

What does Research tell us About the Importance of Teacher-Student Relationships?

It's the time of year when students, no matter what the age, are busy running around gathering up their school supplies, going to Open House to meet their teachers, and double-checking their closets to be sure they have the right outfits to make an impression with their peers.

And what are the teachers doing at this time? They're just as busy picking up their schedules, reviewing the school calendar, double-checking the standards and benchmarks of the school curriculum, and decorating their classrooms for the first day of school.

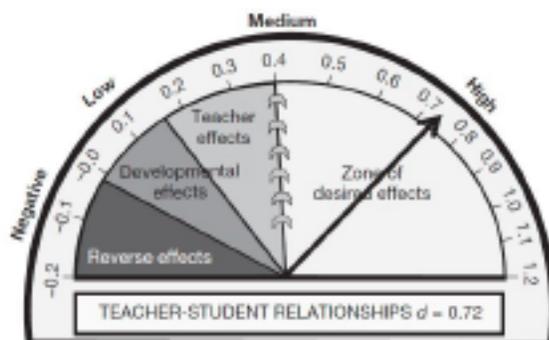
All teachers follow these similar beginning steps, but the expert teachers are constantly asking themselves questions about student achievement and what makes the greatest impact on learning. They begin to question themselves and look for ways to improve their teaching strategies. And they ask themselves, "How great will my impact be on their personal learning? What impact will I have on the lives of my students?"

Most effective educators turn to data-driven research when creating a plan of action. In John Hattie's book, *Visible Learning, A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-analysis Relating to Achievement*, he synthesizes over 800 meta-analyses. Therefore, what indicators make the greatest impact on student achievement?

Ranking Effective Indicators

Scores ranged from -0.51 to 1.30. **In his summary of Hattie's book, Gerry Miller states**, "An effect size of $d=1.0$ indicates an increase of one standard deviation on the student achievement. A one standard deviation increase is typically associated with advancing a student's achievement by 2 to 3 years or improving the rate of learning by 50%....Research shows that these can be expected to have an average effect size of 0.4 (the 'hinge point')." Anything below 0.40 won't have much of an impact on student achievement, while anything above 0.40 will have a direct correlation to student success (Miller, G. p.1).

One of the **most effective indicators** to focus on is **Teacher-student Relationships** which ranked $d = 0.72$. The relationship teachers have with their students dictates the impact they will have on their students' achievement.



Hattie, *Visible Learning*, p. 118

When there is a positive teacher-student relationship, students feel safe and there is a strong bond of trust within the classroom. Students are not afraid to take risks and understand that making errors are all part of the learning process. Students are more likely to feel positive about school and have a greater chance of developing a true love for learning.

“It is teachers who have created positive teacher student relationships that are more likely to have the above average effects on student achievement.”

John Hattie (2009)

The beginning of the school year is time to set the right climate, to begin to develop positive relationships between the teacher and the students. As Kirke Olson stated in his book, **The Invisible Classroom: Relationships, Neuroscience, and Mindfulness in School**, it's time to create a school culture that supports excellence (Olson, p. 3). So *why* is that important and *how* does one do that?

The Invisible Classroom

Olson describes these relationships between the teachers and the students and the students' relationship to one another, as “the invisible classroom—a collection of continuously active neurological and human connections that have an immense effect on learning but little to do with the actual content of the lesson” (Olson, p.64).

Students should learn how the brain functions and how it learns best. The teacher as well as the students need to also understand **emotional intelligence** and how it plays such an important role in the classroom (Goleman, 2001).

From the moment we're born, the human brain is wired to best learn within the context of a loving relationship. “When the humanity is removed from education, so is much of its effectiveness” (Olson, p. 64). In the book, **Humanizing the Education Machine**, the authors discuss how we have taken the personal relationship building attributes out of teaching. “The Education Machine only operates with a mandate and a formula; it cannot care or even think” (Miller, Latham, Cahill, p. 217).

Action Plan for the New School Year

As educators, we have always inspired a love for learning. So what **action steps** can teachers do now as they begin a new school year?

- The teacher creates a positive classroom culture together with the students
- The teacher sets up the purpose for learning, the success criteria, but students have a “choice and a voice” in how they're going to complete the Daily Team Task
- The teacher ensures that resources are available for the students to complete the daily task
- The teacher helps build consensus in solving the daily task through teaching the students how to collaborate
- Errors are welcomed in the classroom... don't look at them as mistakes

- Teachers and fellow classmates are always accepting one another for who they are in any given moment—
- Students have the opportunity to engage in activities they have enjoyed before as well as expose to new and novel challenges
- Students build bridges to new learning through prior knowledge and experiences
- Together the teacher and students create an enriched environment
- Students and teachers set and communicate appropriate, specific and challenging goals
- Extensive feedback is provided to both the students and teachers, from one another
- Student learning involves more than surface learning
- Teachers express their genuine belief that all students will excel and be successful
- Teachers focus on assessing student growth on social emotional skills, such as through empathy, and mindfulness
- And teachers should always “**Know Thy Impact**” (Hattie, p.ix).

For comments and/or questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at DrLou@meteoreducation.com
lwhitaker@meteoreducation.com

Lou Whitaker, Ed. D.

Brain Junkie



Resources:

Goleman, D. (2001, February 22). *A View on Emotional Intelligence*. Retrieved June 8, 2017, from edutopia: <https://www.edutopia.org/daniel-goleman-emotional-intelligence>

Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning, A synthesis of over 800 meta-analysis relating to achievement*. London: Routledge.

Miller, G. (2009). *Summary of visible learning by John Hattie*. University of Auckland, New Zealand. University of Auckland, New Zealand.

Miller, R., Latham, B., & Cahill, B. (2017). *Humanizing the education machine*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Olson, Kirke (2014-07-27T23:58:59). *The Invisible Classroom: Relationships, Neuroscience & Mindfulness in School (The Norton Series on the Social Neuroscience of Education)* (Kindle Locations 64-65). W. W. Norton & Company. Kindle Edition.