

## Fostering Attachment in the Classroom

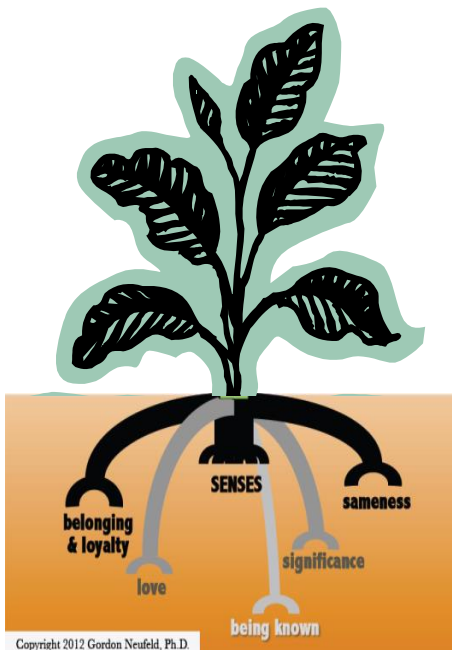
### Attachment as connection

The connection that teachers build with students can be a powerful factor in student success. For students with refugee backgrounds, this connection often becomes the framework where engagement and healing occur.

Students, however, bring their own levels of connection, levels that have developed, or been stalled, depending on the student's experiences.

As teachers understand the six depths of human connection teachers will find it easier to:

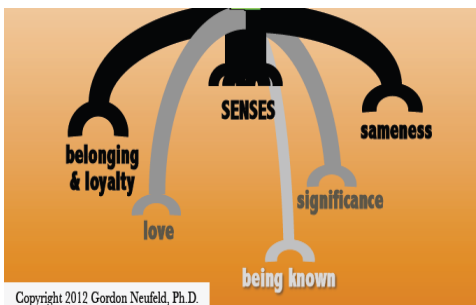
- match the student's current level of connection to increase student engagement
- create structures, routines and activities that engage various depths of connection, independent of language proficiency
- foster the development of deeper connection, which, in turn can spur on the student's social-emotional maturity



### The six levels of connection

Humans have a deep drive to connect with others and be close to others. Dr. Gordon Neufeld suggests that just as a plant is meant to deepen its roots into soil, this drive:

- is natural and meant to develop and deepen over time
- develops in a one-to-one context (e.g., person to person)
- is fostered by families and cultures, and significant adults (e.g., teachers)
- has six levels of connection based on:
  1. being proximate
  2. being the same
  3. feeling belonging and loyalty
  4. feeling significant to others
  5. feeling love
  6. being known









For more on attachment, connections, working with students see [www.neufeldinstitute.com](http://www.neufeldinstitute.com)

For more on teacher-tips for strengthening connections with students see

[www.teachingrefugees.com](http://www.teachingrefugees.com)

Tips for Teachers: Building Connections

## Matching and working with attachment levels

Level of Connection	What You Might See (examples)	What You Might Do matching and deepening the level of connection
<b>Proximity</b> (staying close) 	A student who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- only listens when you are close</li> <li>- cannot “keep” you or the instructions in mind when you are not around.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stay close. Keep close. Invite into your presence.</li> <li>- <b>Emphasize</b> positive sensory experiences (e.g., warm tea, nice smells, comfy chairs, etc.)</li> <li>- <b>Say:</b> “It is good to have you close”</li> <li>- <b>Do:</b> Do the same thing, get a joint project, rearrange the classroom so student is in close proximity; use a “joined at the hip” model through the day, eat snacks at the same time at the same table, drum together; choose activities that are one-to-one, read books that reinforce attachment/connecting.</li> </ul>
<b>Sameness</b> (mimicry, imitation) 	A student who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- dresses exactly like other students</li> <li>- dresses like you</li> <li>- speaks like other students</li> <li>- does not initiate actions to be different, but clearly hungers to be part of the group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Emphasize</b> sameness, similarity, commonality, matching, likeness, common ground)</li> <li>- <b>Say:</b> “Look, we are the same about that!” “We both are fond of ...” “We both like ...”</li> <li>- <b>Do:</b> Do the same activities (e.g., singing songs, drumming together), be on the same side in games, same name teams, find or create interests that are similar, emphasize sameness, read books that reinforce attachment/connecting.</li> </ul>
<b>Loyalty/ Belonging</b> (loyalty) 	A student who <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- is loyal to a group to a fault</li> <li>- cheers only for a certain sports team</li> <li>- marks him/herself (e.g., tattoo, colours) to be in the group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Emphasize</b> loyalty and belonging</li> <li>- <b>Say:</b> “I am on your side.” “We are on the same team!” “I am your champion”</li> <li>- <b>Do:</b> Use team t-shirts, team chants, find common interests (e.g., soccer teams) to be loyal to; school team; emphasize us against them; emphasize inside versus outside of the group; read books that reinforce loyalty and belonging.</li> </ul>
<b>Significance</b> (be seen in a significant way) 	A student who <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- wants to show you things they have done</li> <li>- wants a significant role in the classroom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Emphasize</b> the student’s one-of-a-kind uniqueness</li> <li>- Offer opportunities for meaningful contribution</li> <li>- <b>Say:</b> “You are so important to me / this class” “I am so lucky you are here.”</li> <li>- <b>Do:</b> Have reward and recognition of talent and contribution ceremonies, pictures of self and other posted, look at family histories and unique family stories, have deeper conversations about meaning of life, of relating, place in the universe, my future contributions/career, read books about belonging and significance, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Love</b> (wanting to be good for someone) 	A student who <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- brings home-made presents, or special objects, to you</li> <li>- writes notes of gratitude to you</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Focus</b> on the deep felt expression of acceptance and love, nourish healthy affection</li> <li>- <b>Say:</b> “You are so good to me” “You know how to help so well”</li> <li>- <b>Do:</b> Smile at the student just because (without correcting or commenting), invite ways of giving heart, pictures of self and student, give something valuable (not financially) in return (e.g., special rock, etc.), read stories about loving individuals and the unique impact they have had on others, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Being Known</b> (no secrets) 	A student who <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- is able to be OK with being known</li> <li>- does not mask his/her feelings, fears, concerns, life history</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fundamentally accept the wonderfulness and messiness of the life of the student, and be a person of hope in the messiness, non-judgemental about the difficulties faced</li> <li>- <b>Focus</b> on the uniqueness of this person, and value of the interior experiences (e.g., thoughts, feelings, worries, etc.)</li> <li>- <b>Say:</b> “I know you”</li> <li>- <b>Do:</b> Be open to hearing the student’s challenges; share (as appropriate) challenges in your own journey and some of the uncertainty and the outcomes; be open (with appropriate boundaries) around yourself as a person; acknowledge student’s challenges and celebrate triumphs, etc.</li> </ul>