



Supporting Early Childhood Social Emotional Development

Commission on Native Children: Navajo Nation

April 22, 2022

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Navajo Project Indigenous LAUNCH

(Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Children's Health)

- ❖ 5 Year grant from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to promote social emotional wellness of young children from birth to eight years.
- ❖ Prepare children and their families to thrive in school and beyond.
- ❖ Enhance and improve the way Early Childhood systems function on the Navajo Nation.



Five Core Strategies of LAUNCH



1. Screening and Assessment



2. Enhanced Home Visiting



3. Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation



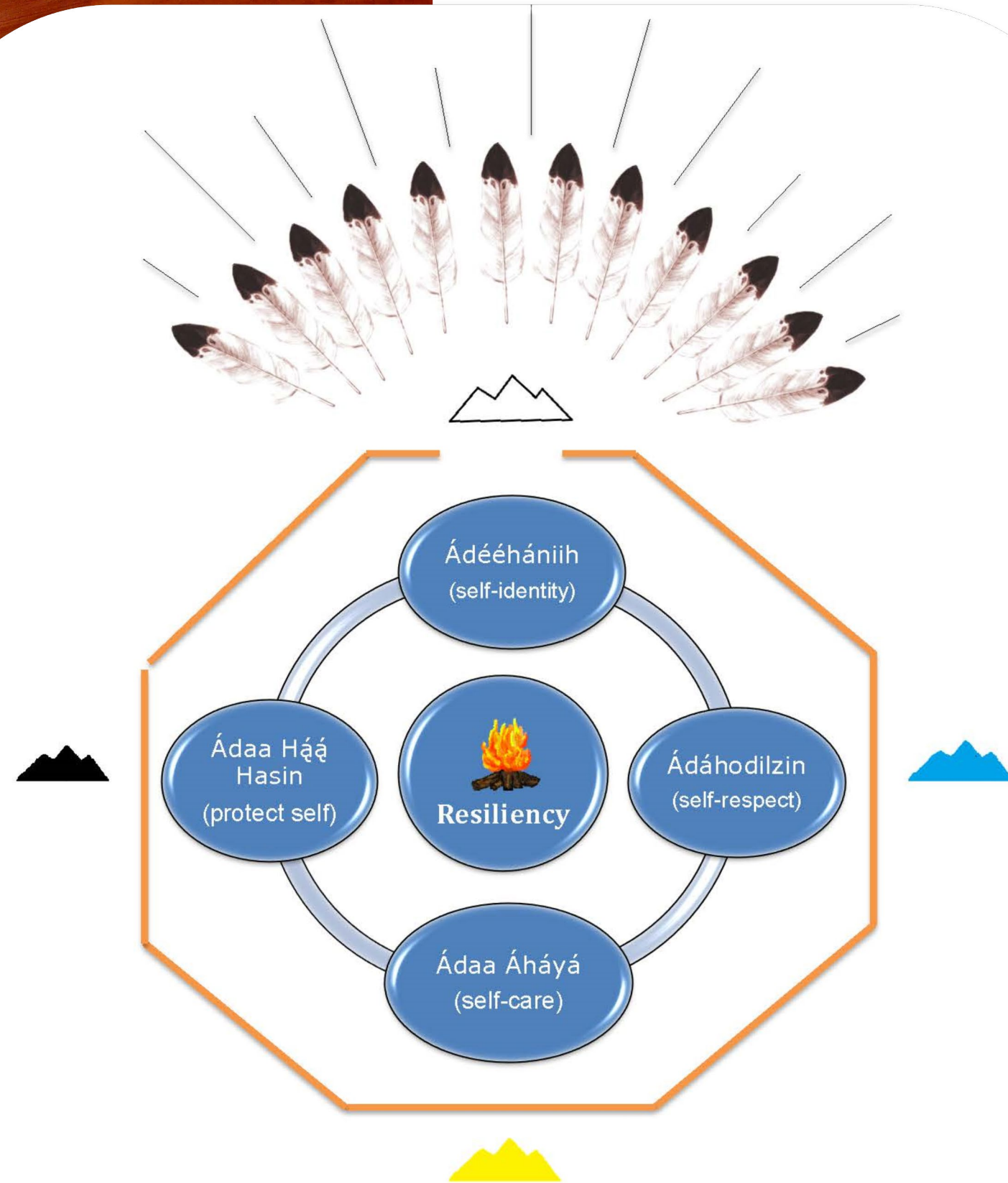
4. Family Strengthening and Parent Training



5. Integration of Behavioral Health Into Primary Care Settings

8 goals that span across the 5 core strategies

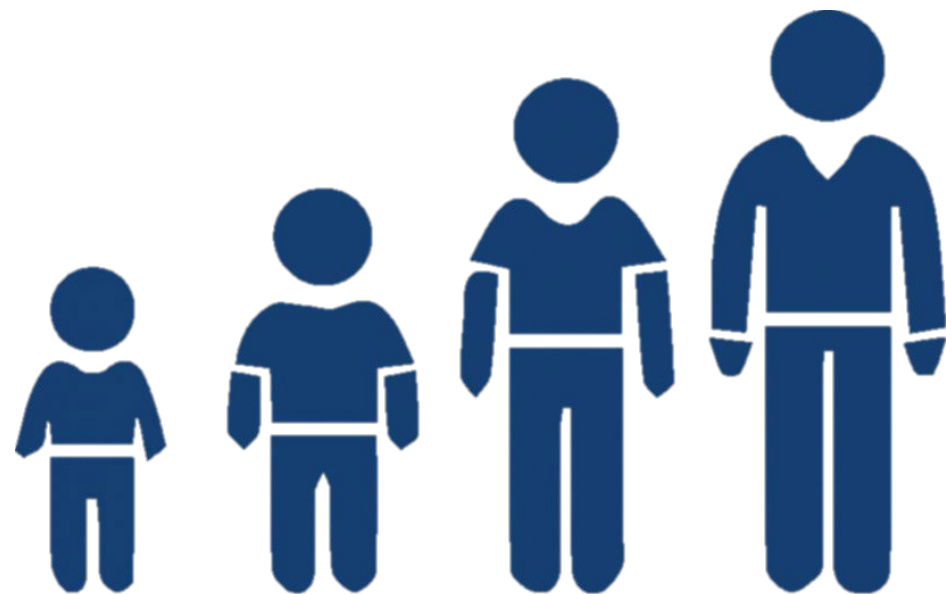
Navajo Wellness Model



“The core teachings emphasize four domains of health and wellness from the Navajo perspective that include self-identity, self-respect, self-care, protection of self, and resiliency.”



By age 5, 90% of a child's brain is developed.



“Children with high levels of exposure to adversity are more than four times as likely to develop a mental disorder by the time they reach adulthood than children who have not experienced adversity.” (American Psychological Association)

Pyramid Model Framework

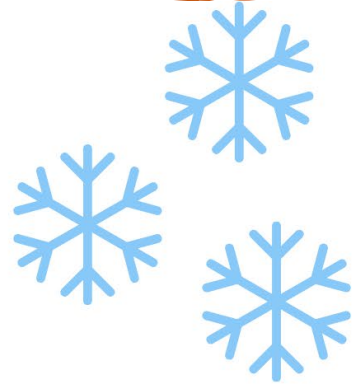


<https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/Pyramid/overview/tiers.html>
<https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/early-childhood-matters/brain-development/>
<https://www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2017/04/adverse-childhood>

Challenges & Barriers

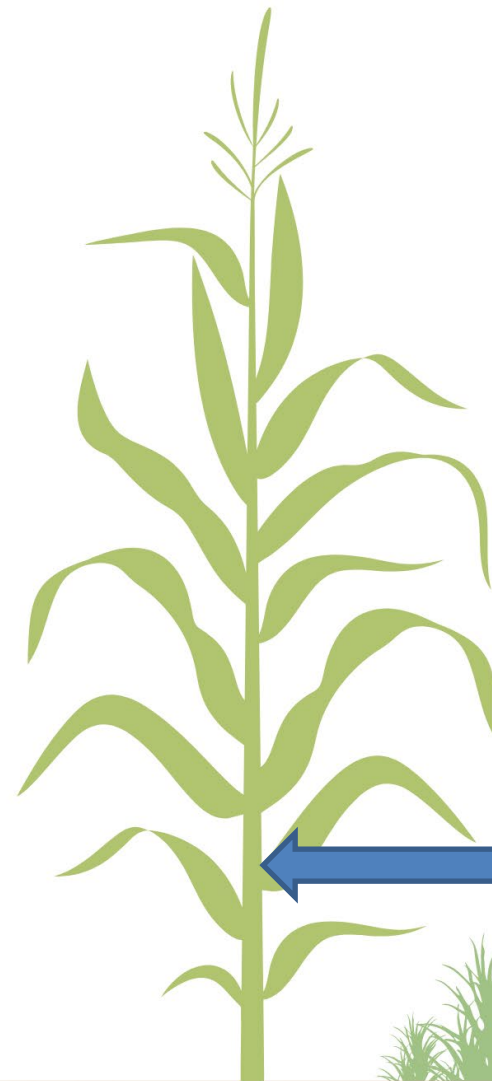
Government, State, & Tribal Relationship:

- Incomprehension of tribal systems
- Unrealistic expectations
- Western approach



Social Emotional/Infant Mental Health Stigma

Grant Time Frame



Infrastructure, Gaps in Services, Turnover, Burnout, Limited Resources



Outside factors:

- Pandemic
- State/Tribal Borders
- Funding Limitations



Silo Mentality



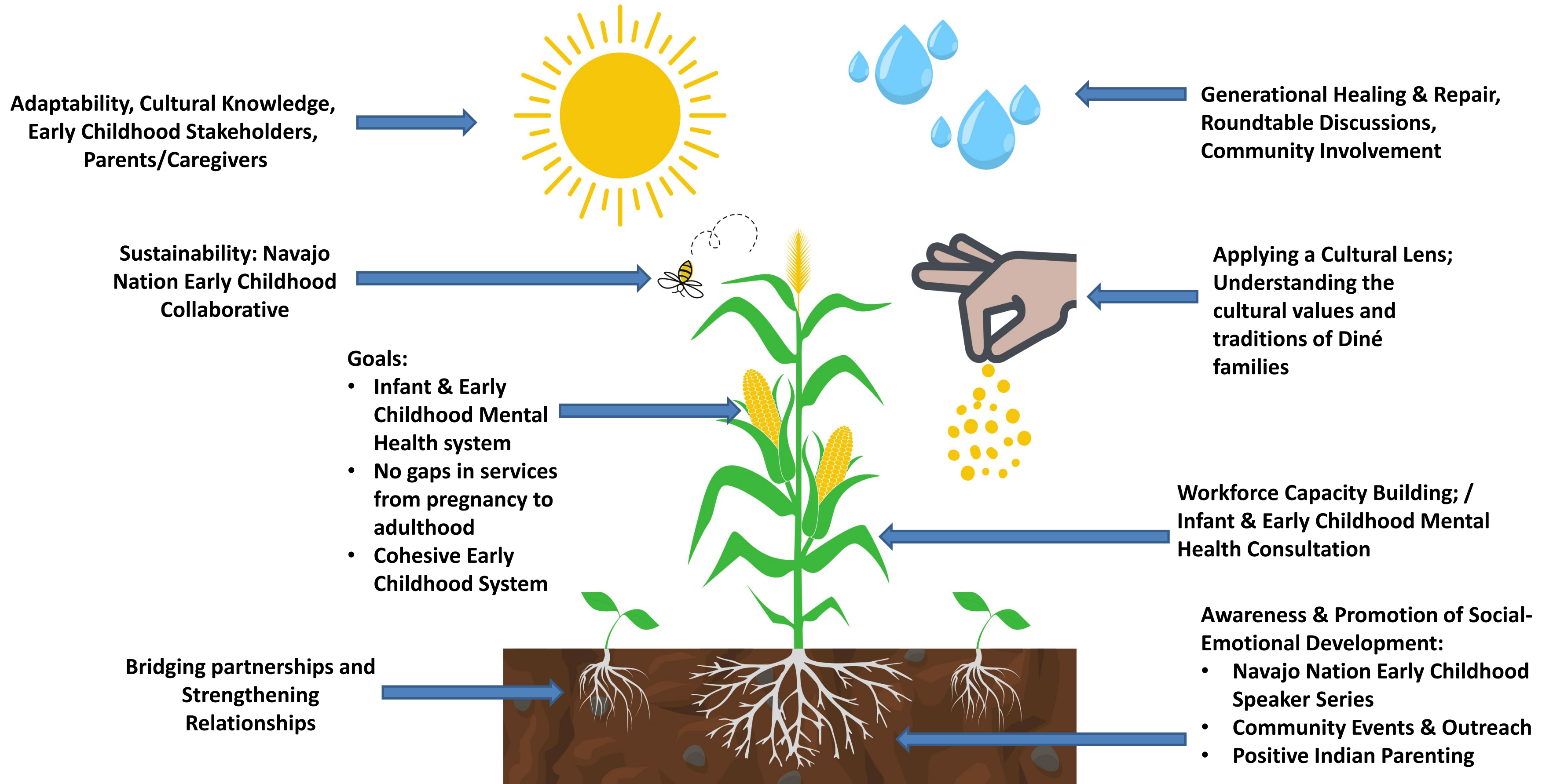
Inequity in expectations



Nonexistent Tribal Early Childhood System, Historical Trauma, Generational Trauma



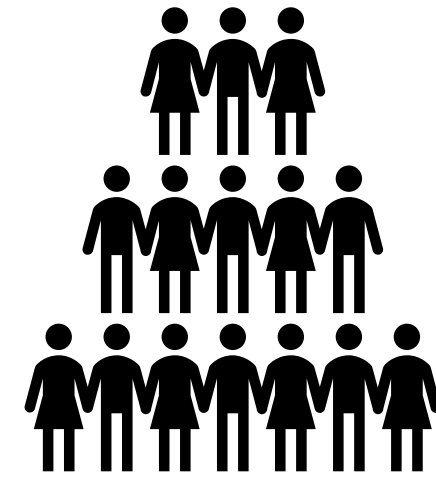
Goals & Successes



Navajo Project I-LAUNCH's Efforts in Fiscal Year 3 (October 1, 2020 – September 2021)

Building the Capacity of the Early Childhood Workforce

Through Navajo Project I-LAUNCH, **1,296** early care and education providers were provided professional development on areas related to social emotional development including the national Pyramid Model foundational training.



Navajo Nation Early Childhood Collaborative

Navajo Project I-LAUNCH project established **34 new key stakeholders** totaling over **80 members** from programs, organizations, and the community through Navajo Nation and surrounding areas. The NNECC held a strategic planning session in June 2021 to create a cohesive Early Childhood System on the Navajo Nation. The NNECC is currently finalizing its logic model and seeking funding to sustain I-LAUNCH's efforts.

Navajo Nation Early Childhood Speaker Series

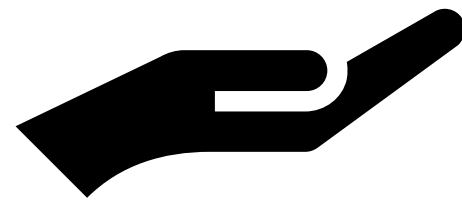
In partnership with Arizona First Things First and Navajo Nation Division of Behavioral & Mental Health Services, **8 Speaker Series** were provided to the public on early childhood topics such as traditional birthing practices, trauma-informed care, and more on various platforms (radio, social media, & Zoom). The series reach **347+** participants.



Navajo Project I-LAUNCH's Efforts in Fiscal Year 3 (October 1, 2020 – September 2021)

Navajo Nation Early Childhood Resources Map

Developed a beta Early Childhood Resource map for early childhood providers and families to utilize to identify local early childhood resources, identify gaps, connect existing resources, and more.

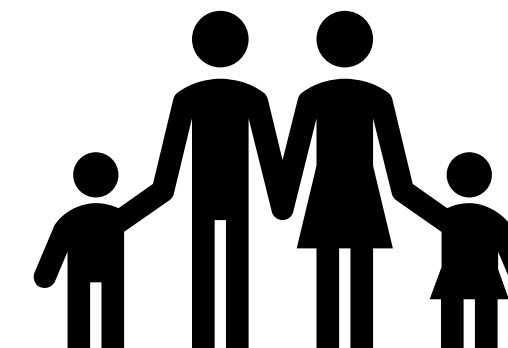


Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

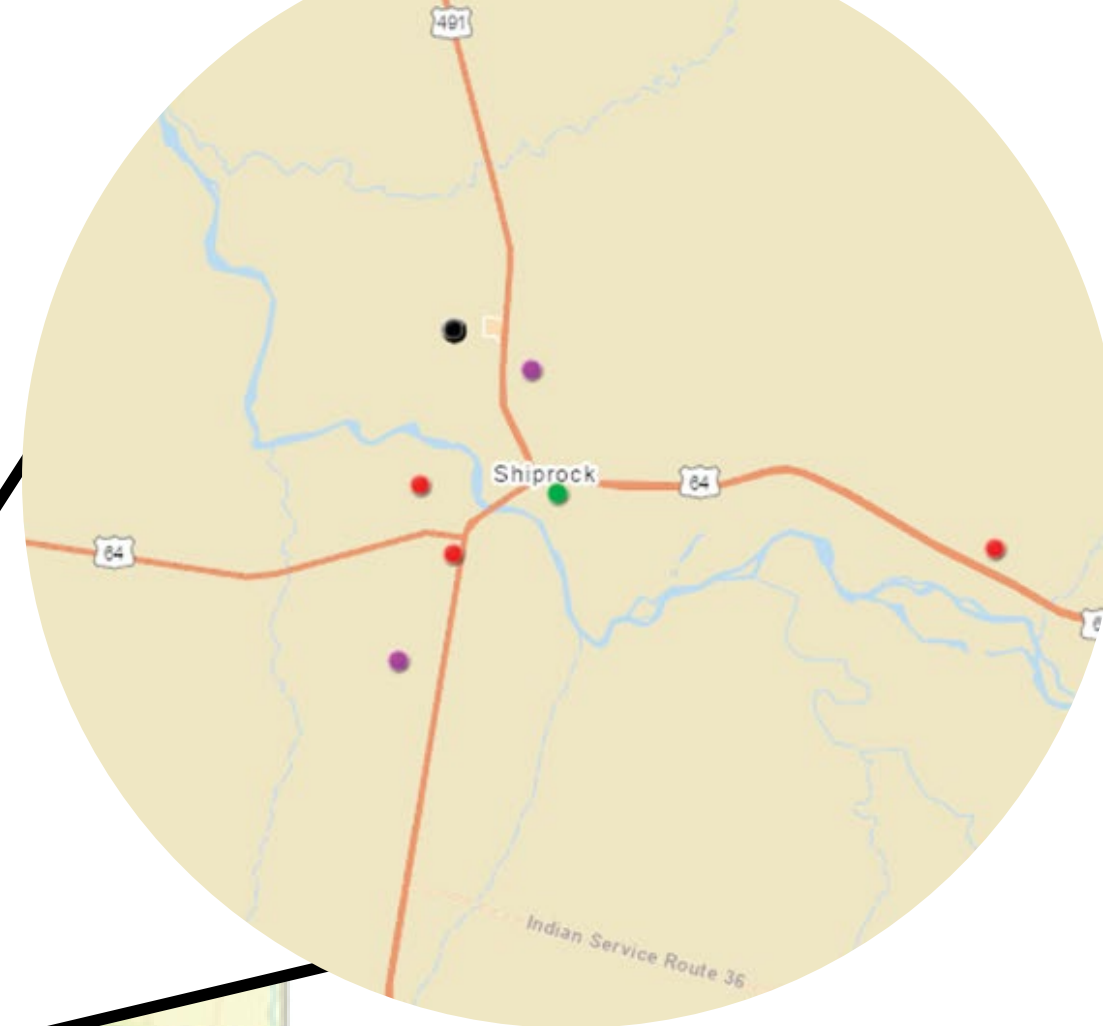
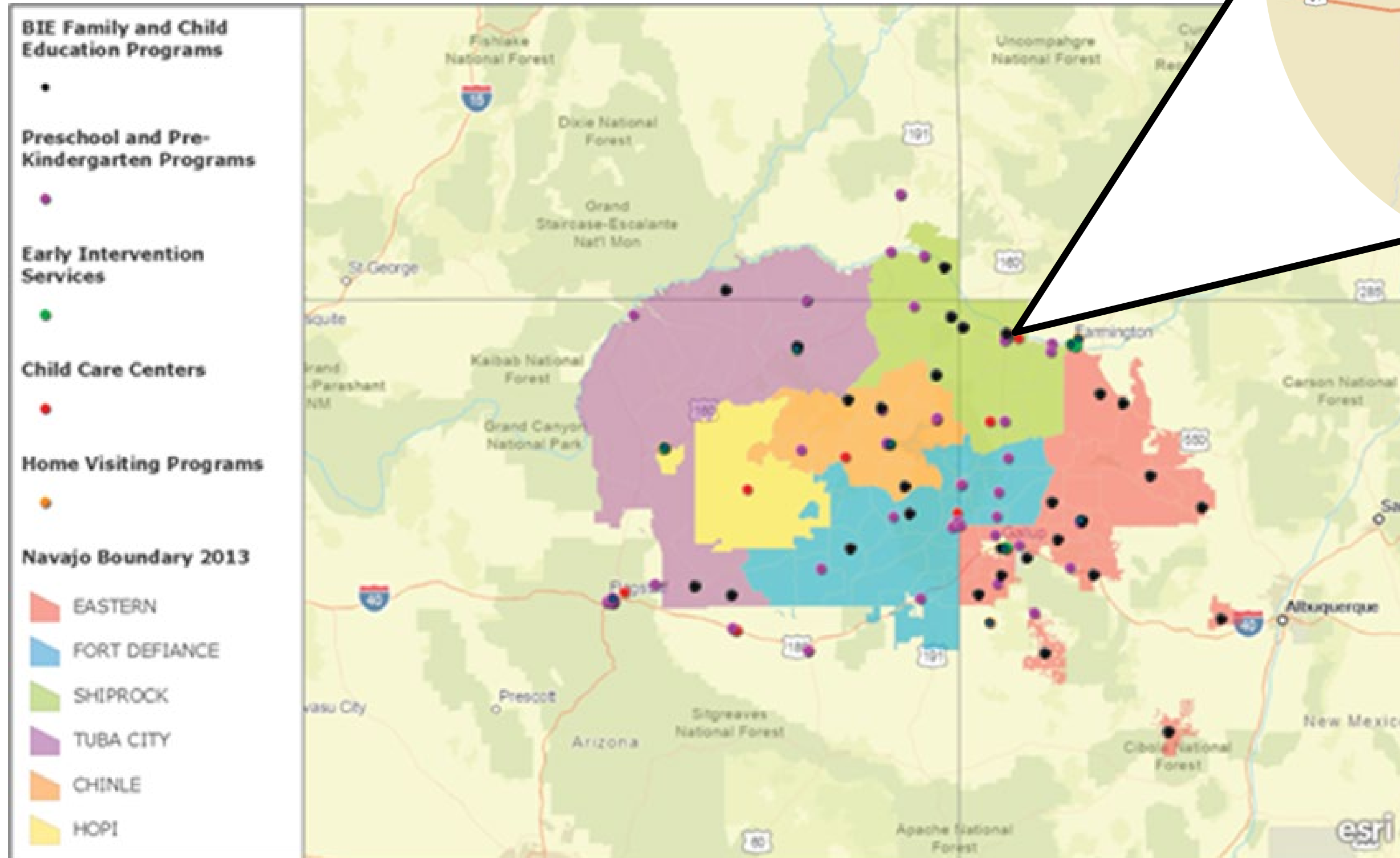
Contracted an IECMH Consultant in training, outreached to Behavioral & Mental Health Division to support interested clinicians to become IECMH Consultants, developed partnership with Southwest Human Development

Positive Diné Parenting

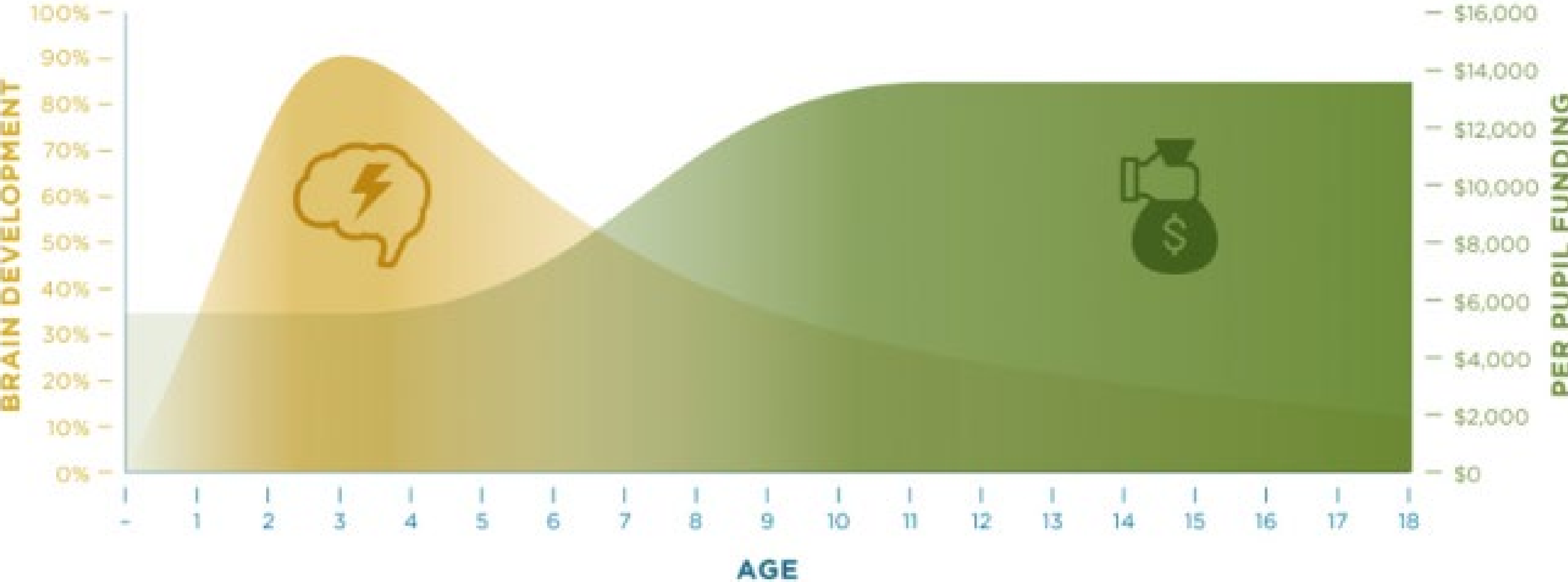
Utilizing the National Indian Child Welfare Association's Positive Indian Parenting curriculum, Project LAUNCH has held 7 cohorts averaging 15-20 parents/caregivers per cohort. The curriculum draws on the strengths of traditional Native American parenting practices using storytelling, cradleboard, harmony, lessons of nature, behavior management, and the use of praise.



Beta Map of Early Childhood Programs in and surrounding Navajo Nation



BRAIN DEVELOPMENT AND PER PUPIL FUNDING BY AGE



Sources: National Institute for Early Education Research, Department of Education, and Tyton Partners Early Childhood Education Survey March 2017



Calls to Action

- ❖ Increase grants & sustainable funding sources serving the early childhood population (ages prenatal to 8) and their families
- ❖ Establish Early Childhood Systems/Divisions in tribal communities to ensure cross sector coordination and collaboration; no gaps in services
- ❖ Federal funding to increase cultural competency to provide equitable funding, technical assistance, & expectations of grantees
- ❖ Demand for Workforce Well-Being through Trauma-Informed Care, Mental Health Awareness, Self-Care initiatives

“The most important thing that parents [stakeholders] need to understand is that the brain of a child will become **exactly what the child was exposed to**. ...That is the beauty of the human brain, it is the mirror to the child’s developmental experience.”

Dr. Bruce Perry



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