

# Strategic Road map

Trying  
together

2023-2027







## A Message from Leadership

**60 years ago, a group of dedicated volunteers in Pittsburgh had a vision.**

They envisioned a future where young children had what they needed to thrive because the early care and education professionals who cared for and educated them were valued for the essential role they serve in supporting children's healthy development and learning.

Known as the Pittsburgh Area Preschool Association (PAPA) and Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children (PAEYC) over the years, this nonprofit 501 (c)(3) organization has grown to become what families and early educators in Southwestern Pennsylvania know today as Trying Together.

In 2018, thousands of early care and education professionals, families, and other individuals who know the importance of high-quality early childhood education joined this effort as Trying Together embarked on its first five-year strategic plan. While great progress was made in achieving those goals, the process did not come without challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic and racial injustice events throughout the United States. As early educators, Trying Together understands that the significance of these traumatic events on the social-emotional wellness of children and their caregivers will be felt for years to come. At the same time, the early childhood sector continues to struggle due to staffing shortages, increased expenses, and the lack



of adequate monetary investments by local state and federal governments necessary to achieve positive systems-level changes.

In the midst of these ongoing constraints, Trying Together remains committed to ensuring that the vision set forth six decades ago becomes a reality for all young children, families, and early educators.

In support of this effort, Trying Together has developed a new five-year strategic plan to guide this work through 2027. Outlined within this document are specific goals that address inequities within the early childhood system, and strategies to grow and support the organization's efforts to address them now and in the future. With continued support and collaboration, Trying Together will work to ensure the needs and rights of educators, families,

children, and communities continue to be prioritized to 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 so they can thrive.

Sincerely,

**Cara Ciminillo**

Trying Together, Executive Director

**Jan Sapatichne**

Trying Together, Associate Executive Director





## Vision

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



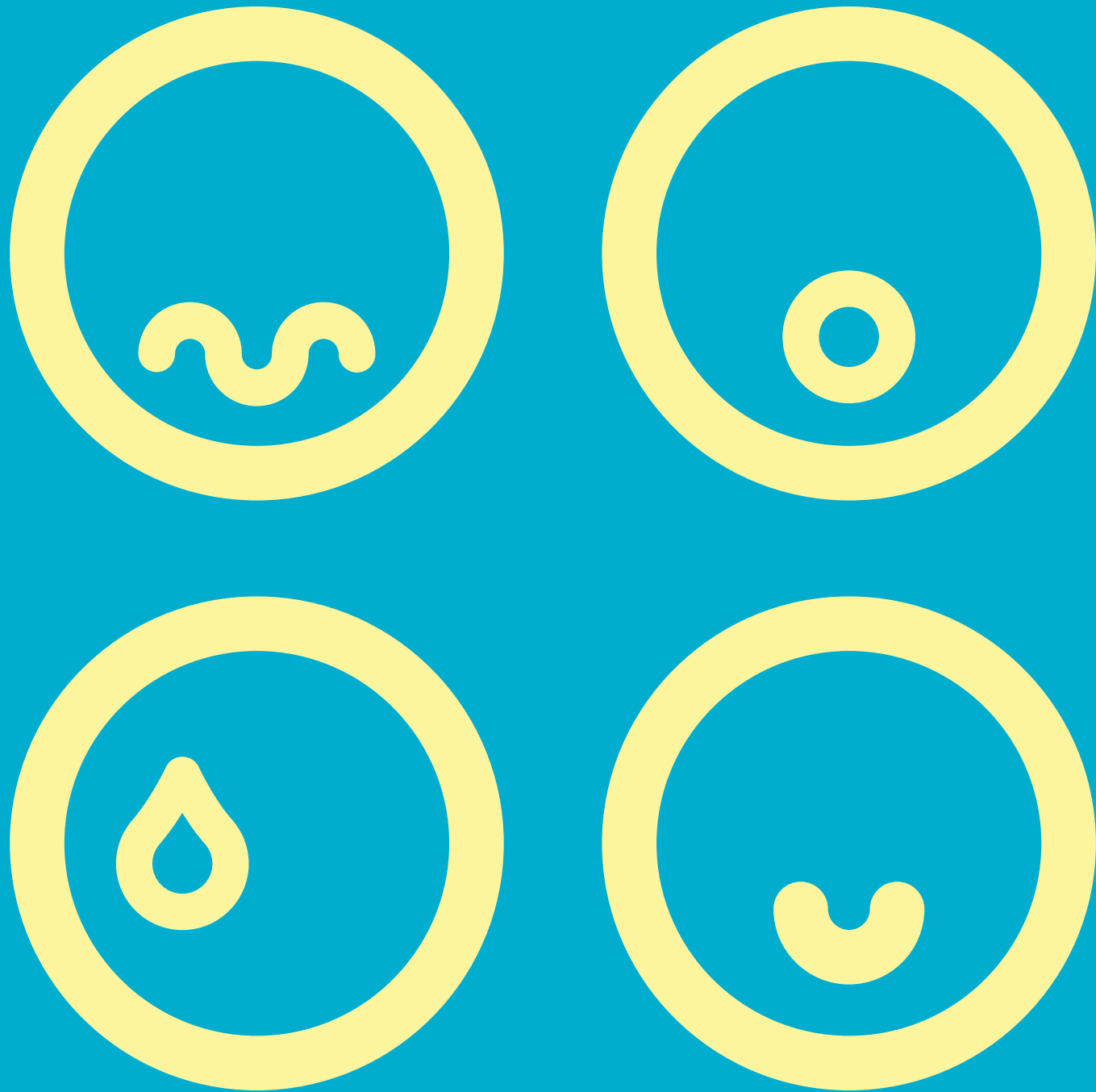
## Mission

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.

## Justice, Equity, Diversity & 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.





## 2023–2027 Strategy Goals

By 2027, Trying Together will sustain a culture of belonging within its staff and Board of Directors and with families, educators, and community partners that values curiosity and collaboration, and nurtures a community of accountability and continuous learning.





**To create this environment, Trying Together will:**

Recruit and retain staff (including leadership) and Board members who represent those the organization serves, and those who are most affected by early education policies.

Establish career pathways within the organization to nurture leadership development and succession planning.

Establish a process for common onboarding of staff and Board members that prioritizes inclusivity.

Provide regular growth opportunities for staff and Board members that inspire continuous personal learning and accountability for disrupting racism and extending a culture of belonging.

To learn more about how Trying Together is working to achieve these goals, visit [tryingtogether.org](https://tryingtogether.org).

**With this ecosystem in place, Trying Together will be:**

A trusted source for families to collaborate with regarding their child's early experiences.

An experienced facilitator of inclusive learning opportunities for educators that aims to ensure every child has access to high-quality early care and education.

A collaborative convener that coordinates and helps to connect systems to support early care and education.

A committed advocate mobilizing for policy change alongside communities to elevate the needs of young children, families, and educators for an equitable early care and education system.

An accountable nonprofit that prioritizes ethics when raising funds in support of its mission and provides transparent stewardship to its donors.



## History

Trying Together began in 1963 as the Pittsburgh Area Preschool Association (P.A.P.A.). In 1983, the organization officially affiliated with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and became the Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children (PAEYC). As a volunteer-driven membership organization for professionals in the field of early childhood learning and development, PAEYC coordinated annual conferences, provided networking and leadership opportunities, and served as a local voice for the field.



Thanks to the generous support of the Pittsburgh philanthropic community in the early 2000s, PAEYC was able to move from a volunteer model to a staffed model allowing for deepened and expanded advocacy and professional service to the region, which included neighborhood-based work with child care providers and families.



In late 2016, PAEYC and its sister “AEYCs” throughout the state were presented with several options for continued engagement with NAEYC. A decision was made that PAEYC would provide leadership for the Pittsburgh Chapter of PennAEYC and continue to lead regional advocacy efforts while PennAEYC provides a daily presence in Harrisburg. Collectively, this move strengthened the field’s voice and enabled greater coordination throughout the state.



Inspired by this Fred Rogers quote, PAEYC rebranded as Trying Together in early 2018:

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.

– Fred Rogers

Today, Trying Together has established a reputation for innovation, deep content knowledge, and the ability to collaborate with a variety of partners. Through its vision and mission, Trying Together remains committed to making sure all young children have high-quality early learning experiences.



# Strategic Goals In Context

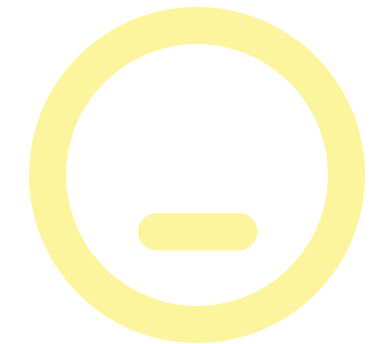
A trusted source for families to collaborate with regarding their child’s early experiences.

- Curate and develop resources, and increase their reach, for families with young children.
- Expand services and engagement of relative-, family-, and center-providers through The Homewood Early Learning Hub & Family Center.
- Develop and implement a plan to broaden the reach of the Buzzword early literacy initiative, specifically to Allegheny County Family Center families.



An experienced facilitator of inclusive learning opportunities for educators that aims to ensure every child has access to high-quality early care and education.

- Identify and develop individualized learning opportunities and supports specific to relative care providers, recognizing the important role they play in their related child’s life.
- Recruit and retain effective, qualified, and diverse early childhood educators.
- Cultivate the competencies of highly qualified, diverse early childhood educators.
- Develop a comprehensive strategy to communicate and promote learning opportunities.



A collaborative convener that coordinates and helps to connect systems to support early care and education.

- Increase access to and awareness of prenatal-to-three health, well-being, and education resources and services.
- Improve family and early learning provider understanding of and access to high-quality early intervention services.
- Develop a centralized process for maximizing access to publicly funded early learning in Allegheny County.
- Continue to cultivate collaborations that promote innovative approaches to incorporating play into education, health, and community development.





A committed advocate mobilizing for policy change alongside communities to elevate the needs of young children, families, and educators for an equitable early care and education system.

- Invest significantly in and strengthen the early care and education system.
- Elevate early childhood education as a profession.
- Focus on equitable and developmentally appropriate care and education.
- Build connections and leverage partnerships to support the health and wellness of families.



An accountable nonprofit that prioritizes ethics when raising funds in support of its mission and provides transparent stewardship to its donors.

- Develop a culture of philanthropy within the organization.
- Diversify funding through a range of solicitation activities.
- Build an ongoing cultivation process for new and existing donors.



## In Gratitude

Sincere thanks to the Trying Together Board of Directors, staff, and community partners for their collaboration and trust in the process of developing this strategy roadmap; to the thousands of young children, families, and early educators whom Trying Together advocates for and serves for giving us purpose; and to the organization's philanthropic supporters, without whom supporting the work of early childhood would not be possible.

## Conclusion

This roadmap is a framework for engaging in an ever-changing world. While the detailed implementation plan is not included in full, it will be evaluated and revised as needed. Biannual Community Reports will continue to be published to share progress on Trying Together's goals.

If you would like to partner together with us to support high-quality care and education for young children, please visit [tryingtogether.org](https://tryingtogether.org) to learn more.







Trying  
together

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