



Ordinary Moments, Meaningful Connections

Trying Together invites you to submit a proposal for the upcoming “UnConference: Ordinary Moments, Meaningful Connections” which will be held on Monday, October 12, 2026 at Hosanna House in Pittsburgh, PA.

The foundation of quality in early learning settings begins with the everyday interactions that we share with one another. These simple and ordinary moments that take place during daily routines form the very foundation of learning and connection for young children and adults alike. Focusing on the belief that meaningful learning happens within everyday moments, this UnConference highlights how connection, reciprocity, inclusion, and opportunities for growth emerge through adult-child interactions. Participants will experience interactive presentations that offer practical strategies for fostering inclusive environments, strengthening relationships, and creating opportunities for mutual growth. This UnConference is designed to support educators in cultivating classrooms where every child—and every adult—feels seen, heard, and valued.

Trying Together’s UnConference is an innovative, hands-on professional development training format where a deeper experience is provided around a particular theme in relation to early childhood education. Local and National speakers are invited to present and participants are encouraged to engage hands-on in the workshops.

Proposal Information

We are seeking dynamic and thoughtful presentation proposals focused on strengthening early childhood classroom practices that center on connection, reciprocity, inclusion, and opportunities for growth. Grounded in the belief that people seek to be present and in tune with one another—whether listening, talking, or working together—we aim to highlight approaches that foster meaningful, responsive relationships among children, educators, and families.

Purpose

The goal of this initiative is to provide early childhood educators with practical strategies, reflective tools, and research-informed practices that:

- Support authentic connection and attunement
- Promote reciprocal interactions between children and adults
- Create inclusive environments where all children feel seen, heard, and valued
- Encourage growth for both children and educators through shared experiences

Priority Topics

Proposals may address (but are not limited to) the following areas:

Connection & Attunement

- Building presence and shared attention in daily routines
- Strengthening teacher-child and peer relationships
- Recognizing and repairing moments of disconnection

Reciprocity in Practice

- Fostering back-and-forth interactions (“serve and return”)
- Co-constructing learning experiences with children
- Encouraging collaboration and mutual engagement

Inclusion & Belonging

- Creating classroom communities where every child feels valued
- Culturally responsive and anti-bias practices
- Supporting diverse learners, including dual language learners and children with varying abilities

Opportunities for Growth

- Reflective teaching practices and continuous improvement
- Supporting social-emotional development through connection
- Creating environments that invite curiosity, risk-taking, and shared learning

Audience

Presentations should be relevant to early childhood professionals, including teachers, caregivers, administrators, and support staff working with children from birth through age 8.

Presentation Formats

We welcome a variety of engaging formats, including:

- Interactive workshops
- Case study presentations
- Hands-on strategy sessions
- Reflective practice discussions

Proposal Selection Criteria

Each proposal will be reviewed by the UnConference Planning Committee. The committee will review proposals based on:

- Alignment with the core themes of connection, reciprocity, inclusion, and opportunity for growth
- Extent to which the proposal targets and is relevant to the early learning child care workforce in Southwestern Pennsylvania
- Experience/expertise of presenters
- Definition and focus of the topic
- Ability to engage participants in discussion and hands-on learning experiences
- Practical application of material and takeaways
- Timeliness and importance of topic

Each workshop proposal should:

- Encourage active learning
- Present culturally sensitive ideas, practices, and/or relevant research aimed at positioning attendees as leaders at the early learning programs in which they work
- Offer strategies for effective implementation of information acquired
- Include presenters who have significant expertise in the topic area and who have spoken successfully in front of groups
- Cover a 90-minute block of time

The proposal form will ask for a program description, learning objectives, and instructional methods. In providing this information, please provide enough detail so the planning

committee can understand how the session will be structured and what key issues will be covered.

We look forward to receiving proposals that inspire educators to be present, responsive, and deeply connected in their work with young children.

Stipend

Trying Together will offer an honorarium of \$250 to any organization or individual (if not affiliated with an organization) whose proposal is chosen to be presented at the UnConference. Additionally, presenters are invited to participate in the rest of the day at no cost. Travel and accommodation expenses are the responsibility of the presenter(s).

Important Dates

- **Proposals Due: June 29, 2026**
- **Applicants Notified: July 10, 2026**
- **Presentation Slides Due: September 28, 2026**
- **UnConference: October 12, 2026**

Your Next Steps: How to Submit a Proposal

- Download the [submission form](#) and save to your desktop.
- Submit your proposal as an attachment to learning@tryingtogether.org with the subject line "October 2026 Unconference Proposal" **no later than 11:59 p.m. on June 29, 2026.**

About Trying Together

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.

