

# HOW CAN YOU MAKE BIDS TO CONNECT?

## 5:1 Interactions (Noticing)

While negative interactions are never encouraged, we understand that they happen from time to time. The goal is to increase the number of positive interactions with students over negative interactions. The critical ratio is 5:1. Just by noticing a student, you are engaging in a positive interaction. Positive interactions and noticing occur when you engage in friendly conversation, provide non-verbal acknowledgment like a head nod, wave or smile, offer praise for something done well and offer support when you see a child struggling. Negative interactions examples include criticism, punishment, and negative or non-existent non-verbal acknowledgment.

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**5:1 interactions increase connections → students feel engaged → motivation increases → academic achievement and regulated behavior improves**

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Examples of how to provide positive interactions:

- Praise for correct answers (i.e., “You worked really hard on that one!”)
- Appreciation for assignments turned in or work completed (i.e., “Thank you for getting your homework turned in – great work!”)
- Acknowledgment of character strengths (i.e., “That took a lot of courage to try that difficult question.”)
- Positive greetings (i.e., “Good morning, we missed you yesterday and I’m happy you’re feeling better today!”)
- Gratitude for good behavior (i.e., “Thank you so much for helping clear up the paper scraps.”)
- Take a moment to check in with a student (i.e., “How is your family?”)
- Inquiring about hobbies or interests (i.e., “I heard your track team had a meet yesterday, how did you do?”)
- Smile or give friendly gestures like a fist pump or wave.

Every interaction we have with a student matters. This is because our brains have something called mirror neurons. A mirror neuron is a neuron that fires both when a person acts and when a person observes the same action performed by another. Thus, the neuron “mirrors” the behavior of the other, as though the observer were itself acting. In other words, neurons tune into the emotions of

others. We tend to mimic and match moods, facial expressions, and behavior as empathy. This is the basis of not just mutual hostility, but also friendly interactions. For staff working with youth who exhibit problematic behavior, this can become a pitfall or be used as a powerful tool. For example, think of a student who is acting in an aggressive manner. If the adult who is responding to the student begins charging toward the student, raising their voice, and widely opening their eyes, this will often further escalate the student because their mirror neurons will respond accordingly. However, if the adult responds calmly, with an even tone of voice and non-threatening body posture, the student's central nervous system will begin to de-escalate.

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