



Trying Together

Finding Joy through Playful Learning

February 3-4, 2021

February 9-10, 2021

Finding Joy through Playful Learning aims to bring together educators, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners who have a variety of experiences related to education, play, and learning. The conference will take place via Zoom over the course of several days covering six topics related to playful learning. The goal is to generate dialogue among different stakeholders and share best practices to support children and families in learning through play.

How Play Can Improve Mental Health and Wellbeing

**February 4, 2021
9-11 AM (ET)**

Children make sense of what's happening in the world around them through play, and it impacts their mental health and wellbeing. This workshop will discuss how essential play and positive relationships are in supporting children's learning and impact their mental health and overall wellbeing.

Opening – Sheba Gittens, The P.R.I.D.E. Program

Introduction – Emily Neff, Trying Together

Featured Speakers

Cindy Eggleton, Brilliant Detroit

Sheba Gittens, The P.R.I.D.E. Program

Sarah Grubb, Trying Together

Q&A with Panel – Emily Neff, Trying Together

Breakout Rooms for Discussion

Closing and Feedback – Emily Neff, Trying Together



Moderator

Emily Neff

As the Assistant Director of Public Policy and Practice at Trying Together, Emily works to strengthen the connection and alignment of the early childhood continuum through various policy, advocacy, and system building activities. She engages with policymakers, educators, and families to advocate for increased access to high-quality early learning experiences. Passionate about play and social emotional learning, Emily co-leads the Recess Advocacy Team, a group of organizations dedicated to health and wellness, education, and play focused on recess practices and policies in elementary schools. Previously, Emily worked for the New York City Department of Education as a Family Support Coordinator, serving families and students from 25 elementary and middle schools. She began her career in education as a first grade teacher in Hazelhurst, Mississippi. Emily is an alumna of Teachers College, Columbia University (Education Policy, M.A.) and Allegheny College (English, B.A.).

How Play Can Improve Mental Health and Wellbeing

Featured Speakers



Cindy Eggleton, PhD

Cindy Eggleton, Co-Founder and CEO of Brilliant Detroit, has a long history of working “with, for, and by” families to build a Detroit where children are successful. At the United Way for Southeastern Michigan, she oversaw a \$60 million education portfolio and brought the Federal Social Innovation Fund to Detroit, supported efforts to improve high school graduation rates and train over 15,000 early childhood caregivers, and more. Today, she leads Brilliant Detroit, which coordinates existing evidence-based programming through houses in the middle of neighborhoods to ensure that families with young children have what they need to be school-ready, healthy, and stable. During the first four years of her time as CEO, Cindy grew Brilliant Detroit to serve 7,500 children and caregivers with over 95 organizational partners operating out of eight home-based hubs. She sees this as the work of her life and is committed to growing this impact to affect population-level change in Detroit.



Sheba Gittens

Sheba Gittens is an anti-racist heActivist, art educator, and creative consultant. She is a trained wellness practitioner, certified anti-racist raja yoga and prenatal yoga instructor, and joy facilitator. She received her BA in Africana Studies with a focus in English Literature and spends her professional career working with and serving youth of all ages (nationally and internationally). She uses mixed mediums to educate and expand the consciousness of those she serves.



Sarah Grubb

Sarah Grubb, M.Ed., works for Trying Together and Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) Region 5 as an Everyday Interactions Design Strategist, a position that inspires her to delve deeply into the power of ordinary interactions between educators and young children. Sarah’s work with educators, children, and families has taken many forms, including joyfully serving as a mentor teacher at Pittsburgh’s Spanish immersion preschool and kindergarten as well as an educator at an all-outdoor Forest Kindergarten north of Pittsburgh. She has taught young children in Nicaragua, supported language access as a Spanish language interpreter, and directed cultural immersion and community service programs in the Dominican Republic and Peru. At the heart of her work lies Sarah’s commitment to examining the impact of cultural values, language, nature and—most importantly—the small, everyday moments that form the core of our most profound connections with others.



Acknowledgements

We'd like to thank the William Penn Foundation for supporting this initiative. We express our gratitude to all of the speakers for their time and expertise and to Kevin Conner from the Allegheny Intermediate Unit for tech hosting the conference. Our appreciation to our Trying Together planning team including Maria Pisano, Emily Neff, and Cara Ciminillo, and to our Playful Learning Landscapes Action Network team including Doug Piper, Rachael Todaro, Ph.D., and Shelly Kessler. Without you, this couldn't have been possible. Finally, thank you to all who attended this conference and support playful learning in their communities.

The opinions expressed in this conference are those of the presenters and do not necessarily reflect the views of the William Penn foundation.