

Touchpoints: Strategies to Link Families and ECE Staff for Children's Health, Education and Well-being

www.brazeltontouchpoints.org

Early Childhood Investigations Webinar PowerPoint version for ECI website
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Challenges and Opportunities for Early Childhood Educators

Early childhood educators:

- Open their hearts to every young child to support early development and learning (and sometimes may wonder if there is any room left)
- Share the care with each child's family (and sometimes may wonder about the family's care)
- Build children's brains – for life
(essential work, yet so undervalued, so underpaid)

The Brazelton Touchpoints Center Vision

For all children to grow up to be adults who can

- cope with adversity,
- strengthen their communities,
- constructively participate in civic life,
- steward our planet's resources, and
- nurture the next generation
- to be prepared to do the same.

What is Touchpoints?

- A dynamic, developmental theory with implications for practice change in pediatric health, early education and care, early intervention and social services
- An approach to working with children and families
- An approach to professional and organizational development, and community self-strengthening
- A Boston-based national and international learning community

Why Touchpoints?

Stressors on Families

- Workplace demands on families
- Changes in family structures and roles
- Increased economic challenges for families
- Stressed education, health and social services
- Increased family mobility and isolation
- Erosion of family traditions, neighborhoods and community connections

Why Touchpoints?

Stressors for Early Childhood Educators

- Low wages
- Inadequate benefits and job security
- No respect
- Not enough time for
 - taking care of ourselves
 - sharing the child with parents

Why Touchpoints? – A relational approach

- Reaffirm parents expertise

Why reaffirm parental expertise?

Professional cultures over-estimate

- the universality of Western child development knowledge,
- the possibility of a single “science of parenting”, and
- the capacity of professional institutions and systems to promote healthy development.

Why reaffirm parental expertise?

- Local knowledge of child development and childrearing, and community capacity for promoting healthy development are overlooked or under-estimated by professional cultures.

Why Touchpoints? – A relational approach

- Rehumanize healthcare
- Transform childcare into family care
- Shift social service from child ‘rescuing’
to family strengthening

Stressors for Parents and Providers

GATEKEEPING:

*“The natural competition felt by any two adults
who care passionately about the same child”*

-TB Brazelton, MD

Why Touchpoints? – A relational approach

- Break down barriers between service providers that fragment care
- Refocus health and human service workers on needs, strengths, problems, solutions *as understood by those we serve*
- Connect professional cultures through reflective practice with cultures of those we serve

Why Touchpoints?– A relational approach

- overcome burn out
- protect and restore our sense of mission

Why Touchpoints?

Rebuilding community: a web of relationships to support children's development and learning

- parent-provider relationships
- parent partner relationships
- parent peer relationships
- communitywide relationships

What is Touchpoints: Key elements

- Developmental
- Preventive
- Relational
- Strengths-based
- Systems theory based
- Culturally informed
- Evidence-based

Development: How Change Happens

- One developmental phase follows another.
- But why does one stop and one start? How?
- And what happens to a phase when it's over?
- How can we support development if we don't understand how change happens?

Touchpoints: disorganization and reorganization

The term “touchpoints” was first coined by T. Berry Brazelton to describe temporary periods of

- developmental disorganization for the child and family, followed by
- reorganization and the emergence of new developmental capacities.

Brazelton TB, rev with Sparrow JD. *Touchpoints 0-3: Your Child's Emotional and Behavioral Development*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press; Second edition; 2006

Heimann M. (Ed.). (2003). *Regression Periods in Human Infancy* (pp. 57-80). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum

Points in time to Touch into the family system

These *points* of time of heightened vulnerability for child and family are periods of both risk and opportunity during which health, education and other professionals serving children and their families can *touch* into the family system to:

- prevent developmental derailment and
- help keep development on track.

Non-human primate evidence for disorganization-reorganization in development

- Predictable transitional periods alternate with stable periods
- Regression: baby chimp more demanding, regresses, clingy, stays closer to mother
- Conflict: mother pushes baby –to discover new potential for greater independence

van de Rijt-Plooij, H.H.C. & Plooij, F. X. (1992). Infantile regressions: Disorganization and the onset of transition periods. *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology*, 10, 129-149.

Developmental Crises, Preventive Opportunities: Anticipatory Guidance

- Predictable Stress, Conflict-within child, child-parent, among adults
- *Vulnerability as opportunity for Learning, Relationship*
- *Vulnerability as risk for Parental sense of failure, incompetence, ineffectiveness, child abuse*

Developmental Crises, Preventive Opportunities: Anticipatory Guidance

- End of day fussing 3 – 12 weeks
- Discipline 9 months
- Tantrums 12-36 months
- Toilet training 24-36 months
- (domestic violence prevention?)

Brazelton TB, Sparrow JD. *Discipline the Brazelton Way*. Perseus Books; Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books; 2003.

Touchpoints: A Paradigm Shift

Practice Strategies for
Strengthening
Parental Self-Efficacy and
Parent-Provider Relationships

Effects of touching in

Mechanisms for these effects include family-provider relationships that affirm

- parental competence,
- parental confidence and
- the positive power of development during these developmental crises.

Touchpoints are times when parents worry about

- their children's development and
- their own effectiveness as parents.

The parent-provider relationship –guided by the Touchpoints approach- also absorbs stress that can interfere with emotional availability

How do children grow,
develop, and learn?

Children Learn Through Relationships

learning processes that require relationships:

- **Attachment**
- **Self Regulation**
- **Mutual Regulation**
- **Shared Subjectivity**

**these relational learning processes require
emotional availability
of child, parent, and teacher**

10 School readiness skills acquired through relational learning processes

- Attention, focus, filter distractions
- Impulse control
- Frustration tolerance
- Persistence
- Motivation
- Resourcefulness, flexibility, creativity
- Risk-taking
- Facing and learning from mistakes
- Understanding one's self, others
- Communication, collaboration – team work

See also “character skills” in: Heckman JJ. *Skill formation and the economics of investing in disadvantaged children*. Science 30 June 2006: Vol. 312. no. 5782, pp. 1900 - 190

What is emotional availability?

- The capacity of two humans (for example infant or child and parent) to be authentically present in the moment

Why is emotional availability necessary for learning?

- Learning depends on the two way transmission of verbal information as well as nonverbal signals that can be extremely rapid (microseconds) and subtle (e.g., the slight flicker of an eye lid)

Mutual Regulation: Learning from screens, Learning with emotionally available people

- Patricia Kuhl experiment with 9 month olds learning Mandarin
- [http://www.ted.com/talks/patricia kuhl the linguistic genius of babies.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/patricia_kuhl_the_linguistic_genius_of_babies.html)

Parental emotional availability can come from

- the support of a **web of relationships** that gives parents the strength to learn from and face their mistakes
- the **hope for their child's development**, their future as a family, hope for the world
- **basic protection for survival**

What hinders emotional availability?

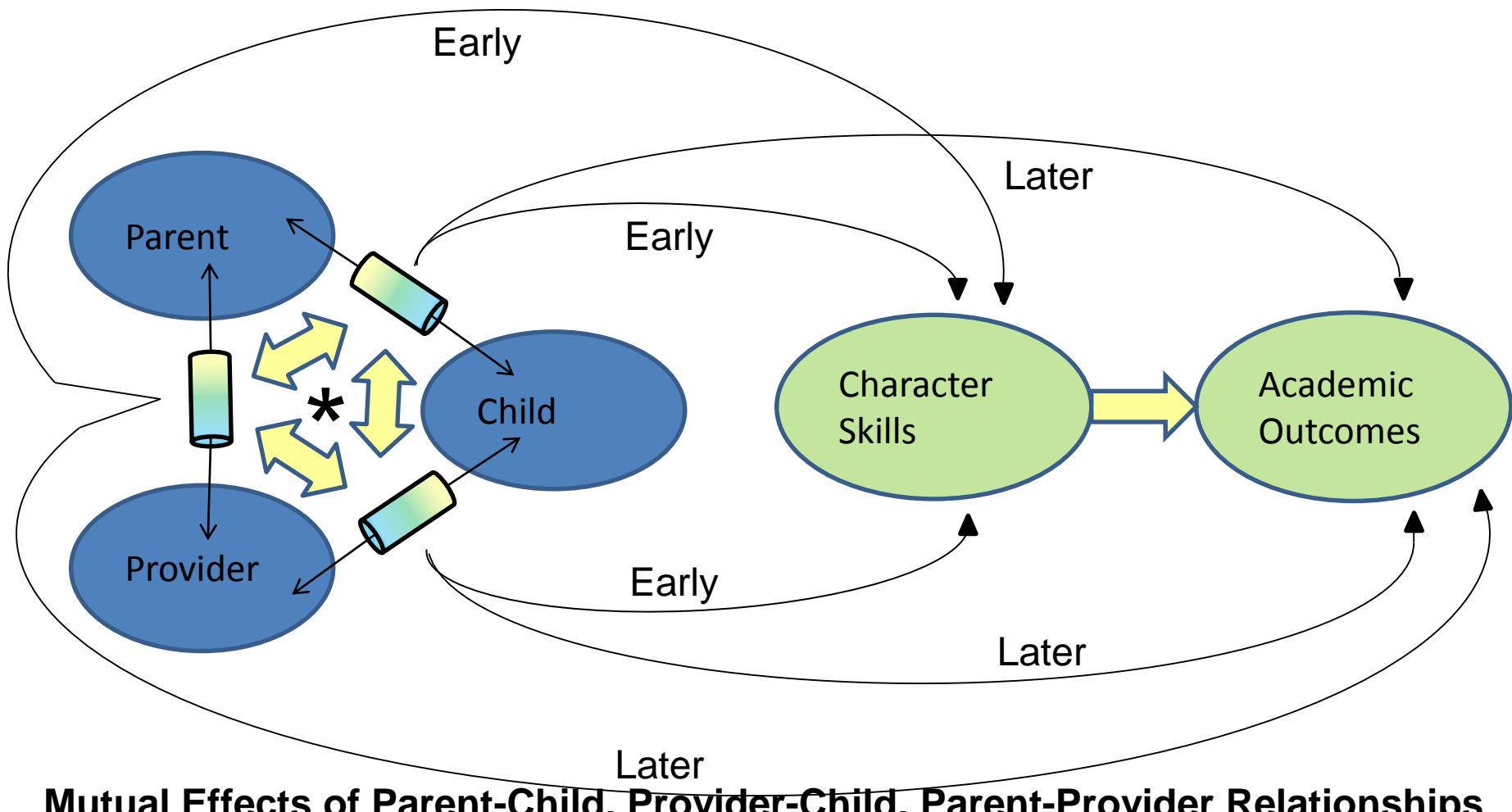
- Isolation
- Sense of powerlessness, disenfranchisement
- Overwhelming stress
- Depression
- Substance abuse
- Domestic violence
- Threatened survival

Where does early childhood educators' emotional availability come from?

Rebuilding community to support children's learning and development

- children's learning occurs primarily in relationships and depends on the quality of those relationships
- quality of child-caregiver relationships is affected by relationships of caregivers with each other and with others who support them, and who mediate the effects of stressors

Parent-Provider-Child Relationships Influence Child Character Skills and Academic Outcomes



Mutual Effects of Parent-Child, Provider-Child, Parent-Provider Relationships

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Rebuilding a web of relationships to support children's development and learning

- parent-provider relationships
- parent partner relationships
- parent peer relationships
- communitywide relationships

linking parent partners with each other

It has become clear over the last two decades that whether and how a father is involved with his child depend in large part on the quality of his engagement with the child's mother.^{92,93} Among ethnically and socioeconomically diverse samples of married, divorced, and never-married men, fathers' engagement with children is consistently associated with the quality of the couple's relationship – the more satisfying the relationship, the greater the father's engagement. This is true as well in the relatively few studies of *never-married but cohabiting* parents' relationship satisfaction and interaction: the closer and more harmonious the relationship between the parents, the greater the father's engagement.

Philip A. Cowan ET AL. "Supporting Fathers' Engagement with Their Kids," in *Raising Children: Emerging Needs, Modern Risks, and Social Responses*, edited by J. D. Berrick and N. Gilbert (Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 44–80. Carolyn P.

linking parent partners with each other

- Cowan and P. A. Cowan, *When Partners Become Parents: The Big Life Change for Couples* (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000).
- P. A. Cowan and others, “Promoting Fathers’ Engagement with Children: Preventive Interventions for Low-Income Families,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 71 (2009): 663–79.
- Philip A. Cowan et al. “Group Interventions for Parents of Preschoolers: 10-Year Impact on Family Functioning and Teen’s Adaptation,” in P. Cowan (Chair), *From Preschool to High School: Individual and Family Risk and Protective Factors Predicting Teens’ Academic and Social Adaptation* (San Francisco: Society for Research in Adolescence, April, 2006).

Human Development Occurs in Complex Dynamic Systems

- Human development evolves not only within families and provider-family interactions, but also within institutions, systems of care, communities, and larger physical, social, political and economic contexts.

Lester B, Sparrow JD. editors. *Nurturing Young Children and Their Families: Building on the Legacy of T.B. Brazelton*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Scientific; 2010.

Professional caregivers work in organizational systems embedded in human eco-systems

- Individual practitioners cannot effectively integrate substantive changes into their practice unless the organizations and systems in which they practice make corresponding changes in all related activities and functional domains.
- Professional development cannot be effective and sustained without carefully coordinated organizational development.
- For example, clinicians emotional availability can be interfered with by a range of organizational dysfunctions.

The power of relationships

- social capital: bonding social capital, bridging social capital
- cultural capital
- community resilience
- community collective efficacy

the power of relationships: social capital

- **social capital is a form of social organization created when the structure of relations among persons facilitates action, "making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible"(p.98;Coleman1990:300).**
- Bourdieu (1986) writes of the "actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institution-alized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p. 249).
- Putnam(1993) de- fines social capital in a more expansive fashion as "features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual ben-efit" (p. 36).
- **Social capital is thus a resource that is realized through relationships (Coleman 1990:304);... social capital is lodged not in individuals but in the structure of social organization (1990:302).**

Sampson RJ, Morenoff JD, Earls F. (Oct 1999). Beyond Social Capital, Spatial Dynamics of Collective Efficacy for Children. American Sociological Review Vol 64, #5, 633-660

the power of goal-oriented relationships: collective efficacy

- **social capital for children refers to the resource potential of personal and organizational networks, whereas collective efficacy is a task-specific construct that relates to the shared expectations and mutual engagement by adults in the active support and social control of children (Sampson et al. 1997).**
- **Although these two concepts have much in common, our distinction differentiates the process of activating or converting social ties to achieve desired outcomes from the ties themselves (cf. Bandura 1997; Portes 1998). From this perspective, resources or networks alone (e.g., voluntary associations, friendship ties, organizational density) are neutral-they may or may not be effective mechanisms for achieving an intended effect.**

Sampson RJ, Morenoff JD, Earls F. (Oct 1999). Beyond Social Capital, Spatial Dynamics of Collective Efficacy for Children. American Sociological Review Vol 64, #5, 633-660

linking parent peers with each other

- Intergenerational closure
- Mutual exchange
- Social control

Sampson RJ, Morenoff JD, Earls F. (Oct 1999). Beyond Social Capital, Spatial Dynamics of Collective Efficacy for Children. American Sociological Review Vol 64, #5, 633-660

linking parent peers with each other

- Intergenerational closure:

when parents know the parents of their children's friends, they can observe the child's actions in different circumstances, talk with other parents about their child, and establish norms (also see Furstenberg et al. 1999). Such structural and normative adult-child closure gives children social support, provides parents with information, and facilitates control (Sandefur and Laumann 1998:486).

Sampson RJ, Morenoff JD, Earls F. (Oct 1999). Beyond Social Capital, Spatial Dynamics of Collective Efficacy for Children. American Sociological Review Vol 64, #5, 633-660

linking parent peers with each other

- Mutual exchange

exchange of advice, material goods, and information about childrearing (Blau 1964). Reciprocated ... exchange leads to social support that can be drawn upon (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993), not just by parents but by children themselves as they develop. This sort of exchange may be facilitated by, but does not require the presence of strong personal ties such as those found in tightly bounded friendship and kin- ship networks.

Sampson RJ, Morenoff JD, Earls F. (Oct 1999). Beyond Social Capital, Spatial Dynamics of Collective Efficacy for Children. American Sociological Review Vol 64, #5, 633-660

linking parent peers with each other

- Social control

The expectation that neighborhood residents can and will intervene on the behalf of children depends on more than shared values among neighbors. ...collective efficacy for children is produced by the shared beliefs of a collectivity in its conjoint capability for action. The notion of collective efficacy emphasizes residents' sense of active engagement that is not well captured by the term social capital.

As Bandura (1997) argues, the meaning of efficacy is captured in expectations about the exercise of control, elevating the "agentic" aspect of social life over a perspective centered on the accumulation of "stocks" of social resources.

This conception of collective efficacy is consistent with the redefinition of social capital by Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993:1323) as "expectations for action within a collectivity."

Sampson RJ, Morenoff JD, Earls F. (Oct 1999). Beyond Social Capital, Spatial Dynamics of Collective Efficacy for Children. American Sociological Review Vol 64, #5, 633-660

What parents need to be the kind of parents *they* want to be for their children

- To perceive themselves as competent
- To feel empowered to make a difference in their children's lives
- To feel connected to a web of supportive relationships – the village
- To feel connected to their pasts, to be emotionally available in the present and to dare to hope for their children's future

EDUCATORS' RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS SUPPORT PARENTS' RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR CHILDREN

Educators need the same things as parents for their work with families:

- sense of competence
- sense of effectiveness
- respect for their expertise
- social connectedness (relationships}
- connection to professional traditions, values
- sense of a shared mission for our children
- hope

Child well-being depends on family well-being which depends on human eco-system

- The continuity of children's early attachments depends on the health and well-being of their caregivers. In order to survive, grow, and thrive, children need caregivers whose own survival, development, and ability to nurture their young are not endangered. Development-promoting early interactions must be nested within strong communities where broader social relationships protect and reinforce these primary ones.

Sparrow JD. Child Justice, Caregiver Empowerment and Community Self-Determination In: Fennimore BS, Goodwin AL, editors. Promoting Social Justice for Young Children. New York: Springer Publishing; 2011

Rebuilding community: re-evaluating the roles of providers and institutions in human development

- Professionals alone cannot recreate the web of human relationships required for human development that has been disrupted by the reorganization of labor and the prioritization of the workplace over family and community.

Rebuilding community: beyond institutions and systems of care

- Neither professional-parent relationships, nor institutions, nor formal systems of care can suffice to hold the child and family through developmental disorganizations and reorganizations, to contain their relationships as these are reconfigured to allow for the emergence of new capacities.
- Extended family, friends, neighbors, and community members and informal helpers are also members of this system.

Rebuilding community for child development: programmatic Interventions

- Programmatic interventions that focus on one or a few factors contributing to complex phenomena such as child and family development are limited in their effectiveness
- Their effects are likely to be overwhelmed and undone by other potent factors –such as those related to poverty and unemployment - that are not addressed in typical programmatic interventions, for example, parent education classes, home visiting, anticipatory guidance, among many others.

Rebuilding community for child development: comprehensive, integrated, systemic, multi-level approaches

- Systemic interventions, rather than programmatic ones, are called for by challenges that arise in complex systems and that are driven by multiple factors.
- Multi-level interventions that link actions across multiple levels may have greater potential than single-level, single-focus interventions to bring about significant and lasting change.

A civilization's *strength* is measured by
the care and wellbeing of
its most *vulnerable*:
the young, old, sick and disabled

A Country's Future Greatness is Determined by
its Care for its Children Today

Touchpoints Books

Brazelton TB, Sparrow JD. Touchpoints Three to Six: Your Child's Emotional and Behavioral Development. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 2001.

**Brazelton TB, revised with Sparrow JD.
Touchpoints 0-3: Your Child's Emotional and Behavioral Development. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press; Second edition; 2006.**

Brazelton Way Books

Brazelton TB, Sparrow JD.

- *Calming Your Fussy Baby* the Brazelton Way.
Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books; 2003.
- *Sleep* the Brazelton Way
- *Discipline* the Brazelton Way.
- *Feeding Your Child* the Brazelton Way. Cambridge,
MA: Perseus Books; 2004.
- *Toilet Training Your Child* the Brazelton Way.
- *Understanding Sibling Rivalry* the Brazelton Way.
Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books; 2005.
- *Mastering Anger and Aggression* the Brazelton Way

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Nurturing Children and Families

Building on the Legacy
of T. Berry Brazelton