

CIS INSTITUTE 2025 MORNING SESSIONS



KEYNOTE: THE BRAZELTON TOUCHPOINTS™ APPROACH: A DEVELOPMENTAL-RELATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN AND ENGAGING FAMILIES

Jayne Singer

The Brazelton Touchpoints™ Approach is an evidence-based, developmental-relational practice that improves professionals' and parents' ability to support children's well-being. This can be especially valuable in more deeply understanding behavior that can be challenging within both typical and atypical development. This Approach focuses on recognizing and anticipating "touchpoints" as key periods in child development and family functioning as opportunities to improve parent-provider and parent-child relationships that promote relational health for the whole family, in service of best outcomes.

This 45-minute Keynote presentation will provide an overview of the Brazelton Touchpoints™ Approach with an exploration of both its Developmental and Relational Frameworks for deeply understanding children's functioning. The event will include PowerPoint presentation material as well as interactive opportunities for reflection to orient participants to Touchpoints-informed practice as applied to their daily challenges. These activities will support workforce skills and well-being in service of capacity to serve young children and their families.

Keynote objectives:

- As a result of their participation in this presentation, participants will be able to:
- Define and explore elements of developmental processes that are key to understanding challenging behavior.
- Understand the role of regression in affecting developmental process. Begin to explore the Touchpoints strength-based attitudes and relationship-based practices as integrated strategies to promote engagement among families and providers.

Core Components:

Developmental Framework – provides a concrete framework to better understand a child's developmental process as one characterized by disorganized behavior and how it impacts caregiving relationships.

Strengths-based, Relational Framework – provides concrete relationship based strategies and practices for building strong partnership with families, staff and community partners.

Culturally Responsive – provides strategies to discover what is important to families

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EMPOWERING FAMILIES: UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES TO PREVENT CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS IN YOUNG CHILDREN

Erin Barton, Ph.D., BCBA-D

This 90-minute session is designed for providers supporting families and caregivers of young children in fostering positive social-emotional development and preventing challenging behaviors. Participants will explore universal, developmentally appropriate strategies—such as responsive caregiving, predictable routines, and co-regulation—that caregivers can use to prevent challenging behaviors and support social emotional competence. Through interactive discussions and illustrative scenarios, providers will gain practical tools to guide families and caregivers in creating environments that support their child’s growth.

Objectives:

- Identify and explain universal strategies that families and caregivers can implement to support emotional regulation and reduce challenging behaviors in young children.
- Develop communication techniques and resources to effectively share these strategies with families and caregivers in a culturally responsive and accessible manner.

COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT AND ENRICHMENT: WHAT DOES THE SCIENCE SAY?

Sara Benham, PhD, CCC-SLP and Molly Bumpas, M.Ed., CCC-SLP, BCBA

In this presentation, we will lay out communication development milestones in children 0-3 who are monolingual and multilingual, and for children who are developing speech and language typically or are at risk for speech and/or language disorders. We will discuss ‘red flags’ for children who may be struggling with communication development, and offer information for caregivers and professionals on clear, evidence-based recommendations for setting up language-rich environments for monolingual and multilingual learners. Attendees will walk away with a sharpened understanding of early communicative development and best practices for facilitating language in the home environment.

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BOUNDARIES AS BRIDGES: STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN AND COLLEAGUES

Alyssa Campbell, M.Ed.

Boundaries aren't barriers—they're the key to stronger, more connected relationships, both in the classroom and among colleagues. This session explores how clear, compassionate boundaries create trust, emotional safety, and cooperation with children while also fostering respect and balance in professional relationships. Walk away with practical strategies to confidently set and maintain boundaries that support both your well-being and the well-being of those around you.

THRIVING TOGETHER: REBUILDING WELLBEING WITH PLAY, MOTIVATION, AND INQUIRY

Ellen Drollette

This interactive workshop invites early childhood educators, leaders, and caregivers to explore how play, motivation, and inquiry can be intentionally used to support the social and emotional wellbeing of children, families, and providers in the wake of the pandemic. Through hands-on activities, reflective exercises, and small group discussions, participants will examine the powerful role of play in fostering resilience and rebuilding connection. Together, we'll explore how motivation can reignite joy and engagement, and how inquiry can serve as a guide toward meaningful transformation in our programs and communities. Participants will leave with practical strategies to create nurturing, inclusive environments that celebrate strengths, inspire curiosity, and promote a deep sense of belonging—for every child and every adult in the system. This workshop is a call to action to build back better—together.

- Understand the role of play, motivation, and inquiry in well-being
- Engage in interactive activities that promote collaboration and reflection
- Develop actionable strategies to foster a thriving environment
- Build a supportive professional community through shared experiences

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WRITING FOR WELLBEING: EMPOWERING PROVIDERS IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

Lori Meyer, Associate Professor, University of Vermont, Ph.D.

In this session, we will delve into the intersection of professional development (PD), writing, and social-emotional wellbeing (SEW) for CIS providers navigating the post-pandemic landscape. The pandemic had a profound impact on children, families, and professionals. In this session, participants will explore how writing can be a transformative process that fosters self-reflection, increases understanding of unique experiences, and promotes personal social-emotional wellbeing (SEW) for both them and the children and families they serve. Participants will learn how reflecting on their practice through writing has the potential to deepen their understanding, strengthen their use of high-quality, recommended practices, and cultivate personal wellbeing.

This session also presents a unique opportunity to establish a first-in-the-nation, state-specific, Community of Practice (CoP) designed explicitly for EI/ECSE professionals who want to leverage writing for PD and SEW. The CoP will offer an exclusive space for members to share their writing, gain feedback, build connections, and support each other's growth and wellbeing. As the Publication and Products Chair for the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), I am deeply committed to amplifying practitioner and family voices and creating resources that uplift those voices and addresses the field's current needs. My published work, including, "DEC at the Intersection: Actualizing Division for Early Childhood's Racial Equity Point of View within our Resource System" (Meyer et al., 2024) focuses on equity and representation in EI/ECSE resources.

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DEVELOPMENT IS A JOURNEY - A CONVERSATION ROADMAP FOR TALKING WITH FAMILIES ABOUT DEVELOPMENTAL CONCERNS

Jayne Singer, PhD, IECMH-E®

We all know how critical early identification and intervention is to promote a child's optimal development. Yet developmental concerns, screening, and assessment results can be anxiety-provoking for families and providers. Come explore a new tool to help family-facing providers have collaborative and productive conversations with families about developmental screening results. This 90-minute workshop introduces the Development is a Journey Conversation Roadmap. Participants learn seven simple steps to engage parents actively in planning for their child's developmental needs. This workshop introduces participants to the Roadmap and its focus on honoring families' knowledge of their child. We explore why providers and families sometimes have differences of opinion about children and screenings. We practice strengths-based ways to invite all perspectives into the conversation and move ahead with collaborative and equitable shared decision-making.

Objectives:

- Identify the key elements of parental emotional reactions to concerns about their child's development.
- Anticipate parental stress and differences in perspective when providers raise concerns about a child's development.
- Implement perspective-taking as a key relationship-based skill.
- Practice using the Development is a Journey Roadmap tool to support strengths-based conversations with families in service of collaborative goals.

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SENSE(S) OF SELF: A CHILD'S RIGHT TO BELONG

Scottie Taylor, Pediatric Physical Therapist

This session explores how children take in information through their five external senses—sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell—while also listening to internal senses like proprioception, vestibular, and interoception. By trusting these experiences, children build self-awareness, confidence, and belonging. Participants will learn to observe sensory patterns and support children's needs in their days/curriculum/supports.

We will discuss how sensory variations shape a child's understanding of themselves and their environment. This session emphasizes honoring each child's unique processing style, fostering self-trust, and using multi-sensory communication to create supportive environments where children can fully engage as their authentic selves.

TAKE-AWAY HOME VISITING STRATEGIES FROM MATERNAL EARLY CHILDHOOD SUSTAINED HOME VISITING (MECSH) AND PARENTS AS TEACHERS (PAT)

Heather Wilson, Licensed Psychologist-Master
Margaret Urban, RN, MSN

Come learn about the evidence-based home visiting models within CIS: Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home visiting (MECSH) and Parents as Teachers (PAT). You will learn about the theories and frameworks from these models and how they can be applied to your partnership with families. You will be introduced to strategies and techniques used within the models such as having difficult conversations and reflective supervision.

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BUILDING STRONGER BONDS: EFFECTIVE FAMILY COACHING THROUGH RELATIONSHIP-FOCUSED STRATEGIES

Erin Barton, Ph.D., BCBA-D

This 90-minute session will focus on strengthening the partnerships with families and caregivers through relationship-based coaching strategies. Participants will learn how trust, collaboration, and active listening enhance family and caregiver engagement and improve outcomes for infants and toddlers. By practicing coaching techniques such as reflective questioning and strength-based feedback, providers will be better equipped to empower families and caregivers in supporting their child's development in natural routines and daily interactions.

Objectives:

- Apply relationship-based coaching techniques, such as active listening and reflective questioning, to strengthen family partnerships and promote collaborative problem-solving.
- Develop strategies to provide strength-based, culturally responsive feedback and reflection that supports families in implementing effective caregiving practices that promote positive social-emotional development.

FOSTERING EMOTIONAL GROWTH IN CHILDREN: BUILDING RESILIENCE AND SOCIAL COMPETENCY

Alyssa Campbell, M.Ed.

Emotional growth is the foundation of lifelong resilience and healthy relationships. This session will dive into practical ways to support children in navigating big feelings, developing coping skills, and building positive social connections. Learn how to create environments that nurture emotional intelligence and equip children with the tools they need to thrive.

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AFTERNOON SESSIONS



OVERVIEW OF LATCH & MOTION / CAUSES OF LOW MILK PRODUCTION

CRADLING CONNECTIONS: CLIENT AND COMMUNITY CENTERED LACTATION SUPPORT IN THE SETTING OF SUBSTANCE USE AND MISUSE

Tricia Cassi, IBCLC, Katy Leffel, RN-IBCLC and Amy Wegner, RN-IBCLC

This session will explore three topics of breastfeeding, including; breastfeeding in motion, low milk supply, and substance use and breastfeeding. A significant portion of this session will focus on the new guidelines on Substance Misuse and Breastfeeding from the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine and how we as a community can support this population in a holistic way. This will be a facilitated discussion with time for questions and answers.

SURVIVING TO THRIVING: CREATING A PERSONAL PLAN

Ellen Drollett

This interactive workshop is designed to help individuals move from merely surviving to truly thriving by leveraging their strengths, experiences, and community support. Through real-life narratives from families and caregivers, participants will explore the power of resilience and discover practical strategies for creating a personal thriving plan. Using a strengths-based approach, this session will provide tools to reframe challenges, build motivation, and foster well-being in personal and professional settings.

Objectives

- Explore personal and professional strengths as tools for resilience and growth.
- Engage in reflective exercises to identify and build upon past successes.
- Develop a personalized plan for thriving using goal-setting techniques.
- Identify strategies to overcome barriers and cultivate a supportive community

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APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS: WHAT IS IT AND HOW DO WE KNOW WE'RE DOING IT RIGHT?

Cheri Keith, MA, MS, BCBA, LBA-VT

This session will provide an overview of applied behavior analysis (ABA) and its historical and contemporary contexts as a treatment for autism spectrum disorder. Autism spectrum disorder will be discussed through medical and social models, including the language used to talk about the autistic experience across the spectrum.

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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PREGNANCY AND EARLY PARENTHOOD, DC- 0-5

Noelle Hause

Presenter will join the conference virtually. CEUs available

Pregnancy and the birth of a child are significant markers in the life of not only the developing baby but the parents and family as well. This includes thinking about the "imagined child" (the prospective parent dreams about) and the actual baby that comes into their life, as well as the "imagined parent" (how they dream about and anticipate they will parent) and the development of the actual parental identity. Explore and consider key concepts around development, identity, and issues surrounding complicated pregnancies, prematurity, and loss. As a result of participating in this training, participants will be able to:

- Describe the psychology of pregnancy, especially as it relates to parental understanding, emotional experiences, and expectations.
- Outline the stages of early parenthood and key concepts surrounding parental identity formation.
- Recognize the impact on the psyche of parents/families around challenging experiences such as complicated pregnancy, prematurity, loss, and birthing a baby who is sick or has disabilities.
- Articulate the importance of clinical reflective practice in working with expectant and new families.