



Supporting Children who show attachment seeking behaviour - A rationale for children being with the same teacher 2 years -.

Transitions are very difficult for children who have experienced adverse childhood events. Going to a new class will increase their vigilance. Building trust with a new teacher can take a lot of time and energy. This energy is taken away from the learning process. Having the same teacher for 2 years will support the child's development of trust and will enable them to re-address this stage of trust building (Ericson's first task in various stages of development).

Attachment based teaching

Supporting children building secure relationships and trust happens very early in the relationship with parents and carers. Ericson speaks about the stages of development that children complete. The first stage he mentions is developing trust/mistrust. Children develop trust or mistrust, depending on the first relationships in their lives, often father, mother, grandparents, and carers. Children who have experienced inconsistency in having their emotional and physical needs met or who are not getting them met, learn that they can't trust on the adults around them. This becomes their worldview/working model; 'I can't trust others to be there for me. I will have to look after my own needs and safety'. Children then develop coping mechanism to survive. They have learned that they need to look after themselves. This can result in unhelpful/disruptive/challenging behaviours in their current and developing, new relationships.

Teachers as secondary attachment figures.

Teachers in general see the children 5 days a week. Children come into the schools and classroom with their worldview of not being able to trust others. Their coping mechanisms, shown in their behaviours, are not helpful for their learning.

To build the basics for learning, a trusting, predictable relationship is detriment.

Children's behaviour tends to move towards attachment seeking as soon as they experience threat, eg abandonment, rejection, new challenges, transition. They will show attachment seeking behaviour either through challenging behaviour that gets the carer's/teacher's attention, behaviours such as running away (not trusting a teacher's reaction or asking to be found and be affirmed of worthy to be with) or by clinging to the carer/teacher.

Strategies that can be useful to put into place in consultation between the school leadership team, learning support team, Aboriginal education officers, teachers, and teacher's aides.

- Building a safe classroom environment with predictable routines, rituals, brain breaks, etc.
- Consistency and continuity, including the possibility that children stay with their teacher for an additional year.
- Building safe relationships between teacher and child. Understanding what the child is communicating through their behaviours. Behaviours are driven from feelings inside. Children who feel good about themselves and the people around them, will show very different behaviours from children who don't feel good about themselves.
- Emotion coaching is a technique that can support positive relationships through reflective language that does address the child's underlying feelings often motivating their behaviours. It also helps children to build emotional language so they can start to verbalise their feelings rather than express it in their behaviour.

- It is important that this becomes known to other staff who are involved with the child to build consistency and predictability. A child who had/has adverse childhood experiences needs continuing positive experiences to start changing their often negative view about themselves as well as their worldview.