# Community Solutions Action Plan for Erie County

## COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

After nearly 40 years of slow, steady decline, Erie County (PA) is poised for resurgence, and education is playing ___the___ pivotal role in this turnaround.

**Erie County** is located in northwest Pennsylvania along the shores of Lake Erie. It is positioned 100 miles northeast of Cleveland, Ohio; 90 miles southwest of Buffalo, New York; and 130 miles north of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania – far enough from these major cities to have its own **unique community** identity.

From its first settlement in 1795 to the mid-1970s, the City of Erie and Erie County experienced steady, consistent growth propelled by immigration from Eastern European nations attracted by plentiful jobs in shipbuilding, fishing, and manufacturing. Successive waves of English, Irish, German, Italian, Polish, and Russian immigrants generated population gains across Erie County in excess of 10% for 150 years, from 1810 to 1960 (with just one exception: a 3.2% gain from the 1940 census). While growth slowed after World War II, Erie County's population still registered significant increases: 14% in 1960, 5% in 1970 and 6% in 1980.

Erie County's diverse manufacturing sector created a stable middle class in the City of Erie and Erie County. Many home-grown industrial corporations were established, creating family-sustaining employment and strong community engagement. Important civic, cultural, educational and social service institutions were founded, which continue to anchor the community today. In the 1960s, the demographics of Erie County so closely mirrored national statistics that Erie became one of the nation's top test markets for consumer products.

By the end of the 1970s, industrial restructuring began to impact Erie and Erie County. Middle class manufacturing jobs started to disappear and downtown's position as the region's retail hub was replaced by a large regional mall and big box retailers in the suburbs.

By the mid-1980s, the region's slow decline was in full force, marked by the departure of corporate headquarters for two major home-grown manufacturers. Other hometown manufacturers were acquired and ultimately closed by new parent companies with no ties to the community. Good-paying manufacturing jobs peaked at 49,500 in 1974, replaced by lower-paying jobs in manufacturing, service, and tourism. **Blight** started to appear in inner city neighborhoods as the city's once high percentage of owner-occupied homes was replaced with absentee ownership.The City of Erie population peaked in 1960 (138,440); since then, the city has lost 28% of its population, falling below 100,000 people in 2016 for the first time since 1930.

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Despite the ominous trends over the past 40 years, there has been a sense of complacency among elected officials, business leaders and citizens. One major reason: the decline in jobs was slow and gradual. Decline was concentrated in inner city neighborhoods, unseen by those living in the suburbs. And, offsetting the decline was the growth of **"meds and eds"** (four universities, one medical college and three major hospitals) and the completion of key infrastructure projects including the Bayfront Parkway, ballpark, convention center and adjacent hotels.

The good news? **The complacency is over.** A community-wide planning process (*Destination Erie: A Regional Vision*) began in 2013 that brought key issues to the forefront. With input from thousands of Erie County residents, challenges - *and opportunities* - were identified and promoted across Erie County in a 25-year plan called *Emerge 2040: A Focused Partnership for the Erie Region's Future.*The challenges identified through Destination Erie's work and incorporated into Emerge 2040 include:

- High Poverty Rates and Concentrations
- Manufacturing Decline and Ongoing Economic Transformation
- Mismatch between Available Jobs and Workforce Skills
- Lack of Regional Coordination
- Inequality between Public Schools
- Suburbanization/Loss of population in City Centers
- Aging Housing Stock/Neighborhood Blight
- Disparity in Access/Opportunity for Minority Communities
- Distance between Population Centers and Jobs

**The challenge is real**, as evidenced by these demographics:

| Poverty and Risk Factors | Erie County Population 2016 Estimate: 276,207 - 1.6% Decline |
|---|---|
| **Erie County** <br> • Poverty Rate (2016): 15.9% <br> • Unemployment Rate (2017): 5.8% <br> • Foreign-born Population (2015): 4.9% <br> • Language Other than English at Home (2015): 6.7% <br> • Per Capita Income (2015): $40,425 <br> • Infant Mortality Rate (2015): 6.4% <br> • Low Birth Weight Babies (2015): 7.5% <br> • Grades K-6 Overweight or Obese (2013): 53.8% <br> **City of Erie** <br> • Poverty Rate (2016):  27.3% (2nd highest in PA) <br> • Foreign-born Population (2015): 8.9% <br> • Language Other than English at Home (2015): 10.8% <br> • Children Under 5 living in poverty (2016): 42.1% | • Persons under 5 years: 5.6% <br> • Persons under 18 years: 21.7% <br> • Persons 65 years and older: 16.5% <br> • White alone: 87.5% <br> • Black or African American alone: 7.3% <br> • American Indian or Alaska Native alone: 0.2% <br> • Asian alone: 1.8% <br> • Hispanic or Latino: 4.1% <br> • Two or more races: 2.4% |

Not unlike other communities, organizational and project silos are unfortunately well-established, and individual interests are still too often prioritized above the common good. As a result, resources are scattered. Local program developers and social service organizations collect data as instructed to show their effectiveness, but are unable to show meaningful gains because their reach is naturally limited when working in silos. Often, these programs are either too limited to have large impact, or are disconnected from other efforts and, thus, have isolated impact. Ultimately, despite isolated successes, the big "needles"- family self-sufficiency, poverty, grade-level proficiency, and graduation rates- remain mostly unmoved.

This isolated approach has been challenged over the past several years, in particular with the county-wide movement driven by Erie Together. Three leading community organizations came together to form Erie Together, including Mercyhurst University, GECAC, and United Way of Erie County. Through Erie Together's work, the appetite to work more collaboratively has increased and we are well-poised to broaden this approach through the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. United Way has also taken a lead in incorporating and implementing the **collective impact approach** with its community-wide efforts.

And, the business community is taking a leadership role to reposition Erie County for growth. Almost $500 million in new private sector investment in the City of Erie was announced in just the 4th quarter 2016 alone by major for-profit and nonprofit institutions. These proactive, collaborative efforts complement the work that needs to be done "upstream" to assure that Erie County has an educated and skilled workforce that can fill jobs being created, providing individuals and families the opportunity to be self-sufficient.

The community recognizes that poverty is the issue and economic self-sufficiency is the goal. Community leaders understand that education will play **_the_** critical role in repositioning Erie County for future success. One major initiative is the introduction of community schools in Erie's Public Schools that started in 2016 in conjunction with United Way of Erie County; the long-term goal is to establish community schools across all 13 Erie County school districts to address barriers preventing children from succeeding in school. Another major educational initiative is the effort to establish a community college in Erie, one of the largest communities in the nation without a community college. This is seen as critical to providing skills training at a low cost across Erie County where only 28.1% of adults age 25 or older have a bachelor's degree or higher.

## THE PROBLEM

### _Current Situation:_

Two significant barriers to success in school include not participating in, or having access to, high-quality early childhood education and living in an impoverished/low income household. These two factors are directly connected to negative outcomes, including being behind when entering kindergarten and absenteeism.

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Children from low income households are known to be at higher risk of not being prepared for kindergarten and success in school thereafter. As noted in the Community Overview, Erie County has a persistently high rate of poverty, with the City of Erie experiencing the second highest rate of poverty, just over 27%, in the entire state of Pennsylvania behind Reading.

Poverty impacts a significant percentage of children in both the City of Erie and Erie County. The latest *American Community Survey* numbers show that **24%** of children under the age of 18 in the entire county live in poverty. In the City of Erie, that number is 40%, with just over 42% of children below the age of five living in poverty.

The federal poverty level for a **family of four** is currently **$24,600**. This is only part of the story. If this family has a household income of $25,000 they are not officially living at or below the federal poverty level and will not qualify for many forms of aid, despite our recognition that this family is not financially stable. Furthermore, according to the most recent PA Office of Child Development and Early Learning Program Reach and Risk Assessment report, the percentage of children under the age of five living in economically at-risk families is 71.7% for Erie County, compared to 60% for the state. Of these, 29.3% are economically high risk in Erie County compared to 22.1% across the state.[1]

Another indicator of the at-risk or low-income student population is eligibility for the National School Lunch program. Currently, **62% of children are receiving free/reduced lunches** in Erie County. In the City of Erie, 100% of the school population receives free/reduced lunches - double the number for the state of Pennsylvania, which is just under 50%.

All 12 Erie City elementary schools were Title I schools in the 2016-17 school year, and all except for two of the 22 Erie County elementary schools were Title I in the same school year.[2] If 40% or more of the student population qualifies for Title I funding to help disadvantaged students, the entire school is considered a Title I school. These federal funds support the needs of students at risk of failure and living in poverty. In the 2016-17 school year there were a total of **34 public elementary schools** in Erie County that offered 3rd grade (some schools are only Pre-K - 2).

The gap for early childhood education exists in both educating families about the importance of early childhood education, and enabling families to overcome barriers so they can actually access early education programs. Less than half of eligible children in Erie County are currently participating

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[1] Economically at-risk is defined in the Reach and Risk Assessment as living at 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), while economically high risk is living at 100% of the FPL.

[2] The count of 34 county schools includes 2 elementary schools that were closed due to redistricting following the 2017-2018 school year; the elementary schools that closed are Emerson-Gridley Elementary and Wayne. It should also be noted that this number includes schools with third grade classes and NOT elementary schools that are grades Pre-K-Grade 2 only (there are 2 Pre-K-Grade 2 schools in Erie County).

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in publicly-funded, quality early education programs (**46.9%**), which directly impacts the number of children entering Kindergarten with age-appropriate skills.

Furthermore, due to differing policies between school districts in Erie County, there is not a universal measurement tool to assess kindergarten readiness. Each district uses their own method, and there is no state-level policy to streamline this process. Transition supports are also lacking for families between early learning providers that offer Pre-K and Kindergarten programs. Kindergarten is not mandatory in Pennsylvania since the compulsory school age is eight years old. Locally, there are some resources in place for children who do attend kindergarten such as the Kindergarten Readiness Tool Kit created by Erie Together, and scholarships to attend high-quality early learning programs from Erie's Future Fund. As well, the county helps low-income families with child care subsidies so that they can afford to attend Keystone STARS child care providers. Building off the work that has already begun in Erie County, we find ourselves at a point where we can create systems-level supports through the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.

The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) data for academic achievement in Erie County shows several areas for concern, the most serious of which is the percentage of students scoring below proficient on 3rd grade reading. Of the 34 elementary schools in the county, 10 have at least half of their 3rd grade population scoring below proficient for the latest school year (2016-17). The worst-performing school reports that 78% of its 3rd grade students are below proficient.

Of the 34 Erie County schools for which 3rd grade PSSA scores are recorded, only seven have 80% of their students or more reading at grade-level proficiency or above. Ten of the 34 schools have fewer than 50% of students in the same category; five of these schools report that over **70%** of their 3rd grade students score below proficient in reading at grade-level.

The average of 3rd grade students across Erie County scoring below proficient in reading is **39%**. With the direct correlation between this academic indicator and the potential for dropping out of school, this could be called a "crisis for student success" in our community. One way to reduce this crisis is through community schools, which offer integrated supports for students K-12 in order to address grade-level reading and high school graduation rates. For the students who are graduating from high school, these integrated supports ensure that they are graduating with a **plan** (college, trade, or career) and the skills to be successful.

## DESTINATION, STRATEGY & DATA

For each of the three focus areas of school attendance, school readiness and summer learning, four domains are included in their strategies: children, families, community and policy. Goals have been identified for each domain, along with desired outcomes and measures, through a process detailed later in this document.

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In addition to the domains under each of the three focus areas, cross-cutting issues that will impact the work of the three subcommittees have been an important part of discussion and will be included as part of a comprehensive strategy. These include parent involvement, health, and cultural competency to ensure the inclusion of diverse populations.

Achieving these goals ranges from strengthening, expanding, and coordinating existing programs to developing and inventing new and innovative approaches. Due to the range of interventions, it will be important to adapt practices to fit the needs of our community. Some goals have accessible and readily-available baseline data that will be used to track progress. Reaching other goals might require providers to track data differently or even develop new metrics in order to ensure accountability. In some places there is still not a clear understanding of what data is being collected in the community.

Therefore, during the first several months after acceptance of this CSAP, and with the input of the technical assistance resources at GLR, priorities will be established within the three focus areas, including a mapped out 3-year implementation and data collection schedule.

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**More children ATTENDING school regularly**

*School Attendance*

**Build and maintain a county, district, and community-wide culture of attendance through early and preventive outreach, cross-sector systems of support, and attention to data.**

Data sources for this committee include: Infinite Campus or equivalent system to track student information, surveys, interviews, and partner program data.

### Domain: Children

**GOAL 1:**  Identify students at elementary schools in Erie County, PA who are chronically absent (missing 10% or more of the school year) as well as students at risk for chronic absenteeism (10+ days).

Measure: Number of students who are chronically absent (missing 10% or more of the school year) or in danger of becoming chronically absent (10+ days) as identified by Infinite Campus or equivalent system records (disaggregated by grade).

Outcome: The scale of chronic absenteeism across Erie County school districts will be understood and schools will prioritize tracking relevant data.

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**GOAL 2:** Identify the root causes of chronic absenteeism for students in grades Pre-K - 3 in Erie County, PA.

> <u>Measure:</u> Data collected from principal interviews, surveys, and administrative interviews on why students are or are at risk of being chronically absent
>
> <u>Outcome:</u> Districts will develop reduction strategies for highest-frequency root causes.

**GOAL 3:** Increase the number of Erie County, PA elementary schools that utilize the Attendance Works three-tiered system or equivalent evidence-based support systems (and implement them with fidelity) that seek to create positive school climates and address root causes.

> <u>Measure:</u> Number of elementary schools in Erie County, PA utilizing Attendance Works three-tiered system or equivalent evidence-based system of support for improving attendance
>
> <u>Outcome:</u> Schools will utilize three-tiered support or equivalent to address attendance barriers for students through school-wide and individual approaches.

## Domain: Families

**GOAL 1:** Establish a preventative education program for parents to promote positive engagement with the schools, instill the value of attendance to student education, and review school attendance policies.

> <u>Measure:</u> Number of touchpoints with parents
>
> <u>Outcome:</u> Parents will receive information about the importance of attendance and begin to encourage their children to attend school. Parents of chronically absent students will be discerned and addressed through school and community resources.

**GOAL 2:** Increase supports to address root causes of absenteeism for individual families by leveraging the Community Schools model. Examples could include free in-school child care and health care (dental, medical, vision) services.

> <u>Measure:</u> Number of supports for parents/families of chronically absent students
>
> <u>Outcome:</u> Parents will be offered school-level supports through conversations with school and community teams.

**GOAL 3:** Decrease the percentage of children in Kindergarten who are chronically absent at each of the target population's elementary schools.

> <u>Measure:</u> Number of Kindergarten students that are chronically absent in each school, number of  students eligible and enrolled in Kindergarten county-wide
>
> <u>Outcome:</u> Kindergarten students and their families will understand the importance of attending and enrolling in school.

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<p align="center">**Domain: Community**</p>

**GOAL 1:** Create an attendance awareness and education campaign for community partners.
> Measure: Number of distribution methods, number of materials distributed, number of partners promoting campaign
> Outcome: Community members will be more exposed to materials that promote the importance of school attendance from an early age.

**GOAL 2:** Identify community partners working on addressing absenteeism through data collection, reporting, training, and intervention.
> Measure: Number of partner programs collecting program level data
> Outcome: Community partner supports will be integrated for students to better connect to partners and community resources.

**GOAL 3:** Establish a Walking School Bus with parents and other community volunteers to ensure that safe travel is not a barrier to attendance.
> Measure: Number of walking school bus routes and active "buses"
> Outcome: Chronically absent students will be encouraged to attend school through increased neighborhood outreach, also removing some transportation barriers.

<p align="center">**Domain: Policy**</p>

**GOAL 1**: Create an attendance awareness and education campaign for policy makers about absenteeism at the county, district, and community levels.
> Measure: Number of distribution methods, number of events attended, number of politicians promoting campaign
> Outcome: Policymakers will better understand the importance of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading strategies and allocate resources to support them.

**GOAL 2:** Connect with political leaders in established Campaign for Grade-Level Reading communities to better understand the process of integration and determine potential next steps at the local level.
> Measure: Action steps determined by conversations held with political leaders from established GLR communities
> Outcome: The Summit on Campaign for Gradle Level Reading will be held in Erie.

**More children READY for kindergarten**

*School Readiness*

**All children in Erie County are school-ready as a result of having access to and experiencing high-quality early care and education through their families and community ECE providers.**

Data sources for this committee include: 2015-2016 Pennsylvania Reach and Risk Assessment, Erie Together, PSSA results, PA Department of Education, United Way of Erie County, PA Office of Child Development and Early Learning, Erie Family Center, and DIBELS scores.

### Domain: Children 0-5

**GOAL 1:** Increase the percentage of children, 0-5, who are enrolled in high-quality, publicly-funded child care/early learning programs in Erie County.

> Measure: Percent of children under 5 served by all ECE (Early Childhood Education) programs and percent of children eligible to be enrolled in ECE programs
> Outcome: More children 0-5 will be enrolled in high-quality early learning programs.

**GOAL 2:** Increase the percentage of children who register on-time for kindergarten in Erie County.

> Measure: Percent of children who register on-time for Kindergarten in Erie County
> Outcome: Children will be registered on-time for kindergarten.

**GOAL 3:** Increase the percentage of children who are school-ready in Erie County.

> Measure: Number and percent of children entering kindergarten who are proficient and above in DIBELS (Letter Naming Fluency) and the Kindergarten Entry Inventory (KEI)[3] for pre-academic competencies and learning engagement competencies
> Outcome: Students will acquire alphabet knowledge so they are better prepared for kindergarten.

**GOAL 4:** Decrease the percentage of children who are reading below Proficient by the end of third grade in Erie County.

> Measure: Percent of children below proficient in reading at 3rd grade PSSA, or equivalent assessment
> Outcome: Students will score better on the PSSA 3rd grade reading assessments.

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[3] KEI is Pennsylvania's effort to establish a statewide reporting tool

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<div align="center">**Domain: Families**</div>

**GOAL 1:** Increase the number/percent of at-risk children under 5 served in high-quality ECE programs that have a parental component, focusing on healthy parent-child relationships.

> <u>Measure:</u> Number and percentage of children under 5 served in specified ECE programs with a parental component; number of parents successfully completing parenting programs
>
> <u>Outcome:</u> Parents will be engaged in their child's education while creating healthy parent-child relationships.

**GOAL 2:** Increase the books available to children and families in Erie County.

> <u>Measure:</u> Number of children enrolled in the United Way's Imagination Library; number of books distributed via the Summer Slide Program; number of books distributed via Hooked on Books for Kids
>
> <u>Outcome:</u> More children will have books at home, which encourages families to read together.

**GOAL 3:** Increase the number of families using the Kindergarten Readiness Tool Kit.

> <u>Measure:</u> Number of families using the Kindergarten Readiness Tool Kit
>
> <u>Outcome:</u> Children and their families will be better prepared to enter kindergarten.

**GOAL 4:** Track the number of children receiving immunizations prior to the start of school.

> <u>Measure:</u> Immunization record reports from school nurses across the district
>
> <u>Outcome:</u> Students will start school on-time because they meet state immunization requirements.

**GOAL 5:** Increase availability of resources to support physical health barriers (vision/ hearing interventions).

> <u>Measure:</u> Number and percent of children who are screened and referred for vision/hearing intervention(s)
>
> <u>Outcome:</u> Children are not only being screened and referred, but are also receiving interventions after follow-ups with the families.

<div align="center">**Domain: Community (ECE Providers)**</div>

**GOAL 1:** Increase the number/percentage of high quality ECE providers in Erie County.

> <u>Measure:</u> Number and percentage of ECE providers participating in Keystone STAR[4] 3 and 4 providers in Erie County
>
> <u>Outcome:</u> More ECE providers in Erie County will provide high-quality programs and earn a STAR 3 and STAR 4 rating.

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[4] Keystone STARS provides performance standards to improve, support, and recognize quality improvement efforts of early learning programs in Pennsylvania.

**GOAL 2:** Increase the number/percentage of STAR 3 and 4 ECE providers in Erie County.
    Measure: Number and percentage of STAR 3 and 4 ECE providers in Erie County
    Outcome: More ECE providers in Erie County will provide high-quality programs and earn ranks STAR 3 and STAR 4.

**GOAL 3:** Increase the number of Pre-K Counts agencies and number/percentage of children served in Erie County.
    Measure: Number of children (3&4) served by Pre-K Counts agencies in Erie County; Number and children eligible to be served by Pre-K Counts in Erie County; Percent of eligible children served by Pre-K Counts agencies in Erie County
    Outcome: More eligible children in Erie County will be served by higher-quality Pre-K Counts providers.

**GOAL 4:** Increase the number of active transition teams in all Erie County school districts (i.e., teams meet at least two times per year; they include representation from early intervention, early childhood providers, and kindergarten teachers from the school districts).
    Measure: Number of active transition teams in Erie County school districts
    Outcome: Students in Erie County will be better prepared to transition from early learning environments to kindergarten.

**GOAL 5:** Increase the number of organizations distributing and collecting the pre- and post- metrics data from the Kindergarten Readiness Tool Kit.
    Measure: Number of organizations distributing and collecting pre- and post- data from the Kindergarten Readiness Tool Kit
    Outcome: The effectiveness of the Kindergarten Readiness Toolkit will be determined and data used to improve programming aimed at increasing kindergarten readiness.

<center>**Domain: Policy**</center>

**GOAL 1:** Increase legislator support for high-quality early care and education policies (i.e., for increase in funding for ECE programs and improving access to high-quality ECE by at-risk families)
    Measure: Amount of funding for ECE programs; amount of ECE funding per child served
    Outcome: More high-quality ECE programs will be available in Erie County

**GOAL 2:** Increase business financial support for and engagement with ECE programming in Erie County.
    Measure: Number of businesses in support for Erie's Future Fund and Educational Income Tax Credit; number of companies that serve as hosts for the Kindergarten Readiness Tool Kit
    Outcome: The engagement of the business community and their level of support for high-quality early learning programs will increase.

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**GOAL 3:** Increase the number of schools in Erie County that use the Kindergarten Entry Inventory as a measure of kindergarten readiness.

> <u>Measure:</u> Percentage of schools in Erie County that use the KEI
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> <u>Outcome:</u> More schools will utilize a standard assessment of Kindergarten learning style and how needs can be addressed through school and home supports.

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**More children LEARNING in the summer**

*Summer Learning*

## **<u>Maintain and nurture reading readiness and reading performance during the summer break.</u>**

Data sources for this committee include: existing summer programs, surveys, asset inventory, training sessions, budget allocations, and supportive businesses.

### **Domain: Children**

**GOAL 1:** Increase number of children (0-3$^{rd}$ grade) participating in summer learning opportunities that include a literacy component of 3-5 hours per week.

> <u>Measure</u>: Number of children participating in summer learning opportunities with a literacy component
>
> <u>Outcome:</u> More children will participate in and attend summer learning programs with a literacy component.

**GOAL 2:** Increase number of children of reading age who report reading at least 20 minutes per day on their own.

> <u>Measure:</u> Number of children who report reading 20 minutes per day on their own
>
> <u>Outcome:</u> More children of reading age will report reading at least 20 minutes per day on their own.

**GOAL 3:** Increase number of children that do not yet read who interact for at least 20 minutes per day (exposed to books, audio, speaking, listening, etc.) with "text" that promotes proper brain development .

> <u>Measure:</u> Number of early childhood learning programs; number of parents reporting that children are interacting with "text" 20 minutes per day
>
> <u>Outcome:</u> More children that do not yet read will interact for at least 20 minutes per day with "text" that promotes proper brain development.

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## Domain: Families

**GOAL 1:** Increase family knowledge about the summer slide and the importance of summer learning (through effective communication and promotion of information as well as resources).

    <u>Measure:</u> Number of parents reached through outreach (meetings, webinars, brochures, web hits, etc.)

    <u>Outcome:</u> An assessment method will be created to strengthen outreach efforts and share resources with families.

**GOAL 2:** Identify and reduce barriers families face to enrolling children in summer programs with a literacy component.

    <u>Measure:</u> Number of barriers and solutions to barriers identified

    <u>Outcome:</u> Families will face fewer barriers to enrolling children in summer programs with a literacy component.

**GOAL 3:** Increase number of families that utilize/participate in academically-focused summer learning opportunities with a literacy component (i.e. using the programs and resources outlined in the Community asset inventory).

    <u>Measure:</u> Number of children participating in summer programs with a literacy component

    <u>Outcome:</u> Parents will use asset inventory to get information about ECE programs.

**GOAL 4:** Encourage parents to support year-round literacy engagement with their children.

    <u>Measure:</u> Number of parents with children in summer programs that report working with children during school year

    <u>Outcome:</u> Parents will be more aware of different ways to engage with their children (conversation, vocabulary, etc.)

**GOAL 5:** Increase number of parents who report that their child is engaged in age-appropriate literacy practices while at home (20+ minutes per day).

    <u>Measure:</u> Parents surveys and outreach

    <u>Outcome:</u> More parents will report that their child is engaged in age-appropriate literacy practices while at home (20+ minutes per day).

## Domain: Community

**GOAL 1:** Create an inventory of summer programs are currently available within the community and categorize the information in a way that is useful for families.

    <u>Measure:</u> Ages served, length of program, geographic area, type of program, fee

    <u>Outcome:</u> Parents will be able to publicly access the asset inventory to get information about free programs.

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**GOAL 2:** Scale up training for providers, directors and staff of existing summer learning programs to make them aware of how their existing program can promote literacy programming based on best practices.

> Measure: Number of training, hours spent, programs participating in training, etc.
> Outcome: Providers will better understand the importance of literacy programming and their programs  meet the national standard of 2+ hours/day.

**GOAL 3:** Identify gaps in summer learning programs for low-income populations including both the types of services that are offered and the specific geographic area served using the resource inventory.

> Measure: Community asset inventory gaps identified
> Outcome: GLR can understand and address service and geographic gaps in Summer Learning Programs.

<p style="text-align:center; color:orange;"><strong>Domain: Policy</strong></p>

**GOAL 1:** Encourage subject matter experts from other GLR communities to come and speak to public sector representatives about the long-term benefits for the economic health of the community and workforce development to implement these practices.

> Measure: Action steps determined by conversations held with subject matter experts from established GLR communities
> Outcome: Public sector representatives will recognize the importance of GLR strategies, support them, and more high-quality ECE programs will be available in Erie County.

**GOAL 2:** Create a plan to engage with local decision makers (education and outreach) to ensure they are aware of importance of Grade-Level Reading.

> Measure: Action steps from meetings with local decision makers
> Outcome: Local decision makers will recognize the importance of GLR strategies, support them, and more high-quality ECE programs will be available in Erie County.

**GOAL 3:** Commit to advocacy by encouraging our representatives to create a fair state-level budget each year that prioritizes summer learning programs.

> Measure: State budget amount allocated to efforts, programs and initiatives aligned with GLR including ECE programs, amount of funding
> Outcome: More high-quality summer learning programs will be available in Erie County.

**GOAL 4:** Encourage the business community to become advocates to promote literacy by 3rd grade.

> Measure: Number of businesses in support of or sponsoring summer learning programs in Erie County
> Outcome: More high-quality summer learning programs will be available in Erie County.

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## SYNERGY, SUCCESS, AND SUSTAINABILITY

Erie is fortunate to have many resources working to improve the community. However, these efforts have oftentimes been made in silos, resulting in isolated impact. There is increased awareness, however, that this is not an effective or efficient way to address challenges and move toward common goals. Erie Together, a community movement that was formed seven years ago, worked to promote collaboration between public organizations, the private sector, social services and ordinary citizens, laying the foundation for future initiatives.

United Way of Erie County is building upon this work and collaborative approach. As the backbone organization for GLR, a role United Way also serves with community schools, it will use the collective impact model to assure that the work will follow this systemic approach that includes: a common agenda, shared measurements for data and results, mutually reinforcing results, and open and continuous communications.

The collective impact effort for GLR has included bringing diverse stakeholders to the table to ensure commitment to the strategy as well as aligning the efforts of existing champions of early childhood education. Members of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading Leadership Planning Team represent partners throughout Erie County such as: Hooked on Books for Kids, Erie Together, Mercyhurst University, United Way of Erie County, Penn State Behrend, Partnership for Erie's Public Schools, Erie's Public Schools, Edinboro University, Girard School District, Northwest Institute of Research, Gannon University, Erie County Library System, Erie Day School, Minority Community Investment Coalition, St. Benedict Education Center, YMCA, and the Barber National Institute.

As referenced earlier in the Community Overview, *Emerge 2040* is a county-wide initiative that is being implemented within the community that would also promote synergy, success, and sustainability of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. Emerge 2040 aims to create a thriving, educated, livable, green and connected Erie County by guiding the application of the region's 25-year plan for sustainability through collaborative and inclusive leadership.

Specifically, two of Emerge 2040's educational recommendations closely align with GLR and community schools. They are: create countywide access to high-quality early childhood care and education; and, develop a countywide network of community partnerships among schools, universities, local nonprofits and government agencies to meet the year-round education needs of residents of all ages.

Community schools have received broad-based support and capacity building resources to continue the efforts led by United Way. Stakeholders, including lead partners, corporate partners, and community organizations, have mobilized their resources to support this initiative and express their commitment to this proven model. United Way, working with numerous community partners, will integrate GLR within the community schools model, strategically directing funding and resources toward meeting our goals as set forth in the CSAP. Currently, community schools are in three

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elementary schools and two middle schools in the City of Erie. The vision is to have the community schools model deployed county-wide in all 13 school districts.

United Way is committed to **transparency** and **open communication** to ensure support of the GLR initiative in the future throughout the entire Erie County community. Through United Way's outreach plans GLR information will be incorporated where appropriate, including educational materials for distribution in the community about community schools. Educating the public about services and supports in the community is a top priority as exhibited in the Destination and Strategy sections, where we explain our strategies to accomplish our goals.

## OVERVIEW OF CSAP DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The process for developing Erie County's CSAP began in **early 2017**. Organizations connected to early childhood literacy and education were invited to provide representatives to participate on the Leadership Planning Team ().

An organizational meeting was held at United Way of Erie County on **February 14** with the confirmed Leadership Planning Team members. A review of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading was presented with open Q&A. A draft Letter of Intent was also circulated for comments and recommendations. The final LOI was submitted on **February 23**.

Following the LOI submission, a conference call with Jeff Smink, our technical assistance liaison, was held on **March 15** with the Leadership Planning Team. Jeff provided an overview of the GLR, including activity statewide in Pennsylvania and updates. In addition, the group discussed next steps with Jeff and the timeline.

Subsequent to the call with Jeff, the Leadership Planning Team was surveyed for interest in participating on one of the three subcommittees to be formed: school readiness, school attendance and summer learning. They were also asked to provide names of potential additional members to ensure inclusivity.

The subcommittees began meeting in **April**, focusing their efforts on identifying an overarching mission statement along with goals, measures and outcomes. Each subcommittee focused on four domains: children, families, community and policy. Their work represents the main section of the CSAP and will guide the action plans for these three focus areas moving forward. A timeline based on priorities will be part of the action plans, but we understand that this will be an effort that necessarily needs to be monitored and updated based on changing factors in the community.

Simultaneous to the work of the subcommittees, a smaller group focused on the other CSAP components. A final draft was completed in **mid-November** and distributed to the Leadership Planning Team. A meeting of the Leadership Planning Team was held on **November 16**, with final

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comments and recommendations due by the end of November. These were incorporated into the final CSAP that is being submitted.

Next steps after the CSAP submission will be to set priorities and timelines for each focus area. Then, each subcommittee will work on implementation, following a **3-year schedule**. **United Way** will serve as the **backbone organization** for this county-wide initiative, working closely with all current and future partners.

Outreach to potential additional partners is ongoing and we expect that the Leadership Planning Team and subcommittees will expand. This includes all of the 13 school districts located in Erie County.

The successful completion of the CSAP demonstrates the willingness and desire by the numerous partners to **work collectively** to achieve a **common agenda**. Erie Together has been instrumental in building community-wide efforts around early childhood education and this will enable that work, with contributions of **hundreds**, to be taken to the next level through GLR. In addition, United Way of Erie County has shifted from a transactional model to a transformational model, leveraging collective impact to effect systemic change versus isolated impact. This shift, along with the county-wide community schools initiative, will ensure that the GLR work will be sustained and integrated with other efforts focusing on **systemic change**.

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## Campaign For Grade-Level Reading
## Erie County Leadership Planning Team

**Dean Baldwin**
*Hooked on Books for Kids*

**Phillip Belfiore**
*Mercyhurst University*

**Del Birch**
*Bayfront Eastside Task Force*

**Mary Bula**
*Erie Together*

**Lisa Ciecierski**
*Penn State Erie, The Behrend College*

**Daria Devlin**
*Partnership for Erie's Public Schools*

**Bernadine Habursky**
*Erie's Public Schools*

**Gary Horton**
*Minority Community Investment Coalition*

**William Jackson**
*United Way of Erie County*

**Michael Jaruszewicz**
*United Way of Erie County*

**Sue Johnson**
*Mercyhurst University*

**Mary Jo Melvin**
*Edinboro University*

**Donna Miller**
*Girard School District*

**Joyce Miller**
*Northwest Institute of Research*

**Robin Quick**
*Gannon University*

**Laurie Root**
*United Way of Erie County*

**Jill Simmons**
*YMCA of Greater Erie*

**Sheryl Thomas**
*Erie County Library System*

**Karen Tyler**
*Erie Day School*

**Jill Varner**
*St. Benedict Education Center*

**Nina Wolfarth**
*Barber National Institute*

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