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In December and January, Erie Together connected with its broad network of participants to explore and solidify 2017 priorities. Keep reading for the results of this strategic planning work and additional key Erie Together activity...

Early Childhood Readiness and Success (Action Team 1)

- An individual's future success begins with a solid early foundation. That's why in 2017, the early childhood readiness and success action team will deploy a comprehensive countywide campaign to reach the most challenged neighborhoods and families with greatest need. The campaign will generate awareness of the importance of high quality early childhood education and third grade reading proficiency, and help connect families to resources to improve children's outcomes. One key element will be to use innovative technology to reach parents.

This work will complement additional Erie Together efforts to improve kindergarten readiness and third grade reading proficiency in the region, including support for Erie County's inclusion in the nationwide Campaign for Grade Level Reading and efforts to significantly improve early reading outcomes through individualized instruction in the classroom.

Aligning Education to Careers (Action Team 2)

- This team's desired outcome is to increase the number of students graduating high school well prepared for what's next. In 2017, this team will develop a positive informational campaign on affordable and achievable career pathways and help employers showcase potential job openings in our region. The campaign will not only target students, but also parents, community leaders, and other caring adults. This campaign will complement the important work of Erie Together's College, Career and Life Readiness task team, a group of school district and workforce development leaders who are developing career pathways within our local school districts and beyond.

Individual and Family Stability (Action Team 3)

- In order to increase the number of self-sufficient families in Erie County, this team will pursue ways to foster family-to-family supports, namely through mentoring opportunities. Elements may include promoting existing evidence-based programs, encouraging

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successful program participants to share stories and encouragement, and supporting opportunities for families to come together and form positive connections.

This work is very well aligned with Erie Together's Getting Ahead program expansion through partnerships with social service and faith-based organizations in our community.

Aligning Workforce and Economic Development (Action Team 4)

- To help more Erie County residents find and maintain family-sustaining employment, this team will bolster its efforts to help individuals understand required job skills at all levels – from basic academic skills, to soft skills, to technical skills. Furthermore, the team will work to connect individuals with local supports to help develop those skills, potentially through publicizing a list of providers, linking training programs to employment opportunities, and addressing gaps within existing pathways.

Miscellaneous:

- Upcoming **Action Team Meetings**: March 21 and 22 or [click here](#) for the yearly calendar.
- The panelists from our **2016 Erie Together Community Forum** have answered many of the questions raised by the audience at the event. [Click here](#) to visit our website.
- **ExpERIEnce Children's Museum** has new hours, classes, and special events. Visit the [website](#) for more information on discounted rates for those with EBT cards, and upcoming sensory friendly free admission days.
- For students attending post-secondary education or training institutions, the **FAFSA** is due before May 1 to be eligible for financial aid. Make sure families are aware of this requirement and assistance available through [PHEAA](#). If your organization would like to host a *help night*, please contact Amy Sloan (asloan@pheaa.org).
- Erie Together's **Kindergarten Registration Flyers** will be available soon. Contact mary@erietogether.org for copies.
- Erie Together remains committed to regularly convening leaders of **other significant strategic community initiatives** – Emerge 2040, Unified Erie, Erie Refocused and the Community Health Improvement Plan – to develop synergies and address local priorities. One significant result of this work to date is the creation of the "Education and Training Consortium." [Click here](#) for more information.