



5 Things Your Child's Teacher Needs to Know about Attachment

Securely attached children are more confident and efficient learners because their minds are free from the primary task of attaching and able to focus on absorbing new concepts. Securely attached children are also better able to stay regulated in spite of the daily challenges they will encounter in a learning environment. Teachers can contribute to securing attachment in several ways.

1. Attachment is measured in terms of how secure the trust relationship is between a parent and a child. Secure attachment is the goal for all parent-child relationships. When a child is adopted, particularly when they are adopted as an older child, attachment security can take many years to establish. When children are separating from their parent to attend school, every effort must be made to prioritize attachment security over all other aspects of development.

2. A child who has experienced attachment disruption, meaning they have lost one or more attachment figures, often find it easier to take direction, feel positively towards and get their needs met by adults other than their parents. While this might feel good for the adults who being engaged by the child it is important to know that forming close emotional relationships with these children is NOT helpful in promoting secure attachment. Drawing clear boundaries will actually improve their experience of security with parents.

3. Attachment between a parent and child can be reinforced even when a separation occurs during school. Teachers can verbally remind students about their parents interest, care and availability when the child is in distress.

4. Attachment security will shift and change depending on the time of year, current life events and developmental growth spurts. This may result in behavioural differences and different levels of dependence a child might have on their parent. It is important to be responsive and flexible to these fluctuations without pathologizing the child or assuming manipulative intent.

5. Children who are building attachment security need all the grownups round them to prioritize by ensuring they have access to parental soothing whenever possible. Sending children for a 'break' with mom or dad when they are having a hard time coping or sending them home should not be a consequence but rather the identification of a significant mental health need.

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