



# An Introduction to 5 Radical Minutes

*5 Radical Minutes promotes emotional intelligence and a sense of well-being through a blended series of activities, leading to significant personal growth and improved school climate.*

## 3 Constants Keep 5 Radical Minutes Simple Yet Effective

5 Radical Minutes has three constant strands, all based in solid research. The critical difference in this program over others is that we've chosen these three means of connecting students and staff and combined them into a straight-forward format.

1. **Paired Activities.** Structured, paired activities bring students together with all others in the classroom over time. As a result, *all* classmates get to know one another. Designed to foster acceptance, compassion, and kindness, paired sharing connects youth who may feel isolated or not liked with fellow students by revealing what they have in common with others.
2. **Community Circles.** Classrooms use structured circle activities to further build community. Some circles are geared for fun and laughter. Others address a range of emotions, issues, and attitudes and are designed to enhance classroom climate. (When something has gone awry between a student and others in class, Restorative Circles can be used to support the student needing to make amends.) Because most circles focus on community building, students learn how to create that “safe container” for conversations that are more difficult, and student behaviors need to be addressed.
3. **Stress Management Coping Skills.** Stress prevents students from doing their best on tests. Additionally, stress leaves students vulnerable to impulsive reactions and short-sightedness. Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) has a 40-year history of research. [Robert Sapolsky's](#) research on the debilitating effects of stress brings meaning to the relief it is for students to be mindful of the present. Students learn to break the cycle of ruminating on the past or worrying about the future. This contributes significantly to operating as a trauma-informed school.

We suggest that all adults in the building join in these 5-minute classroom activities as often as is feasible. This participation significantly increases students' trust in adults' willingness to listen, their desire to support youth, and their acceptance of and care for students.

# The Benefits of 5 Radical Minutes

## Connect Staff and Get an Accurate Pulse of Classroom Climate

**5 Radical Minutes for School Administrators** works in tandem with the classroom program and provides many additional benefits. It utilizes the same format of five-minute activities for staff or departmental meetings.

### Benefits for staff relations:

- Pairing staff with others they don't know well allows everyone to get to know staff who are new or not well-connected and builds staff camaraderie.
- Prompts are designed to support staff and to help them see ways of better supporting students.
- School climate will improve in direct proportion to how much both the student and staff programs are implemented. Taking time to do some of the MBSR activities as well as using the restorative practices processes to resolve staff conflict or stressors continues to pay dividends over time.

### Benefits for teachers who use the classroom program:

- During the five-minute staff meeting activities, teachers have opportunities to identify not just what's working well, but also what's frustrating in their classrooms.
- Teachers gain ideas and insights from brief, targeted exchanges with colleagues.
- By being a participant rather than a facilitator in the process, teachers get a better sense of how their students feel and learn as they use 5 Radical Minutes in the classroom.

We know that every school is different, staff needs vary, and willingness to leap into new programs varies from one teacher to the next. 5 Radical Minutes can be integrated into your building in a variety of ways, but the goal is that over time, *all* teachers will participate in the staff (adult version) of 5 Radical Minute activities at least once a week, and all will be facilitating the program in at least one of the classes each day.

# How 5 Radical Minutes Works

## Easy to Implement and Simple to Follow

5 Radical Minutes not only enhances individual lives, but also improves classroom and school climate. This carefully crafted combination of activities provides a broad range of benefits.

Developed strategically over five years to ensure that the most profoundly effective practices would be included, 5 Radical Minutes remains easy to implement and simple to follow. **This straightforward, effective approach to connect students and staff is our critical differentiator.**

5 Radical Minutes mindfulness techniques address several risk factors for individuals and schools. Dan Hurley, in a New York Times magazine article "[Breathing In vs. Spacing Out](#)," quotes astounding research from the journal Psychological Science's May 2014 trial results:

*...undergraduates instructed to spend a mere 10 minutes a day for two weeks practicing mindfulness made significant improvement on the verbal portion of the Graduate Record Exam – a gain of 16 percentile points. They also significantly increased their working memory capacity the ability to maintain and manipulate multiple items of attention.*

## For Individual Students: Greater Mindfulness and Decreased Isolation

- Structured, paired sharing increases students' willingness to get along with others – ALL others – such that it decreases student-to-student conflict and as a result, increases teaching time.
- Students face risk factors that, left unaddressed, often lead them to self-harm, depression, and other self-destructive behaviors. Our carefully crafted prompts address these risk factors by providing insights and teaching increased coping skills.
- Community circles make sure that each student is known, respected, and has a voice in relationship with all others in the classroom, resulting in decreased student isolation.
- Mindfulness activities reduce stress and increase the ability to focus and think clearly, leading to better test scores and longer concentration for academic tasks.

## For Teachers: Step-by-Step Guidance for Classroom Incorporation

- Prompts for the shared activities provide insights and strategies that teacher may employ any time student difficulties arise.
- Community circles build camaraderie and improve classroom climate.
- Restorative practices decrease discipline and increase students' sense of self-worth.
- Staff meeting activities reinforce 5 Radical Minutes classroom concepts and strategies for all adults in the building.
- Quarterly surveys show progress and enable teachers to refine their approach in order to enhance progress.

## For Administrators: Restorative Discipline and Trackable Metrics

- The 5 Radical Minutes discipline process engages students in taking responsibility and making amends for their behaviors rather than focusing on negative deterrents, which only occur when students are caught. We encourage all discipline to start with the 5 Radical Minute format, where each party respectfully listens to the other without interruption, but without the two-minute time limit.
- Quarterly surveys provide insight on the strengths and needs in each classroom, and provide data that allows buildings and districts to track overall progress and benefit.

## Helpful Strategies for Implementation

### Designate a 5 Radical Minutes Coordinator

We recommend one staff person coordinates 5 Radical Minutes for each building. This one point of contact streamlines the communication process and ensures that the issues you deem most important are being addressed as such.

As we continue to add resources for teachers and students during the school year, we'll update teachers through the website. Occasionally however, we might need to communicate directly with the coordinator.

### Make Implementation Voluntary

All it takes is a few enthusiastic teachers to begin using the program successfully with their students. Once other teachers, staff, and students start to see the difference it's making, more are apt to join in. Buildings don't have to do total implementation to start using the program.

Those who join later will begin the prompts from the very beginning, not where others are. These foundational concepts begin easily and build trust gradually, so teachers will achieve greater success starting at the beginning rather than rushing to catch up with their colleagues.

### Encourage All Adults Building-Wide to Participate

Imagine students' surprise when they see the front office secretary join their classroom's 5 Radical Minutes activity. But imagine even more delight when they see the school principal and assistant principals come to their classroom to take turns listening and sharing with them.

No matter which child gets paired with the principal, every student in the classroom sees that all adults in the building will make honest attempts to listen to students in a new and heartfelt way. We encourage the custodians, crossing guards, parent volunteers and any other adult who happens to be in the building to drop in to classrooms for their 5 Radical Minute activity.