Attachment in the Classroom

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Abstract

Children enter classrooms with different experiences, personalities, family backgrounds, needs, and expectations. The art of working with children requires teachers to understand the specific needs their children; learn effective strategies to work with them; and implement the best course of action to meet their academic and social needs. Parents, teachers, and schools have enormous impact upon the children's success. For teachers to create an optimal learning environment, it requires careful monitoring of children and thoughtful changes in teaching behavior.

Each school year teachers invite new children into their classrooms. A fresh year of learning together begins, and teachers and children become a community of learners. The relationship children have with parents, teachers, and school communities proves influential in their academic achievement. Christi and David Bergin (2009) analyze the influences of attachment to parents, teachers, and schools to student's academic success in the article *Attachment in the Classroom*. In the first section, the authors describe the effect of "primary attachment figures", such as parents and primary care givers. In the second section, they emphasize the power of relationships teachers develop with their students. In the third section, they stress the importance of the children's connection to their schools.

Surely the relationship a child has with parents or caregivers makes a lasting impact on the child's life. The authors Bergin and Bergin (2009) call this person their "attachment figure". This relationship is usually the earliest, strongest and most powerful one. The quality of this relationship may vary from secure attachment to an insecure attachment. Secure children typically exhibit more curiosity and active engagement as long as the attachment figure is supportive and accessible; however, insecure children demonstrate a variety of behaviors ranging from extremely needy to overly independent. This relationship impacts school success throughout their academic years.

Similarly, teachers have a positive or negative impact on the children too. Some children may come to school with insecurities and lack of quality relationships with parents or caregivers; consequently, teachers should establish strong relationships that will positively impact student achievement. Bergin and Bergin (2009 p. 151) identify "four types of attachment to teachers that parallel the typology for parent-child attachment." Avoidant children seemingly disappear in the classroom. They prefer to be unnoticed; furthermore, they avoid contact with their teachers and

typically do not misbehave because they do not want attention. Resistant children do not comply with classroom rules and usually are visible because they misbehave and appear to be exceedingly needy. They want positive or negative attention from their teachers. Secure children respond to their teachers appropriately. They enjoy being with their teachers and peers; additionally, they accept correction and seek help when needed. Near secure children may display some unresponsive behaviors and not trust their teachers initially. With warm and caring teachers they quickly become more likely respond to them in a positive way.

On pages 158 and 159, Bergin & Bergin (2009) state six recommendations for teachers to build outstanding teacher student relationships. First, teachers should become aware of the developmental needs of their children to establish suitably warm and caring interactions with the children they teach. Second, teacher preparation and planning contributes to student perceptions of teacher concern for their welfare. Third, when students choose activities related to the subject matter, they demonstrate greater rapport with their teachers. Fourth, they recommend "inductive rather than coercive discipline." Induction improves student behavior by helping students understand the reasons for rules and procedures. Fifth, teachers should encourage students to support and accept one another. Sixth, teachers should adopt individualized strategies for difficult students. Behavioral strategies, based on students' needs, provide the support they require to create more positive attitudes.

Additionally, this article relates school atmosphere. According to Cristi and David Bergin (2009, p. 156), "School bonding refers to a sense of belonging at school and having a network of relationships with peers and teachers." The authors recommend six strategies to help children have better school experiences. First, the teachers should work together to apply compatible interventions to make sure there is consistency among the teachers. Second, make sure there are

extra-curricular activities available to all students. Often clubs and organizations base inclusion on criteria the children cannot achieve. For example, the expense may exclude children from joining a group. Third, the authors recommended that schools remain small enough for the children to know the staff and administration. Fourth, since it takes time for a sense of community and closeness, students should be kept together as much as possible. Fifth, situations where school systems require students to move from one school to another should be limited; however, if the administrators must transfer students, they may ease the transition by scheduling a time for students to visit their new schools. The sixth recommendation Christi and David Bergin name is to limit the movement in and out of the classroom. Teachers and students lose valuable instructional time when children transition to and from other rooms more than necessary.

The article presents reliable research and sound suggestions related to child-parent attachments, student-teacher relationships, and student-school connections. When students enter school, their prior experiences influence their behavior and academic success; however, teachers cannot alter their past. The authors have six excellent suggestions for teachers. They offer sound strategies to create a positive classroom foundation to provide support and develop positive teacher student relationships. The authors' six suggestions for schools provide a number of reasonable guidelines for administrators, but teachers may not have enough influence to launch compliance to all of the strategies suggested in the article. Ideally, school administrators and teachers should use this research as encouragement to set forth school-wide practices to help students succeed.

References

Bergin, C., & Bergin, D. (2009). Attachment in the Classroom. *Educational Psychology Review*,

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