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**EARLY CHILDHOOD NONPROFIT RELEASES NEW PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA**

**PITTSBURGH, Pennsylvania** — Early childhood nonprofit Trying Together has [released its new 2019-2020 Public Policy Agenda](#). Building on key components in the previous agenda (which asked policymakers to *do what's right for children, invest adequately, and enhance quality*), the 2019-20 agenda asks all levels of Pennsylvania's government—school boards, county council/commissioners, state legislators, and Congress members—to:

1. Advance the use of developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) in teaching and learning;
2. Acknowledge child development in setting expectations and responding to behaviors;
3. Make inclusive, diverse, culturally-responsive early childhood environments the norm;
4. Increase access to high-quality pre-kindergarten programs;
5. Increase access to high-quality infant and toddler care;
6. Elevate the early care and education profession;
7. Ensure continuous high-quality early learning experiences in school districts serving children from birth through age four;
8. Augment quality in school-age child care and out-of-school time programs; and
9. Expand maintenance and availability of data that informs access, affordability, equity, and quality.

“With our first Public Policy Agenda in 2017-18, we [Trying Together] focused on key advancements that would remove barriers to access, affordability, and quality of early care and education environments. While this emphasis has not changed, the 2019-20 agenda adds a focus on school-age child care and out-of-school time programs, both key to the healthy development of young children,” said Cara Ciminillo, Executive Director at Trying Together.

The 2017-2018 agenda called for several action items which were positively advanced in the past two years. While there is still work to do, Trying Together helped to achieve several key accomplishments in support of these goals including:

1. Advance the use of developmentally appropriate practices (DAP).
  - released a Kindergarten Transition [white paper](#);
  - formed a [Recess Advocacy Team](#) in partnership with the Playful Pittsburgh Collaborative to elevate the importance of free play and promote recess best practices for children in pre-k through sixth grade;
  - released a DAP [white paper](#) and [guide for parents](#);
  - [hosted a DAP webinar](#);
  - [developed custom professional development on DAP for early childhood professionals](#);
  - and presented information on the role of DAP to an assembly of school superintendents.

2. End early childhood suspensions and expulsions\*:
  - released a [white paper](#) and [guide for families](#);
  - hosted a lunch and learn with the Remake Learning Council;
  - presented at [The Early Childhood Education Summit](#) in 2017 and 2018;
  - and sits on the state workgroup in Pennsylvania.

*\*Notably, Pittsburgh Public Schools ruled in 2017 that suspensions and expulsions for minor, non-violent infractions for K-2 students would be abolished after which Philadelphia followed suit. Additionally, The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) released a policy announcement and provided resources on how to do reduce suspensions and expulsions.*

3. Increase access to high-quality pre-kindergarten (pre-k) programs.
  - partnered on the [Pre-K for PA campaign](#) which successfully advocated for an increased investment of \$55 million dollars in the 2017-18 and 2018-19 budgets collectively.
4. Increase access to high-quality infant-toddler care.
  - successfully advocated for an increased investment of \$26.8 million dollars in child care services as of the 2018-19 budget;
  - and convened and partnered on a workgroup to launch the [Start Strong PA campaign](#) in January 2019 to advocate for high-quality child care for infants and toddlers.
5. Transform the early childhood profession.
  - provided several dozen Level 1 Teachers their Induction program;
  - hosted the ECE Advocacy Fellowship for more than 20 early childhood professional;
  - and successfully updated language state statute and regulations to use the term 'child care' instead of 'day care'.
6. Leverage resources and partnerships.
  - has continued its partnership with the CREATE Lab at Carnegie Mellon University to provide professional development to 1,000 early care and education professionals who utilize the *Message From Me* digital tool, allowing 20,000 children to consistently communicate about their day with caregivers. In 2019, we, along with our partners, will develop an Advisory Board to bring this to PNC markets nationwide;
  - and partners with the United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania and the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU3) to lead the Hi5! Kindergarten Readiness and Registration campaign - working with nearly all 43 school districts in Allegheny County to facilitate roundtables and networking for best practices in supporting young children as they transition into kindergarten.

As a leading advocate for high-quality early childhood care and education in Pennsylvania, Trying Together educates and engages regularly with policymakers on access, affordability, and quality policies that affect the lives of children, families, and professionals throughout the state. Partnering with education, government, business, nonprofit, and philanthropic stakeholders, Trying Together advocates for public policy changes throughout Southwestern Pennsylvania, with an emphasis in the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. [Visit tryingtogether.org to view the full 2019-2020 Public Policy Agenda.](#)

[Advocates are invited to sign-on support for the 2019-2020 Trying Together Public Policy Agenda at tryingtogether.org to begin engaging their legislators today.](#)

**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.

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