



## Assistant Principal *Ex*celeration

This is a special edition of The Assistant Principal Podcast inspired by some work I did recently with nine assistant principals as part of the APEX program. This podcast assumes that you are familiar with 5-mc. If you aren't, you can go to [frederickbuskey.com/resources](https://www.frederickbuskey.com/resources) and download a one-pager. This is a deeper look at the purposes and techniques of 5-mc.

### Purpose of 5-mc

1. Help T become more reflective (by creating space)
2. Show T that you value them (by listening)
3. Help you understand what's happening (by listening)
4. Increase your listening skills (by not thinking about what you should say)

It is easy and low investment – don't make it more complicated, there are other observation formats for that. This is like hitting the Bojangles drive through, not sitting down to a meal in a restaurant.

Similarly, 5-mc is an MVP approach. It is great, but it is only one part or step.

### Impact over time:

1. T begin answering the questions routinely without you being there to ask them (become more reflective practitioners)
2. T view you as a partner in their growth and they will seek you out
3. You will become more proactive because you will consistently have better information sooner.
4. Your ability to focus will increase and your mind will quiet down
5. Change is gradual – this is not about getting teachers to change a specific practice, it is about getting them to be more reflective over the long term.

If you are doing these things, you are not doing 5-minute coaching:

- Trying to fix things
- Trying to suggest things
- Trying to make things better
- Talking
- Replying
- Thinking about answers or next steps
- You could use the questions as part of a more formal coaching cycle, but it isn't 5-mc at that point.

(Don't tarnish the brand!)

The most powerful, simplest, but hardest thing to do:  
100% attention, listening, totally present in the moment.

<https://www.frederickbuskey.com/apex-members-page.html>



## Assistant Principal *Exc*eleration

- It is a gift of immeasurable value.
- Time is finite, we can't make more of it, so it is the most valuable resource. Your teachers know that, so when you give them your undivided attention, they know you are giving them something special.
- It is hard because we want to think about our response or about other things we must do. By understanding that the presence is the value, maybe we can let go of our need to be thinking about other things.

### Multiple uses:

- Reflecting on a lesson
- A practice
- A student
- School culture
- A school initiative
- T socio-emotional health

### What to do with what you learn?

- Pieces of information are data a points.
- One purpose of 5mc is for you to learn more about what's going on, which means you are collecting data
- It is anecdotal and informal data
- How do we use it?
  - Write it down after coaching is over, probably shouldn't tell T you are writing anything down. Do not write while doing 5-mc, it makes it too formal.
  - Reflect on themes and patterns at the end of the week
  - You can circle back later (hours or days) to follow up with more questions:
    - "You mentioned x, can you say more about that?"
    - "Would you be interested in having a conversation about Y?"
  - You can conduct normative observations in multiple classrooms to gather concrete data. Example, three teachers say they are having trouble keeping their focused lessons short. You can observe multiple focus lessons and look for patterns or wasted time (complex example)
  - Can do formative observations with specific teachers as a precursor to a coaching cycle. "You have mentioned in several 5-mc sessions that you wished you were asking deeper questions, would it be worth doing a coaching cycle on that?"

### On being transparent:



## Assistant Principal *Exc*eleration

- It can be awkward to begin 5-mc, especially if you are new to the school or don't have a history of engaging teachers in instructional conversation, or don't have a school culture that encourages it.
- Be transparent: "I am working on my instructional leadership, so I am trying to do this 5-mc thing. It works like this: I ask you three questions, then I shut up and listen. It's teaching me to be a better listener." Please be patient with me as I work on it.

### Responding to certain things:

- There are never surprises or things they would do differently: That's okay. It is a sign that they either aren't good at self-assessing or don't trust you (or themselves)? Accepting their answers as valid, and being appreciative, will, over time, build trust and help them to become more reflective. The beauty of 5-mc is that it is a bit like yoga – you can start basic, but with continued practice even the same poses yield deeper more powerful results.
- They ask for feedback: be honest – this is my gift to you, time for you to reflect on your own practice. If pressed, you can offer to come into their classroom later to observe something specific that they want.
- Teacher wants to think more deeply and will get back to you: YES!!!! that's a homerun because they are going deeper into reflection.

### Going off script:

- You can drop one (or two) of the questions, but don't add anything.