# Building Positive Relationships with Students

Positive student-teacher relationships are the best predictor of how much a student will learn in a class (students generally don’t learn from adults that they don’t like or feel don’t care about them). Because of this, building positive relationships with students is not another thing we add to our plates; **it *is* the plate.**

You may already may be doing some of these in your classrooms. However, here are 3 research-based strategies for facilitating positive teacher-student relationships.

1. Greet students ***every*** day at the beginning of class (use their name, smile, and make eye contact).
   * Greeting students at the beginning of class has been repeatedly demonstrated to be one of the most effective strategies for supporting engagement and reducing disruptive behavior.
2. Research suggests that healthy relationships are maintained by a ratio of at least 4 positive comments/interactions for every 1 negative/corrective comment/interaction (some studies endorse a 5 to 1 ratio). T*his ratio is particularly important for students who are struggling in school.* Ways to achieve this ratio include:
   * Greeting and saying goodbye to students
   * Providing positive feedback about effort.
   * Using humor (not sarcasm)
   * Asking a student about hobbies/interests.
   * Telling students what to do instead of what not to do. For example:
     + “Everyone should be reading silently right now.” versus “Stop talking!”
   * Actively ignoring some low-level challenging behavior (e.g., being passively off-task).
   * Praising around mis-behavior (e.g., providing praise to a student who is near the student engaging in off-task behavior).
   * Use proximity as a way to support on-task behavior (e.g., if a student is off-task, move closer to him/her before providing corrective feedback).
3. Use behavior-specific praise.
   * Behavior-specific praise (e.g., I like how you participated in class today), as compared to generalized praise (e.g., Good job), is a research-based way to increase the likelihood that students will repeat desired behaviors

# Resources

* Supporting a high ratio of positive to corrective comments: <http://www.sdrg.org/presentations/Practice_Guide.pdf>
* Ted Talk: Rita Pierson, Every Kid Needs a Champion.
* Research behind greeting students: <https://www.edutopia.org/article/welcoming-students-smile>
* Video example of 4 to 1 ratio: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3wpviS5gaQ>
* Research supporting behavior specific praise:
  + https://vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/assets/files/resources/psibehaviorspecpraise.pdf