

The Invisible Classroom

Relationships, Neuroscience, and Mindfulness in School

Summary

- The physical environment and written curriculum represent only a portion of the structures that influence students' learning in school.
- Social and emotional neuroscience allow educators to understand the brain and inform practices.
- A classroom is “a web of interconnected relationships, with forces operating with their own rules that change the neurology of all involved” (Olson & Cozolino, 2014, p. XXX).
- An interplay between neurological connections and human interactions prepare the stage for education and life.
- Understanding concepts of attachment, safety, emotional regulation, and implicit memory, educators may meet learners as unique, emotional, and social beings whose behavior is symbolic of unmet needs or challenging feelings.

Aligning with Ainsworth's Attachment Theory

Theories of attachment can be observed in early childhood classrooms around the world. Ainsworth's attachment research (Marvin & Ainsworth, 1995):

- Evolved from a pure psychoanalyst to a more ethologist perspective
- Noted cultural influences on parenting and, hence, attachment
- Identified maternal warmth and sensitivity, not warmth alone, impact infants' attachment
- Conducted the Strange Situation lab study and developed a classification of attachment styles:
 - Secure (type B)
 - Insecure avoidant (type A)
 - Insecure ambivalent/resistant (type C)
- Found relationships early in life impact one's ability to develop and participate in relationships as an adult



References

Marvin, R. S. & Ainsworth, M. (1995). On the shaping of attachment theory and research: an interview with M. D. S. Ainsworth (Fall 1994). *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 60(2–3), 3–21. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5834.1995.tb00200.x>

National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2019, May). Understanding young children's play: Seeing behavior through the lens of attachment theory. *Young Children*, 74(2). <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/may2019/understanding-young-childrens-play?r=1&Site=NAEYC>

Olson, K., & Cozolino, L. (2014). *The invisible classroom: Relationships, neuroscience & mindfulness in school* (The Norton Series on the Social Neuroscience of Education) *Illustrated Edition*, [Kindle Edition]. W.W. Norton & Company.

“To help teachers broaden their meaning-making process when encountering various play behaviors, it can be helpful to consider **behavior through the lens of attachment theory**. Although teachers should avoid categorizing children by attachment style (because determining attachment requires specialized training and assessments), considering attachment as one of several factors can assist teachers in providing **sensitive care** to children” (NAEYC, 2020, para. 2).