

# Public Engagement Summary

## Allegheny County Children's Fund Working Group

**SEPTEMBER 2019**

This summary is a companion  
piece to the Working Group's  
*Report to the County Executive*



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# Executive Summary

The Allegheny County Children's Fund Working Group was convened by Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald in March 2019 to make recommendations around how a potential county-wide fund to bolster early learning and out-of-school time programs for kids throughout Allegheny County could work. As a part of their charge from County Executive Rich Fitzgerald, the Allegheny County Children's Fund Working Group facilitated a Public Engagement process in Spring 2019 to understand what is important to people in Allegheny County when it comes to Early Learning, Out-of-School Time, and the County's Role in a potential county-wide Children's Fund. The Public Engagement process engaged 135 attendees to the Public Meetings, 244 respondents to an online survey, and 35 respondents to a paper survey. Additionally, two Focus Groups with subject matter experts on equity and inclusivity were convened, and six Youth Input Sessions with teens were held around the County. Here are the key themes heard in their responses:

## Early Learning:

- Early Learning is very costly to families across income levels, and waitlists are long; and infant care is especially challenging to find and expensive.
- Location (and transportation) along with hours of operation are key aspects and determinants of accessibility for families.
- A lack of access to quality Early Learning programs for children with special needs stigmatizes them.
- Parents who need Early Learning in a language other than English can't find it.
- Access to quality Early Learning is not equitable across the County, and improving quality is encumbered by low salaries and limited opportunities for professional development.

## Out-of-School Time

- Families are looking for a variety of enrichment activities to be supported after school and during the summer — and nutritional support is critical to kids, especially when school is not in session.
- Out-of-School Time is critical to keeping kids safe and to family prosperity (meaning, enabling parents and caregivers to work).
- Older kids need places to go, and there are opportunities to engage them and help them build skills.
- Kids with special needs are being left behind by Out-of-School Time programs.
- Culturally-competent and bilingual educators are needed throughout the County.
- The access issues related to Out-of-School Time programs are multi-faceted and include cost, the availability of programs, a lack of transportation to sites, and limited sources of information.

## The County's Role

- Ongoing communication through diverse sources and platforms will be critical to deploying a fund and ensuring accountability.
- Creating an independent, diverse, and non-political advisory board including parents and educators from across the County was important to attendees and respondents.
- Equity and cultural respect will be important to distributing funds fairly — and those terms require additional definition.
- Out-of-School Time and Early Learning are different issues with different types of systems in place (the former is largely unsystematized and the latter highly systematized); when possible, build on existing infrastructure, and don't create unnecessary bureaucracy.

## Members of the Allegheny County Children's Fund Working Group

Councilman Tom Baker, Allegheny County Council

Ms. Carol Barone Martin, Pittsburgh Public Schools  
Early Childhood Programs

Mr. Earl Buford, Partner 4 Work

Dr. Quintin Bullock, Community College of  
Allegheny County

Ms. Cara Ciminillo, Trying Together

Mr. Dave Coplan, Human Services Center Corporation

Ms. Rosamaria Cristello, Latino Community Center

Mr. James Doyle, Environmental Charter School

Ms. Colleen Fedor, Mentoring Partnership of  
Southwestern PA

Ms. Michelle Figlar, The Heinz Endowments\*

Ms. Wanda Franklin, Hug Me Tight Childlife Center

Dr. Trisha Gadson, Macedonia FACE\*

Ms. Debbie Gallagher, Council of Three Rivers  
American Indian Center

Mr. James Guffey, South Hills Interfaith Movement

Ms. Rosanne Javorsky, Allegheny Intermediate Unit

Ms. Valerie Kinloch, University of Pittsburgh  
School of Education

Mr. Walter Lewis, Homewood Children's Village

Ms. Betty Lisowski, Riverview Children's Center

Ms. Sally McCrady, PNC Community Affairs

Mr. Jesse McLean, Pressley Ridge

Ms. Becky Mercatoris, Office of Child  
Development & Early Learning,  
Pennsylvania Department of Human Services

Ms. Nancy Murray, The Arc of Greater Pittsburgh at  
ACHIEVA

Mr. Robert Nelkin, Retired

Ms. Kathryn Vargas, Allegheny Partnership for Out of  
School Time

Councilman DeWitt Walton, Allegheny County Council

\*Working Group Co-Chairs

## Consultant Team

The Working Group's development of this report was facilitated by a consultant team led by de Paor Strategies with Mongalo-Winston Consulting providing project management and public outreach support, and the UrbanKind Institute providing support in data collection and analysis.



# I. Background: the Working Group and this Report

The Allegheny County Children's Fund Working Group was convened by Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald in March 2019 to make recommendations around how a potential county-wide fund to bolster early learning and out-of-school time programs for kids throughout Allegheny County could work. The Allegheny County Children's Fund Working Group is a group of stakeholders who support across the County.

The Working Group's recommendations for a potential fund will be informed by three efforts, working in parallel between March and September 2019:

- reviewing data to assess existing programs and understand the gaps between the supply and demand for early learning and out-of-school time programs in Allegheny County;
- designing how a Fund would operate with an annual budget of \$5 million, \$10 million, or \$20 million; and
- facilitating a public process to engage people throughout Allegheny County to understand what access to high-quality early learning and out-of-school time programs looks like in their experience and in their communities; and the role community members envision the County playing in the future.

This report summarizes details of the Public Engagement Process and the input heard during that public process. While it is but one component of developing recommendations to the County Executive, the Public Engagement Process was crucial to informing a fund grounded in the specific needs and perspectives of the residents in Allegheny County.

**The members of the Allegheny County Children's Fund Working Group would like to thank all of the community members who gave their input into this process; your perspectives have brought these issues to life.**

This report is a companion piece to the **Report to the County Executive**, the Working Group's primary work product. Actively seeking input from the public on the creation of a children's fund at the County level was a central element of the Working Group's charge. The Working Group made extensive use of the suggestions, opinions, and observations gleaned through the Public Engagement process in the creation of the Report and its recommendations. In the spirit of accountability, one of the core principles identified in the Report, the Working Group created this summary document in order to record the voices of parents, providers, and students that were so important to the Report's development.

## II. The Public Engagement Process

Through the Public Engagement Process, the Working group wanted to engage as many voices, and as wide-ranging a set of voices as possible; and to listen impartially to what people had to say and report what the public said back to the County Executive. With that in mind, the Working Group set about to create a public process to engage parents, care-givers, educators, and providers throughout Allegheny County.

The Public Engagement process included: six public meetings, two focus groups, an online survey (in English and Spanish), and a meeting-in-a-box kit to get the input of teens. (Read more about the focus groups and Youth Input sessions in sections **IV. Focus Group Feedback** and **V. Youth Input Sessions**, respectively.)

### A. The Geography of the Public Meetings

Public meeting locations were chosen around the County in close consultation with the Working Group in order to maximize participation. The Working Group's goal was that people would be able to attend a meeting convenient to them. The meetings were held in:

- The Hill District in the City of Pittsburgh (the City Meeting) on May 30, 2019 at the Jeron X Grayson Center;
- Moon Township (the West Meeting) on June 3, 2019 at the The Landing Community Center;
- Bethel Park (the South Meeting) on June 4, 2019 at the Bethel Park Community Center;
- Shaler (the North Meeting) on June 5, 2019 at the Shaler North Hills Library;
- McKeesport (the East Meeting) on June 12, 2019 at Founders Hall Middle School; and
- a Spanish-language meeting, held in Downtown Pittsburgh at the YWCA on June 18, 2019 in partnership with the Latino Community Center of Pittsburgh.

Figure 1. Locations of the Public Meetings



### B. Making the Public Meetings Accessible

At each of the six evening meetings, refreshments and childcare were provided. Meeting venues were selected in conjunction with community partners and were proximate to public transportation as much as possible. Additionally, language interpretation was offered at the five English-language meetings. (The sixth meeting was facilitated in Spanish.)

**Appendix I contains the slides presented at the start of the Public Meetings (a translated version was presented at the Spanish-language meeting)**

# THE PUBLIC MEETINGS



## City Meeting

May 30, 2019 at the Jeron X Grayson Center in the Hill District, Pittsburgh



## West Meeting

June 3, 2019 at The Landing Community Center, Moon Township



## South Meeting

June 4, 2019 at the Bethel Park Community Center



## North Meeting

June 5, 2019 at Shaler North Hills Library, Shaler



## East Meeting

June 12, 2019 at Founders Hall Middle School, McKeesport



## Spanish-Language Meeting

June 18, 2019 at the YWCA in Downtown Pittsburgh

## 1. The Project Website

A website, [childrensfundcommunitymeetings.org](http://childrensfundcommunitymeetings.org), was established to keep all of the meeting information in one place and easy to access for members of the public. Between when the website was launched on May 15, 2019 and July 5th, 2019, it received 2,082 visits from 1,723 unique visitors. The website contained information about the Working Group and links to RSVP to the Community Meetings on Eventbrite.

## 2. The Surveys

To collect the feedback of people who couldn't attend a Community Meeting but wanted to share their input, three surveys were created and posted on the [childrensfundcommunitymeetings.org](http://childrensfundcommunitymeetings.org) website:

- one for parents/caregivers;
- one for providers; and
- a parent/caregiver survey in Spanish.

The English-language surveys were made live on June 5th, 2019, and the Spanish-language survey was made live on June 18th; both surveys remained open until July 5th, 2019. In addition, some partner organizations facilitated conversations with parents and caregivers within their network using paper surveys; Hosanna House in Wilkesburg had parents and caregivers fill out paper surveys and submitted the responses to the Working Group.

**(See Appendix III, Survey Questions, for the survey questions.)**

## 3. Publicizing the Community Meetings and Surveys

A number of steps were taken to market the Community Meetings and surveys during May and June 2019:

- The Working Group members shared information about the meetings through their own networks, via email and on social media two to three weeks in advance of the meetings starting. As a result of this outreach, other organizations (for example, PA PTA) shared this information through their own networks.

Figure 2. The project website



- Through the Working Group, an email list of about 1,800 contacts was assembled and emails were sent advertising the meetings.
- The consultant group publicized the meetings through their network of community organizations, and resources such as the library, YMCA, and trusted community partners.
- 2,000 flyers were distributed to area libraries and businesses.
- Community Meeting attendees were encouraged to tell other parents, caregivers, and providers to fill out the survey.

#### 4. Meeting Attendance and Survey Responses

A total of 135 people attended the six public meetings. In addition, between June 5th and June 30th, the surveys received 279 total responses (244 online and 35 paper surveys), including:

- 101 providers, including Early Learning providers, Out-of-School Time providers, respondents who worked with kids of a range of ages at libraries, and respondents who worked for local non-profit or advocacy groups.
- 143 parents and caregivers from throughout the County.



Figure 3. Online flyer advertising the Public Meetings



Figure 4. Email advertising the Public Meetings, sent to about 1,800 contacts

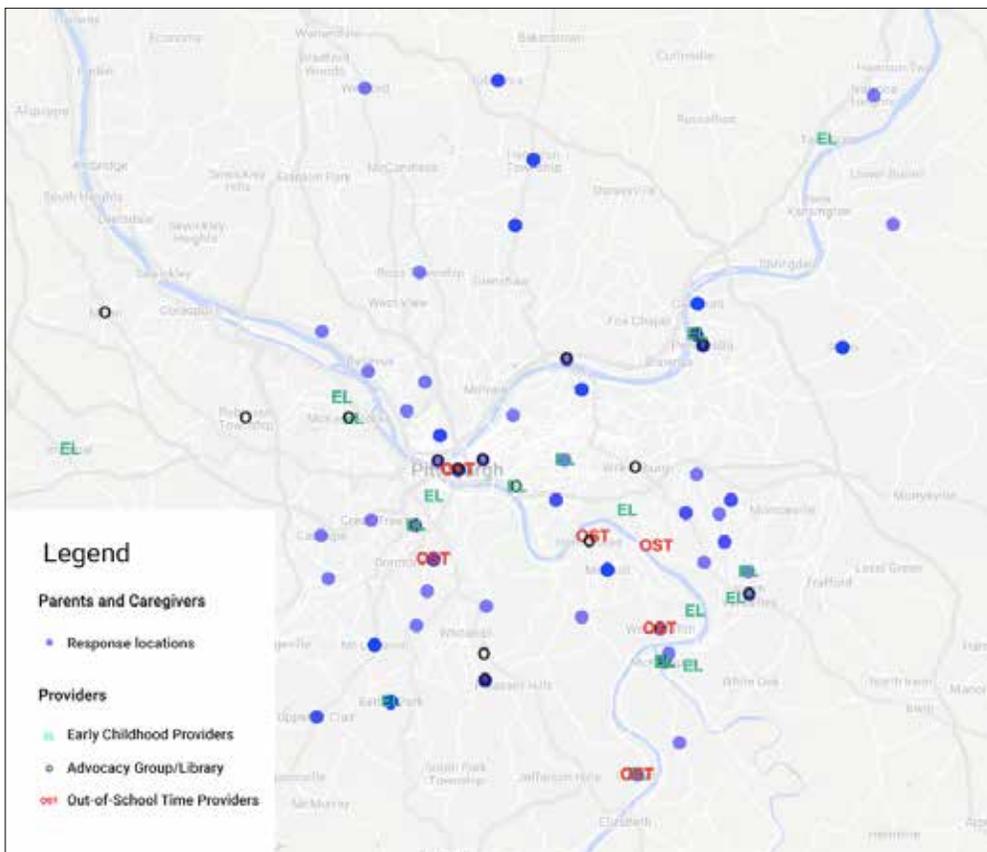


Figure 5. Approximate geographic locations of the respondents to the online survey

## III. Themes in the Public Responses

The Public Meetings and surveys collected data from participants around three topics:

- A. Early Learning**, defined as programs for infants, toddlers, and children before they reach kindergarten.
- B. Out-of-School Time**, meaning programs offered after school and during the summer that give kids K-12 a safe space to go with adult supervision, and a set of enrichment experiences that help youth build background knowledge, explore interests, and develop skills.
- C. The role the County should play** in making sure that every child in Allegheny County can benefit from quality Early Learning and Out-of-School Time.

This section summarizes the input heard from the public around each of these topics.

## A. Early Learning

About 90% of the 127 parents and caregivers who responded to the survey said that they encountered challenges finding Early Learning programs. In this section, we will discuss the key challenges and opportunities we heard from families, and, from the perspective of providers, and some of the underlying reasons parents and caregivers are finding it difficult to access quality early learning programs.

### 1. Waitlists are long — especially for infant care — and Early Learning is costly.

#### COST

Cost and available slots were identified in the surveys and in discussions at the Community Meetings as key challenges faced by parents and caregivers. Cost was mentioned by parents and caregivers across income levels.

Families with lower incomes are impacted by “funding cliffs”:

A parent from West Mifflin with an annual household income between \$20,000 and \$34,000 said, *“The biggest challenge at first was being on a waiting list; 2nd would be cost. I’m currently close to being at the max income level to qualify for assistance paying for child care. Once I hit that max level, I will no longer be able to afford this place.”*

A provider from Mount Washington said, *“Working parents may make slightly over the bars set [for subsidized care] and therefore cannot meet the bills, rent, mortgage and pay for childcare...There really needs to be a review of income levels and funding for centers.”*

For families earning more, Early Learning is unsubsidized and very expensive, especially for families with multiple children:

A parent from Pittsburgh with an annual household income between \$100,000 and \$125,000 said, *“Very challenging to find and get accepted to quality care. Very expensive... It is hardest among us who are technically not impoverished, because childcare will not [be] subsidized and is totally outrageously priced.”*

A parent from Tarentum with an annual family income between \$125,000 and \$150,000 said, *“My family is not eligible for support, which made our child care bill close to \$2000 a month... more than our mortgage! In addition, child care programs near me that were of quality had a 1+ [year] waiting list, particularly for private pay families.”*

#### INFANT CARE

Infant care is especially hard for families to find (one parent from Oakmont remembered being on nine waitlists for infant care):

A parent from Brookline with an annual household income less than \$20,000 wrote: *“Brookline has excellent programs, but none start at age 1 so it’s hard for parents with babies.”*

A parent from North Hills with an annual household income between \$100,000 and \$125,000 wrote, *“Difficult to get off waiting lists; expense during difficult time of non-refundable deposits to never make it off the list for infant care.”* For this parent, even getting onto waitlists was an expensive undertaking.

A parent from North Hills with an annual household income between \$100,000 and \$125,000 wrote, *“Difficult to get off waiting lists; expense during difficult time of non-refundable deposits to never make it off the list for infant care.”* For this parent, even getting onto waitlists was an expensive undertaking.

## 2. Location and transportation are key aspects of accessibility.

### LOCATION

Where Early Learning programs are located relative to where parents and caregivers live and work is another determinant of access for families. In the Community Meetings, we heard that transportation to sites is a barrier — and programs that are more accessible via transportation are at capacity. As a provider from West Mifflin wrote, “Families do not have transportation to early learning programs such as preschool, and so their children do not attend.”

A parent from Plum wrote, “Finding a center that’s in our school zone in Plum...Plum just cut busing for this coming school year to & from certain daycares.”

A parent from Bellevue wrote, “Well for headstart [a challenge] would be finding transportation there is no way for a working parent to be able to work and send their child to preschool with no transportation.”

A parent from Chartiers Valley wrote, “Transportation to and from child care before/after school because both of us work full-time.”

## 3. Hours of operation are another key consideration for families.

### HOURS

Families across the income spectrum and throughout the County have difficulty accessing Early Learning at times that work for them; and there’s a mismatch between available times and work schedules. There is a need for expanded child care hours in order to support varied work schedules.

A provider from the Northside wrote, “In our experience we have found that many families are opting to choose a program that is open longer hours over one that has a NAEYC Accreditation and Keystone Stars 4A.”

A parent from Bethel Park wrote, “I’m a registered nurse and my schedule changes. I cannot work the same 3 days per week at my current job, but I could only find one daycare that would work with my schedule. Unfortunately, it isn’t the highest rated facility, but the better rated facilities will not work with different days of the week and I cannot afford a nanny.”

A provider who works in Pittsburgh echoed that “Families that I work with who are experiencing homelessness often have trouble finding preschool programs that fit the hours they need (long enough hours to cover both their workday and the time for bus transportation), or sometimes there are waiting lists for Head Start or Pre-K Counts.”

A parent from Alison Park wrote, “My husband and I both have nontraditional work hours and we found it almost impossible to find child care centers that would fit our needs. We rely on family, friends and flexible work schedules to provide childcare and get our kids to preschool.”

A provider from Pittsburgh wrote that the hours available through subsidized funding do not match up with working hours: “The subsidized funding only covers 6 hours but families are working longer hours than that. It should cover longer hours. Also, we had a father lose his job and therefore lose his funding - which compromised him finding a new job. How do we provide better coverage for families?”



#### 4. The lack of access to quality Early Learning programs for children with with disabilities sometimes singles them out.

##### CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

A Focus Group was convened around this topic to learn more about it; see p. 24 to read more about their input.

Parents of children with disabilities said at community meetings (especially the South meeting) that finding early learning programs for their children was effectively impossible; and not being able to access early learning has a cascade effect on families and family prosperity.

Additionally, certain types of developmental delays keep children out of Early Learning programs.

A school psychologist from West Mifflin wrote, *"There is no available program for children who are not potty trained unless they have at least 3 (I think this is the minimum number) areas of delay. For these children, who might not have several delays, but are not yet potty trained by the age of 4, there is no preschool experience available for them AT ALL."*

Given that this topic was raised across several meetings, the Working Group convened a focus group with professionals in this field, and parents to discuss this further. See p. x to see the outcomes of that focus group.

#### 5. Families who need Early Learning programs in a language other than English can't find it, either because of cost, proximity or language barriers.

##### LANGUAGE BARRIERS

As a provider in the South Hills wrote, *"There is no bilingual childcare available in Allegheny County, nor Spanish-speaking child care...For this reason, many of the Latino families either keep students at home or utilize home care, and then students enter kindergarten with no PK support. This starts them off with a learning gap from the beginning that's hard to come back from."*

This point was reinforced during the Spanish-language meeting, where parents said that children needed bilingual teachers and teachers who understand what immigrants are facing.

Many refugee and immigrant families are unable to enroll children in a Head Start program because of limited amount of space.

#### 6. Access to quality Early Learning is not equitable, and improving quality is encumbered by low salaries and limited opportunities for professional development.

##### WAGES, QUALITY & EQUITY

One challenge providers face to becoming STAR THREE and STAR FOUR facilities per the Keystone STARS quality standards is that many centers lack the means to invest in professional development or salaries.

A provider from Wilkinsburg said, "In Wilkinsburg, I don't see near as many quality day care facilities as I do in the suburbs." 10% of the providers who completed the survey felt that there was equitable access to quality early learning in Allegheny County – the majority did not.

●A provider from Pittsburgh wrote, *"Higher quality centers charge higher tuition, which is unfair. All children should receive the highest quality education and care during their most vulnerable years of life."*

●A provider at the South meeting said that grants to improve quality are much more likely to help with capital costs, like building improvements, rather than professional development or increased wages.

●A provider at the North meeting said early learning providers in effect subsidize the cost of care for families through their low wages.

The wages in the field result in a lot of turnover, as noted by a family support specialist from McKees Rocks: "The pay in the early learning field is not good, so you have a great turnover rate with teachers."

Staff turnover is a problem for the operation of centers (for example, a provider who attended the South meeting noted how challenging it is to both find and retain employees); and, crucially, the lack of consistency also affects children.

A librarian from Downtown noted: "Consistency is so important to young children, but these types of jobs don't pay a livable wage, so there's tons of turnover, and then all of the training that may or may not go to that center is lost with that person."

A provider from Moon Township wrote, "Stars is now pushing for too high of a percentage of staff to have degrees, which you will never accomplish in the early childcare field, unless teachers are going to be paid for their degree like a public school teacher. As a current Star IV center provider & owner I can attest that there is no way we will maintain our star IV status in 2020 with the new career lattice requirements. So, I think you will lose a lot of current star IV centers who will drop to a Three or lower because the standard is too high. Who is going to pay those teachers a teacher salary? As the owner, I can tell you I would go out of business if I had to pay salary teachers."

## 7. Early Learning is learning. Create awareness about the importance of Early Learning—and help providers address the emotional and social needs of children in their care.

### AWARENESS

In the Community Meetings, providers, parents, and caregivers emphasized the importance of Early Learning in children's social and emotional health ("Play is not just play!") and in preparing children to be ready to sit in a kindergarten classroom.

●A provider from Whitehall wrote that "Many families can't afford preschool. In my opinion children who do not attend preschool are already behind when they begin kindergarten... The gap that I see is that most school districts are implementing full day kindergarten, and preschool is not changing to prepare kids for this transition."

●Addressing the emotional and social needs of children looks different in different communities. We heard that early learning instructors should be trained to provide trauma-informed care to children in some communities. Community Meeting participants also emphasized the need to provide programs that are culturally relevant and culturally sensitive to the families they serve.

Providers emphasized that early learning is not "just babysitting" — and that it's important to increase awareness of the importance of early learning to the community at large so everyone understands why quality centers are important.

Finally, we heard that early learning could be a part of a larger ecosystem through which early intervention could more easily identify children with developmental delays and support them. Providers told us that the current system and attitudes towards early intervention are not helping kids (Community Meetings specifically mentioned short pediatrician visits and school therapists who are disincentivized from intervening).

## 8. Improved communications are needed to help parents and caregivers find quality programs.

### OUTREACH TO FAMILIES

We heard from providers that many Early Learning programs need help getting the word out about their programs. This echoed feedback from parents that is hard to know what is out there:

A provider in Wilmerding wrote, *"Program budgeting does not permit 'getting the word out there' about the programs that are available. They are passed by word of mouth for the most part. We need public service announcements that make families familiar with available programs like family centers and early head start and as the word gets out we will need more money in those programs to serve the increased population."*

Another provider wrote that *"much of the issues I see are communication and efforts on the part of the service-group. It is very easy to say, 'we serve the community' when half the community is unaware that you exist. The best way to help is to get the information out to the people. Every person in the service area should know everything about you."*

## B. Out-of-School-Time

Out-of-School-Time was defined for participants as the time before and after school hours, and summer time. Participants in the public meetings and survey respondents cited the following key issues when it comes to finding quality Out-of-School-Time for their children. Recognizing that the issues vary for kids from kindergarten through 12th grade, we heard the following consistent themes:

### 1. Families are looking for a variety of types of enrichment activities to be supported after school and during the summer.

#### TOPICS FOR OST

Focus on the arts and other enrichment activities being taken out of the schools, including physical activity. A librarian from Baldwin Borough wrote, *"At our library, we are trying to bring programs to children in the K-12 age group that meets their needs and their world (which sadly is filled with stress). We offer yoga classes... and art classes for students all the way through Grade 12, cooking classes, and an opportunity to express themselves through a musical theater group. We offer volunteer opportunities where they can learn skills while being in a safe setting."*

Civic engagement, life skills, and job skills training (for older children) are other important topics for OST programming.

Academic supports (i.e., homework help) are also important.

#### NUTRITION

Nutrition is also critical to student well-being and performance, and kids may especially need nutritional support during the summer, while school is not in session. As survey respondent from a Pittsburgh non-profit wrote, *"Food quality in both summer and after-school programs is sorely lacking. Budgets are limited to inadequate federal reimbursements and food suppliers are chosen on a lowest bid basis. Summer food programs are underutilized, in part because of a long-standing reputation of providing low-quality food."*

**2. Out-of-School-Time also provides social supports to kids**

**SOCIAL SUPPORTS**

Out-of-School-Time can also provide crucial social supports for kids. A parent from McKeesport emphasized the value of “The building of positive social and friendly relationships with other kids and families.” On a similar note, a parent from West Mifflin wrote, “[My daughter] gets socialization and experiences that she wouldn’t get otherwise.”

**3. Out-of-School-Time programs are not serving the needs of all children.**

**CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

There should be a way of providing support for all kids, including kids with disabilities, without singling them out.

**A Focus Group was convened around this topic to learn more about it; read more on p. 24.**

**4. Older kids need places to go, too; there are opportunities to engage older kids and help them build skills.**

**OLDER KIDS**

Sometimes the challenges of caring for younger kids out of school lead to older children missing out on opportunities to attend enrichment programs themselves. This is compounded by the fact that often there are more programming opportunities for younger children; older kids need safe places to go too.

**Read more about older kids’ thoughts on OST on p. 26.**

**5. Out-of-School-Time is critical to supporting child safety and family prosperity.**

**IMPACT ON FAMILIES**

Before school, after school, snow days, and summertime are all times that parents need support from Out-of-School-Time programs; half-day programs for kids are also challenging for families with parents or caregivers who work full-time.

A parent from Alison Park wrote, “I’m terrified because the school district we live in currently only offers half-day Kindergarten. I will probably pay for private Kindergarten that offers full day and wrap-around care.”

A parent from Hampton Township wrote, “The out of school time program with the YMCA was too expensive, therefore affecting us as a family because my husband has to turn down work to ensure he is home to get our daughter off the school bus. It is a cycle that shouldn’t be a concern, but it is.”

**6. Cost was cited repeatedly in every region of the County as a major factor when selecting an Out-of-School Time programs.**

**COST IS A KEY FACTOR FOR FAMILIES**

Costs are high, benefit “cliffs” keep families out of Out-of-School Time programs, and it’s hard to know when financial aid is available.

A parent from Hampton Township wrote, “Once again, cost. It’s cheaper than daycare, but it is ultimately an extra cost. Having to be back at a certain time for pick-up. Sometimes you get stuck at work or in traffic.”

A survey respondent from McKeesport wrote, “The cost is the biggest factor followed by transportation from school to program.”

**7. The access issues related to Out-of-School-Time programs are multi-faceted and include the availability of programs, a lack of transportation, and limited sources of information.**

**TRANSPORTATION**

Transportation gaps are a challenge; and school buses and vans present logistical challenges for Out-of-School-Time transportation. Public meeting participants recommended figuring out why schools aren't offering more Out-of-School-Time programs, and working with partners to help them provide it.

A parent from Pittsburgh wrote, "We have a wonderful provider in our community so this is not an issue for us. The biggest issue is that the center is not associated with their school so we cannot take full advantage because of logistical issues (i.e., getting our kids to and from the center)."

There's a strong desire for schools to offer more OST programs in order to bridge transportation gaps and ease the burden on parents.

**INFORMATION GAPS**

Information gaps: Word of mouth continues to be the primary way that parents seem to hear about Out-of-School-Time opportunities. Parents need a source for finding out about Out-of-School-Time programs (including summer programs), and it's hard to know which programs are available before it's too late.

One survey respondent from Bethel Park noted, "We're in a position to be able to afford enrichment experiences. That being said, I find the South Hills to be lacking in artistic and cultural offerings. Pittsburgh and the North Hills mean a longer commute to get to these things. However, our local library has been invaluable."

A parent from Forest Hills wrote, "This continues to be a challenge. References from others, postings on social media, info from school."

**8. Culturally-competent and bilingual educators are needed throughout the County.**

**CULTURALLY-COMPETENT PROGRAMS**

It's important to create culturally-competent OST programs that reflect diverse communities. Spanish-language OST programs are needed, along with information in multiple languages about the availability of programs.

**9. Response from providers supported parent's feedback that Out-of-School Time programs at capacity, quality programs are scarce, and staff retention is a challenge.**

**QUALITY PROGRAMS ARE SCARCE**

Many existing programs are at capacity – it's important to support providers who are already doing good work. Also, regulated/accredited/quality (respondents used a variety of adjectives) programs are scarce – and, it's challenging for providers to become quality programs.

**STAFF RETENTION**

Finally, staff retention is challenging – and also crucial to providing consistent experiences for children.

## C. The County's Role

Public Meeting participants and survey respondents were asked the following four questions regarding the County's Role:

1. How could a County-wide fund help kids in your community?
2. How do we make sure the community has a voice?
3. How would you want to receive information and updates about the fund?
4. How should resources be allocated?

### ROLES FOR THE COUNTY

Public Meeting participants stated a number of roles mentioned that the county to play:

- To act as a data clearinghouse to understand need across the county and measure progress towards goals;
- To track outcomes and clearly communicate them to the public;
- To convene providers across the county to share best practices and information, and to encourage collaboration between systems;
- To share information with parents and caregivers; and
- To facilitate ongoing input from community members.

This will require dedicated resources. As a survey respondent wrote, "it will require staff who are dedicated to following up with programs that it funds to make sure that all programs are meeting standards."

### **1. Ongoing communication through diverse sources and platforms will be critical to deploying a fund and ensuring accountability.**

### COMMUNICATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

Participants recommended getting out the word about the Fund and provide updates about the performance of the Fund regularly and using channels that meet people where they are.

They also recommended creating regular opportunities for ongoing community input about what the Fund should be prioritizing and about how kids are faring in their community. Participants specifically recommended measures like annual site visits/audits, and progress reports. Accountability is important:

As one survey respondent noted, people will want to know "how will there be accountability for those being funded and how will we ensure there aren't other needs/programs that also deserve funding but aren't getting it because they're not one of the big names or groups that are commonly funded."

## 2. Create an independent, diverse, and non-political advisory board including parents, caregivers, and educators from across the County.

### ADVISORY BOARD

The Working Group consistently heard from meeting public meeting participants and survey respondents that parents and caregivers should have a voice in how the fund would be allocated, yet there was a desire to have parents and caregivers as well as trained professionals that work with kids on any such advisory board.

They also recommended creating regular opportunities for ongoing community input about what the Fund should be prioritizing and about how kids are faring in their community. Participants specifically recommended measures like annual site visits and progress reports. Accountability to the general public is important:

A participant in the East Meeting noted, “the Governing board should be diverse, and should include parent voices, educators, people with lived experience, NOT people who profit from the work.”

## 3. Equity and cultural respect will be important in managing a Fund—and need to be defined.

### EQUITY

How “equity” will be defined and operationalized is a question that meeting attendees and survey respondents are looking to a potential Children’s Fund to address, because how equity and need are defined will determine so much else.

As one survey respondent wrote, “How is the money being distributed (how is quality being measured how is it being determined as to where the money is going and how much programs are getting and who is benefiting from the money (is it being given to certain populations or just certain programs in general).”

In the East Meeting, we heard, “Equity should be the driver for allocating money- should be based on need, income levels, kids in need.”

A variety of definitions of equity were mentioned by meeting participants and survey respondents, for example: “How are low-income children’s needs being prioritized? How is racial/economic equity being actively addressed? How are providers held accountable for the needs of special needs children being addressed? How are food/nutrition needs being addressed/improved?”

**Given that this topic was raised across several meetings, the Working Group convened a Focus Group with professionals, educators, parents, and advocates to discuss specifically how equity would be demonstrated by the Fund. See p. 21 to read about the outcomes of that Focus Group.**

**4. Focus on creating more quality programs, both from funding additional spots in existing high-quality programs, by helping move programs up the quality ladder, and expanding programs to Early Learning and Out-of-School Time “deserts.”**

**QUALITY**

As one provider wrote, “How can providers apply? How will it support providers? How will it support families? How exactly will it increase quality of existing programs which have not raised the bar until now (in turn increasing access to quality)? These questions are for both early learning and out-of-school time.”

**5. Out-of-School Time and Early Learning are different issues with different types of systems in place; consider a dedicated office to grow quality Out-of-School Time programs, and funding quality Early Learning through existing systems and structures.**

**REMAKING THE WHEEL**

In general, when possible, don't create unnecessary bureaucracy. As one survey respondent wrote, “Please seriously consider using existing tools to measure quality (keystone stars, ECERS, SACERS) and not re-invent the wheel.”

There needs to be clear, consistent, and manageable standards and measures of success, both in terms of choosing which programs to fund and evaluating funded programs.

**6. If the County is going to invest in kids, it needs to focus on longer term investment and outcomes.**

**LONG-TERM INVESTMENT**

Respondents consistently noted that outcomes must be measured longer-term, and that investments cannot be on the typical existing grant cycle.

**7. Create partnerships to make the fund work.**

**PARTNERSHIPS**

The corporate community should supplement funding dollars, but the corporate community not be the decision-makers.



## IV. Focus Group Feedback

The Working Group convened two Focus Groups in July 2019 to learn more about two topics:

**A. Equity Considerations**

(building off section III.C.3) and

**B. Serving all Kids and all their Needs**

(building off of sections III.A.4 and III.B.3)

This sections documents the feedback heard from Focus Group participants in those sessions.

## A. Focus Group 1: Equity Considerations

**Attending:** Jessica Ruffin (DHS), Tiffini Simineaux (Mayor's Office), James Fogarty (A+ Schools), Amy Hart (DHS), K.Chase Patterson (Urban Academy), Kevin McNair (1 Nation Mentoring), Brenda Lockley (Melting Pot Ministries), Amy Malen (DHS), Rosamaria Cristello (Latino Community Center), Walter Lewis (HCV), Michelle Figlar, Jason Beery, Colin DePaor, Ivette Mongalo.

### **Key points we heard in this focus group with regard to how the fund should address equity:**

- 1. Kids of color are suffering everywhere.** As the City gets more expensive, people are being pushed out to the suburbs, therefore providers are seeing the same challenges with kids in the South Hills as in the city.
  - Schools are not equipped to deal with “problem” kids- that really tend to be kids of color
  - Kids are reading way below grade level, etc.
  - Based on recent study, Latino kids are already suffering the same experience: programs not meeting their needs.
- 2. We have to name and confront the institutional racism that is limiting access to these programs.**
  - Schools have responsibility to our kids, but we have to recognize the institutional racism within the systems we are working in
  - “We’re not going to program our way out of institutional racism.”
  - Action: include a principle in the report acknowledging that the playing field is not level, and this fund is trying to compensate for that and help kids succeed.
- 3. If culturally-competent programming isn’t happening during school, can that happen before and after school?**
  - Can the fund be used to support programming that employs culturally-competent staff and programming?
- 4. Program evaluation needs to be rethought.**
  - Participants disagreed to some degree about what the measure of success should be:
    - Measure of quality of OST should just be participation
    - Evaluation measures should consider what is the depth of the program, and not just #'s served.
  - Others feel there should be a consistent measure of quality across county, “YET we know the playing field is not level, so why should the standards be the same for everyone?”

**5. Funding should go to kids that need it the most: brown, black and poor.**

- Some debate about how to quantify this, but there's a clear recognition that kids of color continue to perform below established standards. This fund should counteract that.

**6. Lack of culturally-competent teachers is compounding the situation for kids.**

- Kids can't relate to teachers or other families.
- Action/recommendation: Could the fund help to hire additional culturally competent staffing- could it help with innovative staffing strategies?

**7. What is the plan to get kids who are not in OST engaged?**

- Recommendation: the fund should state how it seeks to engage kids not currently in these programs.

**8. Make sure it's equitable for organizations to apply.**

- Consider the following Equity considerations in the RFP process:
  - Evaluate composition of the program, commitment to equity, their knowledge of needs at neighborhood level;
  - Use Risk & Reach model to understand need;
  - Ideally provide T.A. for smaller providers to apply; and
  - Provide a tiered application process:
    - Level 1: small grants/least cumbersome application
    - Level 2: medium grants
    - Level 3: large grants/ most in-depth application
  - Make sure it's equitable for organizations to apply.

**In Summary:**

The fund should make an overarching commitment to advancing equity in the county by funding programs that serve underserved populations and kids of color. The fund should express a value statement reflecting the information above. For example:

*"This fund is committed to advancing equity within our region by supporting programs for children that are traditional disenfranchised and left behind. We are committed expanding opportunities for these children, and supporting programs that think creatively about preparing children for success, and seek to employ culturally competent caretakers and educators."*

*"The fund is committed to supporting programs that are willing and prepared to serve all children, and all of their needs. We will work with providers and connect them to resources in order to ensure they are prepared to serve all families. "*

## B. Focus Group 2: Serving all Kids and all their Needs

**Attending:** Jeannine Brikley (PEAL Center), Nancy Hill (PPS), Sharon Richards (ACHIEVA), Nancy Murray (ACHIEVA), Pam Harbin (parent), Nancy Hubley (Ed Law Center).

### **Key points we heard in this focus group around serving kids and all of their needs:**

#### **1. Be very careful about language, or you will exclude certain populations**

- Do not use “special needs”, or “getting ready for...”

#### **2. Two things we need to do in report:**

- State a clear vision and commit to inclusion and diversity up front
  - One basic thing the fund can do is start to change the culture and narrative around how we serve children
  - Set a new expectation:
    - Inclusive: to serve all children,
    - to meet the needs of all families, and
    - to support innovative programs.
    - That we see parents and providers as equal partners.
- Tie vision to the money- inclusion is a basic requirement for all applicants
  - All providers applying for funding must be prepared to meet the needs of ALL children,
  - OR if they can't currently serve everyone, make a statement about how they will commit to serving all kids in the future, and what resources they will need to make that possible
  - Money must come with strings

#### **3. Go straight for the \$20M**

- Spending any less is not going to make a dent in the complexity of issues

#### **4. Who should get funding?**

- Support existing organizations doing good work (verify they are doing good work through data)
- Use funding to provide seats to kids that don't qualify under existing parameters
- Don't create more hoops for people to go through

**5. Opportunity for this funding to support inclusive, innovative programs.**

- This is not just funding for programs that are doing the same old thing
- Consider low-hanging fruit- such as supporting summer school programs

**6. Support existing providers doing good work.**

- With more staff support, more behavior specialist that can go into centers (ex. ACHIEVA)
- More education assistance
- More training opportunities (racial competency, child development)
- Connect childcare providers to existing mental health specialist (such as those at ACDEL)
- ESL resources

**7. Advisory Council- change this to “Oversight Committee”**

- Must have teeth and be able to truly advise County Council on spending
- Mix of parents, family advocates, youth of all abilities, providers doing work on the ground, pediatrician or child development specialist, also someone not connected to education space (typical resident)
- Should reflect community it is serving
- Key is to make it authentic, ensure it's a safe space for people to participate
- The way the committee operates reflects the values of the fund: diverse, inclusive,
- Get a skilled facilitator to start them on the right track
- Have members take field trips- to keep them connected to experience on the ground

**8. Make sure you continue to engage people doing work on the ground (including parents), to ensure the document uses the right language and reflects needs of all kids.**

## V. Youth Input Sessions

Partners of the Working Group convened six Youth Input Sessions around Allegheny County in July 2019.

The goal was to hear from kids about the issues that affect them most, and in particular about Out-of-School-Time programs.

Here is what we heard.

## A. Background

As the Public Engagement process began to take shape in early Summer 2019, the Working Group realized that the feedback of an important constituency was important to consider: young people themselves. A strategy was devised for engaging young people (specifically, teenagers) through partner organizations running summer programs by creating a “meeting in a box” kit and having the partner organizations facilitate the sessions and report back to the Working Group, with an eye to efficiency and to enable the participants to speak with candor (because the sessions would be run by trusted adults).

Six sessions were held in partnership with local organizations (and with special thanks to the United Way for their coordination);

- ONYX Youth Council
- Neighborhood Learning Alliance
- School 2 Career
- Sara Heinz House
- South Hills Interfaith Movement
- Community Forge, Wilkinsburg

**For more on how the sessions were facilitated and the questions asked of the participants, see Appendix III, Facilitator's Guide, Youth Input Sessions**

## B. Themes from the Youth Input Sessions

### 1. “I feel like I belong here”—like school, but better than school

One theme among the participants is that Out-of-School-Time programs gives kids a place where they feel like they belong; and that a sense of belonging keeps them coming back.

- “There is more freedom, like there are rules but you still feel safe but its not too many rules like school.”
- One group spoke a lot about the reason afterschool feels safer then school. They said the environment in afterschool is more welcoming because you know who will be there and what to expect and that the adults are people that have rules but still let you be yourself.
- An “Open-minded environment where people are able to express themselves and celebrate their cultures”
- “Being around open-minded and supportive adults.”
- “Feels like home/encourages me to attend.”
- “It's a second home – I feel like I belong here”

## **2. Emotional and Mental Health are skills built and exercised over time**

Another theme among the participants is that they are able to chart changes within themselves through their experiences with Out-of-School-Time programs, from becoming a little less shy to (perhaps less anxiously) becoming less reliant on their cell phones. These programs help kids become more like the people they want to be:

- “I used to be very shy and I have been coming here for six years, and now I am less shy and am better at speaking up when I need to speak up.”
- “I used to be on my phone too much but here I can't be on the phone and I think that is good because I didn't want to be on my phone all of the time.”
- “I get to set a positive example for younger kids and I am a leader to them.”
- One of the groups put forward the idea of starting a mental health support group.

## **3. Out-of-School-Programs help kids achieve their short- and near-term goals**

Whatever kids' goals are, from doing better in school to preparing for college to being more active, participants said that Out-of-School-Time program gives them a dedicated space to pursue their goals, once defined.

- “You can get your homework done before you jump into the fun.”
- “When I was in first grade they helped me with my math and I learned things that I couldn't learn in school”
- “I decided to do it because I wanted to be ready for college.”
- “Homework is always done so my grades are better.”
- “I am getting paid and saving up.”
- “Work experiences that I need for jobs when I am in college.”
- “I get more exercise.”
- “I train for off-season sports. I first came for just sports, but then my friends were here so I started to come for the club.”

## **4. Out-of-School-Programs also “help you find your place” in the world and find out what you don't know about yet**

Another benefit of Out-of-School-Time Programs is that they can expose kids to experiences and subject matter that are altogether new to them, enabling them to define long-term goals and, in time, arrive at heretofore unknown destinations.

- Teens in one session talked a bit about how they get most information about college and work opportunities from their afterschool program, making that the most valuable part of being in an afterschool program to them.

- “It helps kids discover what they like and there are lots of different options of things to do so that you can decide what you like.”
- “Helps you find your place in society.”
- “The leadership program has given me new experiences that are helping me decide what I want to do.”
- “We get to learn new things like robotics and media.”
- Fun activities (field trips, community events)
- Volunteer opportunities
- Exploring career options and making connections to professionals in various careers.
- One group talked a lot about all the different types of things that they get to do as a result of their afterschool programs arts, dance, robotics, media, swimming, etc. They talked about how they feel like they could not do all those things at another place.
- “The leadership program has given me new experiences that are helping me decide what I want to do.”
- “Educational classes like teaching how to have a business (make money), and other skill-building classes like medical class, coding, cooking, etc.”

#### Other Notes:

- **Inclusion:** “There Should be opportunities for all kinds of kids so that it can be a place for everyone.”
- **Transportation to and from programs can be a barrier:** One student mentioned that she stopped going to an after-school program that she liked when she changed schools because she did not have transportation. •
- **The need for dedicated spaces for teens:** Participants mentioned that they need spaces where they feel safe outside of home and school, even outside of a program, hang out, and be safe while also accessing information about college and career.
- **Afterschool programs help kids of all ages:** For the little kids , it is a lot of academics and for the older kids it is a lot about the future.
- **Older kids and work experiences:** Older kids need works experiences and to be paid so that they can stay in the program; sometimes, they can't be in a program because they need to have a job.

**The Allegheny County Children's Fund Working Group thanks all of the students who participated in these sessions, and all of the educators and partner organizations that helped make them happen.**

At the bottom of one of the Input Session summary sheets, the participants communicated to the Working Group:

**“Thank you for caring about what we have to say. We love you <3”**

The feeling is mutual.

**Concept Poster: Design Your Own After-School Program**

**Group Members:** Moriyah  
Cydney

**CONCEPT NAME AND TAGLINE**

The babysitting After school program

**EXPLAIN THE BIG IDEA**

This program is for kids that their parent work to late and daycare close early. They won't have to worry about that because we are open 24hrs.

**ALL THE DETAILS: WHERE IS THE PROGRAM HELD? WHO WOULD RUN IT? WHAT DO YOU DO THERE? WHO WOULD ATTEND?**

The program will be held in East Liberty. Both of us will run the babysitting program. We do there is babysit kids who go to daycare but daycare don't stay there until parents get off work late so that's why we are here. All of the kids who go to daycare and there mom go to work late in the day.

Allegheny County Children's Fund Working Group Youth Input Sessions

Figure 6. Concept developed by two students at the Community Forge Input Session called "The Babysitting After-School Program"

# Appendices to the Report

Appendix I. Public Meeting Presentation

Appendix II. Survey Questions

Appendix III. Facilitator's Guide,  
Youth Input Sessions

# Allegheny County Children's Fund Community Meeting

[childrensfundcommunitymeetings.org](http://childrensfundcommunitymeetings.org)

## From the County Executive:



County Executive Rich Fitzgerald convened the Allegheny County Children's Fund Working Group in spring 2019. At that time he said:

"Children who have access to quality early childhood learning have improved **social skills, better grades, and enhanced attention spans**. Children who have access to after-school programs do better in school, have fewer behavioral problems, and do not become involved with crime as young adults."

## The Working Group: Who We Are



The Allegheny County Children's Fund Working Group is a group of stakeholders who support families across the County.

Our Charge: To make recommendations to the County Executive about how the Children's Fund for Allegheny County could work.

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## About this Public Process



Tonight's community meeting is one of six meetings that are being held across Allegheny County.

We want to hear from you about what you would want to see in a fund.

Your input will give us on-the-ground feedback to complement the data our researchers are finding about early learning and out-of-school time in Allegheny County.

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## Definitions



**Early learning:** Programs for infants, toddlers, and children before they reach kindergarten.

**Out-of-school time:** Programs offered after school and during the summer. They give K-12 kids a safe space to go with adult supervision, and a set of enrichment experiences that help youth build background knowledge, explore interests, and develop skills.

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## Example: Philadelphia, PA



**PHLpreK** - Mayor's Office of Education:

- Offers 2,250 pre-k seats to 3- to 4-year-olds throughout the city. Expanding to 5,500 seats by 2023.
- Partners with other city agencies to improve childcare facilities.

**Fund for Quality**

- Foundations and companies help support new Early Childhood Teachers becoming certified.
-



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## Example: Portland, OR

### Portland Children's Levy

Supports Out-of-School (OST) Programs that offer:

- Intensive academic support
- Enrichment programming

Also Supports:

- Mentoring
  - Other programs for kids
- 

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## The County's Role



The vast majority of funding that supports children in our County comes from **state, federal, and private** sources (and through family contributions).

- We know that the current funding is not enough to meet the need.
  - The County Executive wants to make a commitment to providing dedicated funding in order to better meet the need.
- 

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## Early Learning: Benefits



- Improved vocabulary development and cognitive abilities for children
  - Behavioral and social improvements for children
  - Improve student achievement
  - Economic benefits for the community as a whole
  - Help parents and caregivers re-enter the workforce
-



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## Early Learning: Quality & Access

**Quality:** safe, healthy spaces with qualified teachers

**Access:** Anything that is preventing you from finding a program (location, availability of spots, cost, etc.)

- 47% of eligible children in Allegheny County= 5,901 children- do not have access to high quality, publicly-funded Pre-K
  - This translates to a need for 295 additional Pre-K classrooms.



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## Out-of-School Time: Benefits

Out-of-school time programs improve outcomes for K-12 kids:

- Improved reading and assessment scores
- Youth behavior
- Social and emotional skills

72% of parents in Allegheny County say that after-school programs keep their children safe.

**Quality Out of School Time = More Successful Kids**

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## Out-of-School Time: Access

All parents want the same thing for our kids:  
**QUALITY** out-of-school time so both kids and families can thrive.

- 70% of children in Allegheny County would enroll in a program if it was available.
  - Currently, all of the out-of-school time programming in Allegheny County could only serve 28% of all youth in the County at maximum.
-

# Questions for Tables about Early Learning and Out-of-School Time in Allegheny County

## Early Learning



We want to hear about:

- What do you think is important about early learning?
- What is important to you (or to the families you work with) when finding a program for your child? For example,
  - Location/proximity?
  - Hours?
  - Type of provider or caregiver?
  - Cost?

## Out-of-School Time



We want to hear about:

- What do you think is important about out-of-school time?
- What is important to you (or to the families you work with) when finding a program for your child?
  - Location/proximity?
  - Hours?
  - Focus areas (e.g., the arts, STEM, robotics, academic support)?
  - Type of provider?
  - Cost?

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## The County's Role

How could a County-wide fund **help kids** in your community?

How do we make sure the community has a **voice**?

How would you want to receive **information and updates** about the fund?

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# Next Steps

[www.childrensfundcommunitymeetings.org](http://www.childrensfundcommunitymeetings.org)

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# Thank you!

On behalf of the Allegheny County Children's Fund Working Group  
and County Executive Rich Fitzgerald

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Survey for Providers

## Allegheny County Children's Fund Working Group Survey: Providers

The Allegheny County Executive's goal is to make sure that every child can benefit from quality early learning and out-of-school time. The goal of this survey is to learn about the programs that are supporting families today, what's missing, and how Allegheny County can be a leader for kids moving forward.

In this survey, we have questions about Early Learning and Out-of-School Time. We're interested to hear about your experiences working in these areas; and if you only have experience in one of these areas, answer the questions that are most relevant to you.

In this survey, we ask for your email address and some demographic information. We ask for your email address so you can be sent a copy of your responses, and so we can add you to our e-mail list if you opt in at the end of the survey. The demographic questions we ask will help us better understand our survey responses; your entries will be kept anonymous and the responses you give will never be attributed to you.

Thank you so much for your participation!

\* Required

Email address \*

Your email

### Demographic Questions

What type of organization do you work for? What is your role there?

Your answer

What is the age range of children in your care?

Your answer

Where in Allegheny County is your program located?

Your answer

### Part I. Early Learning

"Early learning" means programs for infants, toddlers, and children before they reach kindergarten.

In your experience, do families have equitable access to consistent quality early learning County-wide? What needs are not being served? Where are the gaps in service today?

Your answer

What are the programs that are working well when it comes to early learning? What are the elements of those programs that work well?

Your answer

In your experience, what are the biggest challenges to providing quality early learning?

Your answer

What are the barriers families encounter when trying to access quality early learning?

Your answer

Are there any new opportunities for providing early learning that come to mind?

Your answer

## Part II. Out-of-School Time

"Out-of-school time" means programs offered after school and during the summer. They give K-12 kids a safe space to go with adult supervision, and a set of enrichment experiences that help youth build background knowledge, explore interests, and develop skills.

In your experience, do families have equitable access to quality out-of-school time?

Your answer

What are the programs that are working well, when it comes to out of school time?

Your answer

What are the biggest challenges to providing quality out-of-school time programs? What needs are not being served?

Your answer

Are there any new opportunities that come to mind in regard to out-of-school time?

Your answer

### Part III. Supporting Early Learning and Out-of-School Time

If the County were to establish a children's fund to support out-of-school time and early learning, what would you want to know?

Your answer

Would you like to receive emails about the Allegheny County Children's Fund Working Group? They will be sending an email this summer summarizing what they have heard from providers, parents, and caregivers through this survey and through the community meetings being held in Spring 2019. \*

Yes

No

Send me a copy of my responses.

**SUBMIT**

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

Survey for  
Parents and  
Caregivers

## Allegheny County Children's Fund Working Group Survey: Parents and Caregivers

The Allegheny County Executive's goal is to make sure that every child can benefit from quality early learning and out-of-school time. The goal of this survey is to learn about the programs that are supporting families today, what's missing, and how Allegheny County can be a leader for kids moving forward.

In this survey, we have questions about Early Learning and Out-of-School Time. We're interested to hear about your experiences in these areas; and if you only have experience in one of these areas, answer the questions that are relevant to you.

We ask for your email address and some demographic information in this survey. We ask for your email address so you can be sent a copy of your responses, and so we can send you email if you opt in at the end of the survey. The demographic information we ask will help us better understand our survey responses; your entries will be kept anonymous and the responses you give will never be attributed to you.

Thank you so much for your participation!

\* Required

Email address \*

Your email

### Demographic Questions

Where do you live in Allegheny County? \*

Your answer

How many children are in your care? What are their ages?

Your answer

Where in Allegheny County does your child or children access care or go to school?

Your answer

What's your annual household income?

- Less than \$20,000
- \$20,000 to \$34,999
- \$35,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$124,999
- \$125,000 to \$149,999
- Over \$150,000

### Part I. Early Learning

"Early learning" means programs for infants, toddlers, and children before they reach kindergarten.

Tell us about your experience finding early learning programs (like infant/toddler care, child care and/or pre-school and pre-k) for your child. What, if any, have been the biggest challenges in finding quality early learning for your family?

Your answer

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What information do you use to help you learn about quality? How do you know if an early learning program is a "quality program"?

Your answer

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How did you learn about and choose an early learning program?

Your answer

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For your child and your family, what is the most important part of participating in an early learning program?

Your answer

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### Part II. Out-of-School Time

"Out-of-school time" means programs offered after school and during the summer. They give K-12 kids a safe space to go with adult supervision, and a set of enrichment experiences that help youth build background knowledge, explore interests, and develop skills.

How did you learn about and choose an out-of-school time program?

Your answer

What have been the biggest challenges for your family in finding or accessing quality out-of-school time programs?

Your answer

For your child and your family, what has been the most valuable part of finding an out-of-school time program?

Your answer

### Part III. Supporting Early Learning and Out-of-School Time

If the County were to establish a children's fund to support out-of-school time and early learning, what would you want to know?

Your answer

Would you like to receive emails about the Allegheny County Children's Fund Working Group? They will be sending an email this summer summarizing what they have heard from providers, parents, and caregivers through this survey and through the community meetings being held in Spring 2019. \*

Yes

No

**SUBMIT**

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

Spanish-language  
Survey for  
Parents and  
Caregivers

## Encuesta del Grupo de Trabajo del Fondo de la Niñez del Condado de Allegheny: padres y cuidadores

La meta del Ejecutivo del Condado de Allegheny es asegurar que todos/as los/as niños/as puedan beneficiarse de una alta calidad de aprendizaje temprano y tiempo fuera del horario escolar. El objetivo de esta encuesta es conocer los programas que hoy apoyan a las familias, lo que falta y cómo el Condado de Allegheny puede ser un líder para que la niñez avance.

En esta encuesta preguntaremos sobre el aprendizaje temprano y el tiempo fuera del horario escolar. Nos interesa conocer sus experiencias en estas áreas; si solo tiene experiencia en una de ellas, responda solamente las preguntas que sean relevantes para usted.

En esta encuesta solicitamos su dirección de correo electrónico y algunos datos demográficos. Le pedimos su dirección de correo electrónico para poderle enviar copia de sus respuestas y enviarle un correo electrónico si decide inscribirse al final de la encuesta. La información demográfica que solicitamos nos ayudará a comprender mejor las respuestas a nuestra encuesta; su contribución se mantendrá anónima y las respuestas que proporcione nunca se le atribuirán.

¡Muchísimas gracias por su participación!

\* Required

Email address \*

Your email

### Preguntas demográficas

¿Dónde vive en el condado de Allegheny? \*

Your answer

¿Cuántos niños/as cuida? ¿Cuáles son sus edades?

Your answer

¿En qué lugar del Condado de Allegheny tienen sus hijos/as acceso al servicio de guardería infantil o van a la escuela?

Your answer

¿Cuál es su ingreso familiar anual?

- Less than \$20,000
- \$20,000 to \$34,999
- \$35,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$124,999
- \$125,000 to \$149,999
- Over \$150,000

### Parte I. Aprendizaje Temprano

"Aprendizaje temprano" significa programas para bebés, niños/as pequeños/as y niños/as antes que lleguen al jardín de infantes.

Cuéntenos sobre su experiencia en la búsqueda de programas de aprendizaje temprano para su hijo/a (tal como cuidado de bebés, niños/as pequeños/as, cuidado de niños/as de edad preescolar). ¿Cuáles, si los hay, han sido los mayores desafíos para encontrar un aprendizaje temprano de calidad para su familia?

Your answer

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¿Qué información utiliza para ayudarse a aprender sobre la calidad? ¿Cómo sabe si un programa de aprendizaje temprano es un "programa de calidad"?

Your answer

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¿Cómo supo y eligió un programa de aprendizaje temprano?

Your answer

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Para su hijo/a y su familia, ¿cuál es la parte más importante de participar en un programa de aprendizaje temprano?

Your answer

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## Parte II. Tiempo fuera del horario escolar

"Tiempo fuera del horario escolar" son programas ofrecidos después de la escuela y durante el verano. Brindan a los niños de K-12 un espacio seguro bajo la supervisión de adultos, así como un conjunto de experiencias enriquecedoras que les ayudarán a adquirir conocimientos de base, explorar intereses y desarrollar habilidades.

¿Cómo supo y eligió un programa fuera del horario escolar?

Your answer

¿Cuáles han sido los mayores desafíos para su familia para encontrar o acceder a programas de calidad fuera del horario escolar?

Your answer

Para su hijo/a y su familia, ¿cuál ha sido la parte más valiosa de encontrar un programa fuera del horario escolar?

Your answer

## Parte III. Apoyo al aprendizaje temprano y el tiempo fuera del horario escolar

Si el Condado creara un fondo de la Niñez para apoyar programas fuera del horario escolar y el aprendizaje temprano, ¿qué le gustaría saber?

Your answer

¿Le gustaría recibir correos electrónicos sobre el Grupo de Trabajo del Fondo para la Niñez del Condado de Allegheny? Durante este verano, le estarán enviando un mensaje electrónico resumiendo lo que se ha escuchado de proveedores, padres y cuidadores a través de esta encuesta, así como de las reuniones comunitarias que se están llevando a cabo en la primavera de 2019\* \*

Yes

No

**SUBMIT**

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

Allegheny County Children's Fund Working Group Youth Input Session

## Facilitator's Guide

Thank you for agreeing to lead one of these Children's Fund Working Group Youth Input sessions. The goal of this document is to give you everything you need to lead one of these sessions.

### You'll need:

- One print-out of "Group Discussion Notes" document (plus some extra letter-sized paper for extra notes)
- One print-out of the "Concept Posters – Key Themes" document
- One print-out of the "Reflect Back" document
- Enough copies of the "Concept Poster" template to have one template per group of two
- Scratch paper
- A pen for every participant
- The "Allegheny County Children's Fund Working Group Youth Outreach Presentation" PowerPoint file – if you don't have the ability to project slides, that's ok! See note under "Materials from the Presentations" below

The meeting should take about **an hour and fifteen minutes**, and these activities will work well for groups of 6-10 (but can also easily be adjusted for smaller or bigger groups).

### Agenda:

- **Introductions** (5 minutes)
- **Materials from the presentation** ("Why We're Here" and "After School Time Data") 15 minutes
- **Group Conversation/Think, Pair, Share about After-School Programs** (20 minutes)
- **"Design Your Own After-School Program"** (15 minutes in groups, 10-minute share-out)
- **Reflect Back: Key Points for the Working Group** (5 minutes)

### Introductions (5-10 minutes)

If the assembled group doesn't know each other, have everyone go around the room to introduce one another. Ask someone (or find someone before the session starts) to act as the group "scribe" to take notes during the Group Conversation, Design Your Own After-School Program, and Reflect Back parts of the session.

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#### Materials from the Presentation (15 minutes)

The rest of the session can be driven from the content in the PowerPoint presentation. (The presentation has slides that correspond to Group Conversation, Design Your Own After-School Program, and Reflect Back.) There are no presenter's notes in the presentation – simply read aloud the slides with the group (or have members of the group read the slides aloud).

**Note: if you can't project the presentation, no worries! Here's an introduction you can give instead:**

The Allegheny County Executive's goal is to make sure that every child in Allegheny County can benefit from quality early learning and out-of-school time.

The Allegheny County Children's Fund Working Group has been assembled by the County Executive to make recommendations to the County Executive about how to accomplish that goal. (Because currently, all of the after-school programming in Allegheny County could only serve 28% of all youth in the County.)

Today, the Working Group wants to hear your thoughts about the after-school programs that are supporting kids today, what's missing, and how Allegheny County can be a leader for kids moving forward.

Today's input session is a part of a Community Outreach process being held across Allegheny County, including community meetings, surveys, and other Youth Input Sessions like this one. The input you give us today will give the Working Group on-the-ground feedback to complement the data our researchers are finding about after-school programs in Allegheny County.

#### Group Conversation/Think, Pair, Share about After-School Programs (20 minutes)

Decide as a group (or on your own as the facilitator) whether you want to ask the group the following questions as a group or using a method like Think, Pair, Share:<sup>1</sup>

- What do **you** think is important about after-school programs?
- What was important to you and your family when finding an after-school program? (Location? Hours? Cost? The focus area, like the arts, STEM, robotics, or academic support)?

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<sup>1</sup> In "Think, Pair, Share," the facilitator poses the questions to the group and the participants first think about what they know about the topic; then they pair with other participants into a small group of 2-3; and share their thinking with their partner(s). The facilitator then expands the "share" into a group discussion by asking each small group to share out their discussion.

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- What does your after-school program help you do? How does it help you achieve your goals?

Additional questions to get to the same answers would be: *How long have you been enrolled in an after-school program? What has been the biggest benefit to you about being in an after-school program? If you could change one thing about your current after-school program, what would it be? How common is it in your school to attend an after-school program?*

Overall, the goal is to learn about the participants' experiences, what they value about after-school programs, and how after-school programs are serving them and could best serve them.

During the conversation, the scribe should take notes onto the "Group Discussion Notes" page.

#### "Design Your Own After-School Program" (15 minutes in groups, 10-minute share-out)

To get the participants further thinking about what's valuable to them about after-school programs and which topics they would find engaging, the participants will split into small teams of 2-3 to design an after-school program they'd like to attend. To do this, they can use the letter-sized *Concept Poster* templates.

In small groups, the participants will talk through (and record on the paper templates) their own after-school program. Walk the participants through the questions on the template:

- What's the name of the program?
- What's the Big Idea? How would it benefit you?
- Details:
  - Where would the program be held?
  - Who would run it?
  - What would you do while there?
  - Who would attend?

At the conclusion of the activity, the facilitator should invite a member of each group to present a 30-second "sales pitch" about their after-school program. Encourage participants to clap after each one – and the facilitator should close out the activity by summarizing a few Key Themes heard across the concepts presented. The scribe should record these on the "*Concept Poster – Key Themes*" sheet.

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Reflect back: Key Points for the Working Group (5 minutes)

Gather the participants back together and ask them for any things they have heard over the course of the session that stuck out to them, and any additional points they want to make sure to communicate to the County Executive. The scribe should document these on the "*Reflect Back*" page.

Sincerely thank the participants on behalf of the members of the Children's Fund Working Group.

**Documentation:**

Please scan or photograph the notes documents from your meeting as well as the concept posters and email the files to **[redacted]**.

Alternately, if you have the time, transcribe the notes documents into Microsoft Word and email the Word documents to **[redacted]** along with photos or scans of the Concept Poster documents.

And finally, **please take a couple of photos of the Youth Input sessions in progress and share them with us!**