
Indigenous Early Learning Collaborative (IELC) Project Brief, Volume 04, February 2023



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.

Touchpoints Reflective Practice

Touchpoints Provider Assumption - “All providers need to reflect on their contributions to provider-parent interactions.”

In our Touchpoints training with the sites in the IELC, the facilitators utilized the Touchpoints reflective practice model as our process for planning and implementation. This model is an iterative cycle that parallels our community-based inquiry cycles and the cycles of our natural world. In this process, the facilitators gathered information about the participants and communities, adapted activities and questions to meet the needs/interests of the group, and then reflected on the training sessions in preparation for future sessions with these cohorts and future trainings with other groups.

Listening and learning – The Touchpoints reflective practice cycle begins from our first engagement with our participants. With the IELC sites, it began by meeting and learning with site teams as we collaborated with them in their learning about community-based inquiry and developed their local inquiry questions and projects. Our lead Touchpoints facilitator was part of this process from the beginning and that provided an

opportunity to join these communities as they reflected on their goals and hopes for the Touchpoints professional development.

Practicing the practice – Our Touchpoints facilitators describe the reflective practice cycle during the Touchpoints training. We then observe other Touchpoint trained providers interactions with families and discuss the intentional choices made by the provider in the video as they prepared for the encounter, met with the family, and then reflected afterward. Our goal is to model the reflective practice cycle within each session with the participants inviting them to see that it is a set of specific skills and practices that can be learned and integrated into their work with children, families, and colleagues.

Reflecting over time – In Touchpoints, the reflective practice conversations following the initial training sessions are integral to implementation and are part of training certification. Our facilitators are dedicated to supporting participants in the entire process. The reflective practice sessions are spread over six months to offer several opportunities for participants to plan, practice, and then reflect on their integration of Touchpoints in their setting. Stories and examples were shared that highlight Touchpoints Principles and Assumptions put into practice.

Reflecting as leaders – Many of the participants in the IELC Touchpoints trainings were not working directly with young children and families at this time. Our facilitators took time to think together with these participants about how they could apply Touchpoints in their work. The participants then shared how they used it in coaching and supervision. They discussed using the Touchpoints Provider Assumptions as they interacted with colleagues and other community partners. The site teams mentioned that they felt fortunate to be able to have both the reflective inquiry sessions for their community-based inquiry projects and the Touchpoints reflective practice sessions and they wanted to have more reflective times with the staff members whom they support.

Ties to the Indigenous Early Learning Collaborative mission, vision, and goals – The IELC provided some unique opportunities for our sites to gather and as our Hawaiian relatives call it, “talk story.” Cycles of reflection are valuable to thinking about our past and how it influences us today, observing and learning from our actions, and consider what we may want to continue and what we may want to let go of in our future practice. This year, our IELC site teams were part of the six Touchpoints Reflective Practice sessions, the three-day Brazelton Touchpoints Center National Forum, monthly community-based inquiry sessions with additional, collective inquiry sessions with all of the sites, and the Touchpoints Train the Trainer where local facilitator teams will now be able to offer the Touchpoints training in their local communities.

One goal of the IELC is sustainability. Reflective practice provides an opportunity for continued community capacity building and sustained practices and professional development in early childhood development and practice. Our efforts were layered to enhance collaboration within and across the IELC sites. Teams reported at the Touchpoints Train the Trainer that they appreciated the varied opportunities and experiences in getting to share their stories and learn from other IELC sites. Through reflective inquiry and practice, site teams found that they had much in common as they think about what they want for their children, families, and communities.

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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/>