



Touchpoints Professional Development: Attitudes into Practice

The Touchpoints approach includes several tools for building and sustaining relationships with children, families, and other providers. One set of tools are called the Touchpoints Provider Assumptions. These assumptions offer each of us an attitude that we can choose and hold as our mindset for an interaction with another provider. In our work with the Indigenous Early Learning Collaborative (IELC) partner sites, we considered how these can align with IELC group and individual community goals of building equitable practices.

Cultural Humility, Responsivity, Reciprocity

Touchpoints Provider Assumption - “All providers bring their cultural perspectives.”

As the Touchpoints approach encourages providers to join the family system, our facilitators model this practice by joining our training participants in their local community system. We do this by starting our engagement and then each interaction with listening. We are dedicated to learning from our participants – their goals, plans, and hopes for their children, families, and communities. Then, we are able to collaborate with them in their own individual and group integration of the Touchpoints approach to child and family engagement.

Cultural protocols - The Touchpoints facilitators met with the coordinators at each site prior to the training to learn about the participants and the local cultural protocols and practices when gathering together to learn and share. We learned from one group that they had recently begun implementing some cultural protocols that had not been a part of their organization though they were valued in the community. This site reported that they appreciated our effort to join with them in their practices and that it was affirming to their local efforts to revitalize these particular cultural ways of being together. One site offered various ways of opening

and closing our sessions; sometimes local tribal blessings or songs in their Native language, sometimes time for silent contemplation to remind us to be present in the moment for shared learning and understanding.

Reciprocity - The IELC cohorts were among the first tribal groups to experience an additional Touchpoints Guiding Principle (Acknowledge and respect each family's cultures), an additional Touchpoints Parent Assumption (Parenting is rooted in cultural practices, beliefs, and individual experiences), and an additional Touchpoints Provider Assumption (All providers bring their cultural perspectives) centered on culture. These additions are directly aligned with the other Touchpoints Principles and Assumptions. Collectively, they offer tools for the practitioner to integrate into their practice as strategies and attitudes in their interactions with children, families, coworkers, and community partners.

We intentionally expanded the culture, equity, and belonging concept discussions in each module with our IELC cohorts. In each live session, we have a time for reconnection. During this time, we ask a reflective question to bring the group back into the content and to connect the synchronous activities with the asynchronous activities. For the groups in our IELC, the facilitators chose to narrow the focus and tie it to local practices with an additional question/s in several of the sessions.

Examples of IELC adaptations –

Touchpoints concept: Developmental disorganization (regressions are expected and predictable) happens before a burst in development - the central idea in the Touchpoints Developmental Framework.

Reflection Questions: How did the disorganization show itself? (were there skills that regressed, were the child's mood or routines disrupted?)

IELC adaptation: How does the idea of anticipated regressions fit with your cultural understandings of development? How might you talk with parents about a regression?

Touchpoints concept: Alignment of the Touchpoints approach with the participants' practices.

Reflection Question: What aspects of the Touchpoints Approach seem to fit with your current practice? What are you still wondering about?

IELC adaptation: What aspects align or are congruent with your cultures and community? Are there any aspects that do not?

Touchpoints concept: The idea of mismatches and repairs in relationships.

Reflection Question: Think about an interaction you have had where you had a mismatch. What Touchpoints Principle would you use at that point of the mismatch/disconnection to reconnect?

IELC adaptation: Does the concept of mismatch in relationships fit with your cultural beliefs/practices?

Reflections – As we reviewed our experiences facilitating, our facilitators found several markers of success throughout the training experiences and in the participant discussions. Modeling the model provides flexibility to adapt to each cohort in the IELC trainings. The cultural identity of the individual participants, as well as the children, families and communities were central to the facilitators and the trainees. This has a direct correlation to the community-based inquiry projects in each of the partner sites. Several participants shared poignant self-reflections of their experiences:

“I used to only think of culture as something that Native Americans had. Now, I’m thinking about the culture in each family. I want to learn more about their family.”

“This training taught me about how everyone has different culture, kids are brought up very differently by separated parents, grandparents raising them, born addicted, and many other circumstances. We the teachers have to try our best to understand where every family is coming from and help them along the way while earning their trust as we take care and teach their child.”

“When I first heard the word culture I only thought it was meaning Tribal cultures...WOW, was that an eye opener for me! It took me some time to fully understand and grasp what culture meant. Miigwech for bringing that to light!”

“This training has helped me to think about the child’s perspective and also the family’s. I hadn’t really thought about my cultural biases in-depth prior to this course.”

“I thought we were mostly the same in this community. I’m now thinking more about the different perspectives of each family.”

Ties to the Indigenous Early Learning Collaborative mission, vision, and goals – As with our Community-Based Inquiry projects, we believe that local communities and providers have their own questions and their own answers. Touchpoints offers tools and strategies that are open and inclusive to supplement early childhood practices and offer some shared language. Local providers are then able to decide which parts of the approach could align with their individual, family, and community cultural ways of being and integrate Touchpoints in their own way.

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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

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

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Or visit the Indigenous Early Learning Collaborative website:

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