

What's In Five Minutes?

**Kathleen McCart, M. Ed., M.A.T.S.
University of Houston**

Author's Contact Information

*Kathleen McCart, M. Ed., M.A.T.S.
Doctoral Student
University of Houston – Clear Lake
Sugar Land, TX, 77479
phone: 832-758-5350
email: Mccartk5106@uhcl.edu*

Abstract:

How important is five minutes in a classroom? Every year teachers strive to increase student performance in the classroom however, while some teachers complain there is a lack of time, others embrace every moment shared with their students. Standards and expectations are rising yet the time we have with students seems to decrease every year. In addition, some who complain about the lack of time in their classroom also fail to ensure bell-to-bell instruction occurs on a daily basis. Every minute with our students is important. It is essential that we, as educators, value this time as sacred so that all students receive the best education possible.

Key Words:

bell-to-bell instruction, engagement, student, teacher.

What is in Five Minutes?

If we think about five minutes, it doesn't seem like much time. However, every minute is critical in a classroom where teachers are preparing students for successful futures. Administrators push for bell-to-bell instruction; yet, what does that really look like? The current mindset of many students is: "I have been working for 45 minutes, so I deserve the last five minutes to relax and talk." Even teachers often carry a similar mindset. The problem is that we do not realize how this causes problems in the long run.

Teachers complain about the principal taking the first five minutes of every day to deliver important information, yet they do not complain about the last five minutes being lost with students trying to be first in-line at the door. Walk down any hallway five minutes before the end of class and you will often see students standing at the door, some even with the door cracked open trying to get an early start. Some teachers can even be seen standing in the hallway talking with the students while all wait for the bell to ring. Teachers complain about not having enough time for instruction, yet these are

the same teachers who allow students to gather at the door before class is over. My daughter, who is in high school, feels it is the students' fault because they automatically shut down; that has been the "norm" in their previous classes. I believe the fault lies with the teacher failing to create lessons that ensure bell-to-bell instruction, and with teachers failing to set the expectation that their class is one where learning will occur from the beginning to the end of class. Both groups fail to realize how much time is really lost when this is the pattern every day. Five minutes may not seem like much but... .

Think about this: If you shut-down five minutes early every day for the next week, that equates to 25 minutes of lost instruction in one week. If this pattern continues over a two-week period, your students have lost 50 minutes of instruction; which equate to an entire class period. In nine weeks, the time lost adds up to four and a half class periods. Wow! Imagine how much more your students could learn if they had four and a half more class periods of instruction!

I remember one campus faculty complaining because their administrator created an eight period day versus a seven period day. Each class was shortened by approximately six minutes. Many of these teachers shut down the last five minutes of class but were the first to say they now would not have enough time to cover the entire curriculum. Interesting!

So, are you complaining about not having enough time in the year to cover material? Do you shut down during the last five minutes of class? Are your students gathered at the door before the bell rings? In our quest for greatness, we must take advantage of every minute we spend with our students. Ensuring students are working on engaging warm-ups at the beginning of class and an activity or closure at the end of class will surely help us to move from good to great. Before you complain about the lack of time in your classroom, check your first five and last five minutes of the class. Keep a tally of how much time the students are at the door waiting for class to end. If you see a pattern where you have too much down time, then change your routine. Don't wait until tomorrow; do something about it today! Help your students move from good to great!