



## Touchpoints Professional Development: An Overview of Touchpoints: The How of Child and Family Engagement

Brazelton Touchpoints is an evidence-based child and family engagement approach. This professional development program strengthens relationship based and developmentally informed practice for providers who work with young children and their families. It focuses on implementing a set of strength-based practices such as careful observation of children’s behavior and parents’ strengths to improve parent-provider and parent-child relationships that promote family health and wellness. It also provides the common language that can be used between and among providers as they work to create a partnership that supports seamless care for families. This practice-strengthening approach is intended to be embedded in the work that staff already do, rather than to add more time commitments and tasks to their work.

The virtual Touchpoints: The How of Child & Family Engagement training includes nine interactive learning modules. In each module there is a 90 minute live, synchronous, session and 60-90 minutes of asynchronous, online, activities (video presentations, online discussions). The training also includes six months of reflective practice calls for one hour per month following the initial nine modules.

**Gathering** - The Touchpoints facilitators met with the coordinators at each site prior to the training to learn about the participants and the local recruitment process. We thought together with each site about how their recruitment efforts could match their community-based inquiry goals. We learned at each site that they worked to invite participants that were representative of their different partner organizations while also having several participants from the hosting organization. Each site considered participants who would be able to immediately integrate this professional development into their practice. They also identified some participants who may be able to advocate for building capacity in early childhood development throughout the local community. And, as the partner sites consider developing a local Touchpoints training team, the

team considered participants who may choose to build capacity to be local facilitators and sustain this professional development in the community.

**Adapting** - When we partner with tribal communities, our goal is to join the local community in their practices whenever possible. We ask the local coordinating team how they open and close their meetings and trainings in a good way. We then ask them to share these practices or protocols, if appropriate, for our training sessions. For each site, they shared opening blessings, songs, or chants. One of the sites also offered a closing protocol for each live training session.

**Reflections** – Modeling the model provides flexibility to adapt to each cohort in the IELC trainings. As we reviewed our experiences facilitating, our facilitators found several markers of success throughout the training experiences and in the participant discussions.

*“I’m thinking more about using the behavior of the child as my language. I don’t have to jump to fix things or problem solve as much when I listen to the parent and what they think the behavior means.”*

*“I decided to be a model for the staff, be a leader in coaching others, since I don’t work directly with children.”*

*“Mismatches happen all the time. I like this word as it is less aggressive than disagreement.”*

*“This training has helped me to take a step back and think about different perspectives. I feel that before starting to explore the Touchpoints, I had MY goals in mind for what I wanted the child to do/accomplish. When there would be mismatches, I didn’t always take the time to think about what the child was trying to tell me, instead I tried to push forward and make progress on items that I deemed as important.”*

**Closing thoughts** – As we culminated the three cohorts in this cycle of the Touchpoints training, our facilitators witnessed and heard the paradigm shift that the Touchpoints approach fosters. One participant noted that they, “like the paradigm shift itself. I like that it is based in looking at what is going right instead of what is going wrong.” And, one said, “I feel the guidance in this training is crucial to not only our teaching but with our relationships in life. I have learned how to take a step back and just listen.”

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### About the Indigenous Early Learning Collaborative:

Together, First Light Education Project and the Brazelton Touchpoints Center (BTC) lead the **Indigenous Early Learning Collaborative (IELC)**, a national initiative envisioned and designed in consultation with over 50 different tribal individuals, educators, and representatives from early childhood learning and care organizations and tribal departments of early childhood education. Launched in 2021, Native educators, early learning professionals, and leaders from four tribal/Native partner communities learn how to generate local solutions to historical and current dilemmas of practice. Community-Based Inquiry (CBI) — a process by which Indigenous communities engage in asking and investigating their own questions about their early childhood practices — is the driver and focal point of this project. The IELC was made possible by funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (Grant number: P0133104).

### The Brazelton Touchpoints Center

(BTC) was founded in 1996 by world-renowned pediatrician T. Berry Brazelton, MD, and colleagues and is based in the Division of Developmental Medicine at Boston Children’s Hospital. Together with families, providers, and communities, BTC develops and applies knowledge of early childhood development to practice and policy through professional and leadership development, organizational learning and change, research and evaluation, advocacy and awareness, and serving as a resource for proven practices. BTC is home to the Touchpoints Approach, the Brazelton Institute (Newborn Behavioral Observations and Neonatal Behavioral Assessment Scale), Family Connections, and the BTC Research and Evaluation team. For more information, visit [www.brazeltontouchpoints.org](http://www.brazeltontouchpoints.org)

### About First Light Education Project, LLC

Guided by the principle, “Starting with What Works,” *First Light Education Project, LLC*, is a consulting and collaborative initiative providing leadership on projects of practice and inquiry in community and educational contexts. The company’s two founders and principals, Dr. Tarajeau Yazzie-Mintz (Diné) and Dr. Ethan Yazzie-Mintz, bring extensive expertise and experience working with and within communities, Tribal nations and Indigenous communities, K–12 schools, non-profit organizations and foundations, and higher education institutions across a variety of social, political, and educational domains. Conceptually grounded in the idea that education is a fountain of enormous possibility and immense potential from prenatal development and continuing through adulthood, First Light Education Project uses a strengths-based and question-driven approach to create relationships, processes, and knowledge that lead to collective, transformative outcomes. For more information, visit [www.firstlighteducationproject.org](http://www.firstlighteducationproject.org)

### For more information about the IELC, contact:

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### Or visit the Indigenous Early Learning Collaborative website:

<https://www.brazeltontouchpoints.org/programs-services/indigenous-early-learning/>