

The logo features a large purple number '5' on the left, with the words 'To Thrive' in a purple sans-serif font to its right. Below 'To Thrive' is the text 'School Culture Challenge' in a smaller purple font. The entire text is set against a background of colorful, stylized human figures in various colors (red, purple, blue, green, yellow) arranged in a circular pattern, suggesting a community or group.

5 To Thrive

School Culture Challenge

STRENGTHEN YOUR CULTURE IN JUST 5 MINUTES A DAY
POSITIVE CHANGE STARTS WITH YOU!



THE SCHOOL CULTURE CHALLENGE

Dedicate 5 minutes each day for the next month to simple activities that will reframe your thinking and improve the culture in your school.

With daily, 5 minute learning opportunities — we call it “micro-learning” — you can reframe your thinking in a way that expands your motivation, engagement, performance—even your well-being. These outcomes will lead to a positive ripple effect on everyone around you!

By dedicating 5 minutes a day to research-based activities, it is possible to shift your culture to one in which learners of *all ages* thrive!

For this challenge, we have adapted four simple and quick practices from our Thriving Learning Communities™ (TLC) Program. Each week’s selected activity is focused on one of the following:

WEEK 1: Self-Awareness

Daniel Goleman, best-selling author of *Emotional Intelligence*, asserts that a lack of self-awareness is a “primary cause of ineffective leadership, which poisons organizational culture.” Small changes in your self-awareness can make a big difference for you and those around you. Doing the first 5-minute activity each day during Week 1 will expand self-awareness, advancing your leadership in a way that encourages positive potential.

WEEK 2: Self-Management

How leaders choose to manage their beliefs and emotions has a direct impact on organizational culture. In an article in Harvard Business Review, Sterling Livingston suggests, “What managers believe about themselves subtly influences what they believe about their subordinates.” Doing the 5-minute activity each day during Week 2 will expand your capacity for self-management so that you can express the very best within yourself and bring out the best in others.

TAKE 5 TO THRIVE!

WEEK 3: Social Awareness

Social awareness is the ability to understand different social situations and manage your reactions to those situations. Simon Sinek, author of *Leaders Eat Last* and whose TED Talk has been viewed more than 17 million times, says, “The lesson I’m learning is that I’m useless by myself. My success hinges entirely on the people I work with.” Doing the 5-minute activity each day during Week 3 will expand your social awareness to help you build a more successful team.

WEEK 4: Relationships

Strong relationships are an essential component to a thriving organizational culture and effective leadership. In *The Leadership Challenge*, James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner say, “When leadership is a relationship founded on trust and confidence, people take risks, make changes, and keep organizations and movements alive.” Doing the 5-minute activity each day during Week 4 will expand your capacity to build strong, relational leadership.

THRIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

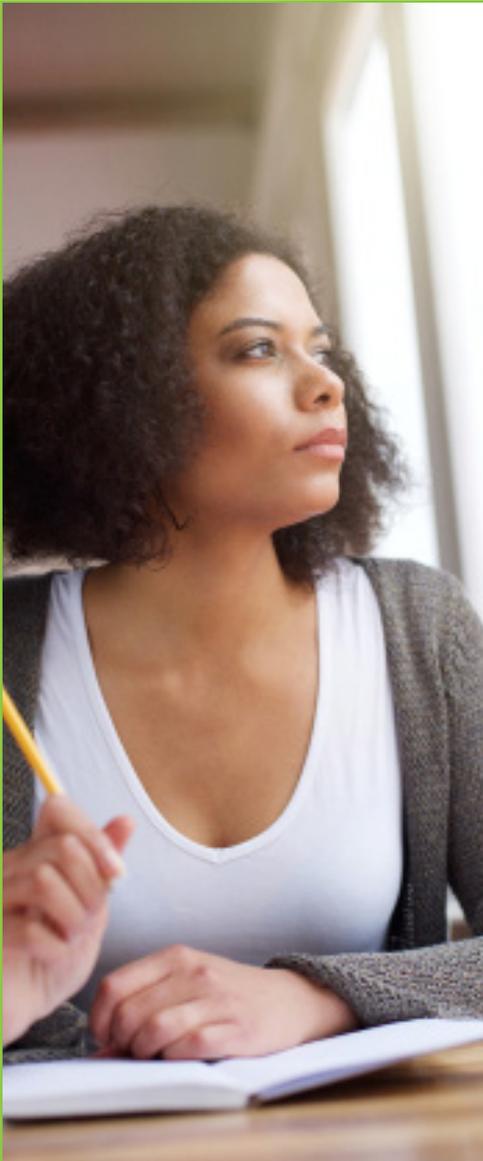
In more than 50 schools across the country, the Thriving Learning Communities™ program applies the science of character strengths to the practice of teaching and learning. The program has led to positive changes in students’ social and emotional competencies and an increase in motivation, engagement, learning and performance. For more information, review our latest [evaluation report](#). Thriving Learning Communities is comprised of three critical elements.

- 1. Social and Emotional Learning** sets the foundation for the program, addressing five interrelated sets of competencies including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2005).
- 2. The Science of Character** provides a common language from which to build social and emotional learning skills and accelerate motivation and engagement. Through our partnership with the VIA Institute, an international thought leader on character, our work is scientifically grounded in cutting-edge research.
- 3. Online Games**, designed in partnership with experts at Happify™, create an enhanced blended learning experience for students as they engage in online micro-learning activities designed to reinforce and extend classroom learning.

Visit our [website](#) to learn more about how you can bring Thriving Learning Communities™ to your school.

WEEK 1: SELF-AWARENESS

POWER WORDS ACTIVITY



The next five minutes is all about you! Do whatever is required to make sure you have a few uninterrupted minutes to savor a time when you were at your best. Bring back every detail—the sounds, the images, the feelings, etc. Think of the reflection as a movie and replay it several times in your mind.

What are three character strengths you accessed in that instance? (See the last page for a complete list.) Write them on the “For Myself” sticky note. If you are like 99.9% of the people in the world, you will face a challenge today. Let the challenge be a cue to recall your strengths and ignite your best performance. Repeat this reflection and application every day this week and see what happens!

To go deeper, write the names of five colleagues on the “For Others” sticky note and take a moment to help one person each day become aware of the strengths you have observed in him or her. With just one moment you will change their day!

What will you do to bring this idea to life this week?

FOR MYSELF

FOR OTHERS

IMAGINE...

THE POSITIVE SHIFT IN YOUR SCHOOL OR CLASSROOM CULTURE IF EVERYONE IN YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY INTENTIONALLY ACTIVATED THE VERY BEST WITHIN THEMSELVES TODAY AND EVERY DAY!

WHO SAYS?

In her ground-breaking work, Barbara Frederickson's (2001) investigation of positive emotions revealed that people in environments where they experienced positive emotions showed heightened levels of creativity, inventiveness, and "big picture" perceptual focus. Increasing our positivity opens our awareness, broadens our boundaries, and expands our world, leading to greater happiness overall.

WHAT ELSE?

In the TLC program, Self-Awareness is unlocked for learners of all ages by activating the character strengths of gratitude (becoming aware of where gratitude can be cultivated), kindness (moderating our perspective of self and others with kindness) and hope (expanding hope to set and achieve ambitious goals).

WHAT NOW?

The VIA Survey is designed to identify your unique combination of strengths. If you would like to learn more about your personal signature strengths, [take the survey](#).

**“ It is wisdom to know others;
It is enlightenment to know one's self. ”**

- Lao-Tzu (6th century B.C.) *The Way of Life*

WEEK 2: SELF-MANAGEMENT

STRIKE A POSE ACTIVITY



You might be asking, “If this toolkit is about culture, why am I spending all this time on me?” It’s because you are the most powerful place to start! When one person in a network becomes happier and experiences a greater sense of well-being or feels more powerful, the chance that others will do likewise goes up 27%. Clearly, it’s important to manage our emotions wisely.

In her book *Presence*, Amy Cuddy describes how small nudges can change our behavior and mindset. Cuddy’s research suggests that our attitudes often follow from our behaviors, as opposed to the other way around, and can be dramatically altered by our body language. Start your day by striking an energizing pose. Plant your feet widely and stretch your arms overhead in a V shape. Repeat the pose several times. This small nudge can boost your confidence and energy for hours. Write down how it went on the “For Myself” sticky note to inspire yourself to keep trying new “nudges” this week.

To go deeper, identify a team facing a challenge on your “For Others” sticky note. Laugh together as you lead them to discover a pose that enhances their confidence and optimism.

What will you do to bring this idea to life this week?

FOR MYSELF

FOR OTHERS

IMAGINE...

THE IMPACT IF EVERY STUDENT HAD A MOMENT TO POWERFULLY EXPAND HIS/HER CONFIDENCE BEFORE SITTING DOWN FOR A TEST

WHO SAYS?

Research supports the notion that positive leaders—those that exude hopefulness, gratitude, or love of learning, for example—can have a “contagion effect” on their staffs. When their positive emotions spread, resiliency, cooperation, and perceived task performance all increase (Barsade, 2002).

WHAT ELSE?

In the TLC program, Self-Management is unlocked by activating the character strengths of self-regulation (managing feelings and actions), honesty (owning my strengths and challenges), perseverance, (building new habits over time) and love of learning (discovering new ways to guide my thinking and actions).

WHAT NOW?

In just 2 weeks, doing these simple 5 minute activities can create a shift in culture. What are you seeing? We would love to hear! Share your experience on Twitter with #5tothrive.

“ There is only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving, and that’s your own self. ”

—Aldous Huxley

WEEK 3: SOCIAL AWARENESS



WHO ARE YOU, AGAIN? ACTIVITY

Remember the old adage about what happens to you and me when we “assume?” Increasing social awareness is about stopping our unconscious assumptions about people and replacing those assumptions with curiosity. Instead of making potentially misguided judgments about the meaning of someone’s looks, actions, or words, curiosity prompts questions that create understanding and expand awareness.

Is there a student, a parent, or a colleague whom you have unknowingly made assumptions about? (Hints: Does someone annoy you and you don’t know why? Do you have a different perspective than others on a particular person?)

Replace what you think you know with questions. Try going from, “She is so resistant” to “I am interested to hear, what concerns do you have about this?” On the “For Myself” sticky note, list the names of 5 people you are going to get more curious about this week.

To go deeper, write down the name of someone who might benefit from hearing about your experience on your “For Others” note and make time to connect with that person this week.

What will you do to bring this idea to life this week?

FOR MYSELF

FOR OTHERS

IMAGINE...

THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF REPLACING ASSUMPTIONS WITH QUESTIONS IN CONVERSATIONS ABOUT STUDENT PERFORMANCE

WHO SAYS?

Findings from biology and brain science reveal that we are hard-wired to connect to others. The skills that are inherent in these connections (empathy, picking up social cues, compassion, etc.) have a positive effect on our health, our mood, and our energy (Goleman, 2006).

WHAT ELSE?

In the TLC program, Social-Awareness is unlocked by activating the character strengths of social intelligence (strengthening capacity for understanding), fairness (appreciating differences with respect) and curiosity (building understanding through questions).

WHAT NOW?

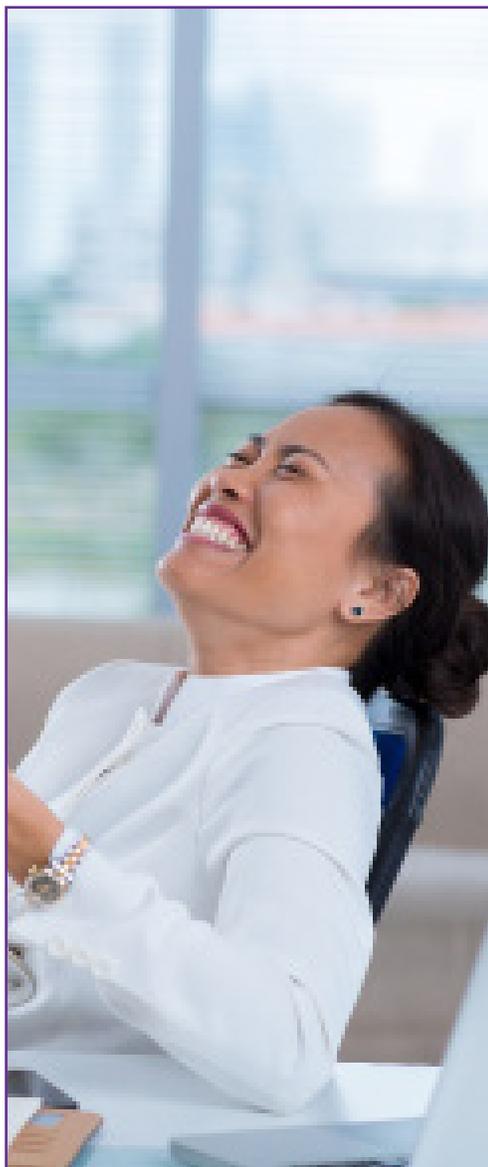
Want to continue building your school culture? Visit our [website](#) to order a desktop tool that contains new prompts for every week of the year.

“ The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn’t said. ”

—Peter Drucker

WEEK 4: RELATIONSHIPS

SHARE A LAUGH ACTIVITY



Are you satisfied? What does it take to be satisfied? The Grant Harvard research study followed 268 men for 75 years and emphatically concluded that relationships are the strongest predictor of life satisfaction. The strength of relationships at work has been linked with numerous positive organizational outcomes, from a decreased number of sick days taken to increased organizational performance.

Relationships take time - a precious commodity in the busy life of a school community. With little time to engage, even small adjustments can make a big difference. An easy way to start is to introduce new strategies into your meetings. On the "For Myself" sticky note, identify a humor strategy you can use to build relationships at a meeting this week. Try a quick activity that introduces levity and helps people connect in a personal way, such as asking each participant to write one surprising personal fact on a slip of paper. Read each out loud and guess the writer.

If you want to go deeper, identify someone on your "For Others" sticky note who is struggling to lead a team. Help that person craft a humor-based strategy to build team relationships.

What will you do to bring this idea to life this week?

FOR MYSELF

FOR OTHERS

IMAGINE...

HOW DIFFERENT A MEETING MIGHT BE IF EVERY “BELLY-ACHE” WAS REPLACED WITH A SHARED “BELLY-LAUGH.”

WHO SAYS?

Productive work relationships foster a positive environment in the workplace. “Building relationships is one of the strongest skill sets related to leadership effectiveness,” says Jean Leslie, from the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL). Those who can grow relationships are seen as more successful leaders, according to a comprehensive study undertaken by CCL.

WHAT ELSE?

In the TLC program, relationships are unlocked by activating the character strengths of teamwork (working together to build social bonds), humor (connecting through a shared laugh) and bravery (meeting the challenge of forming strong relationships).

WHAT NOW?

What has been your experience this month? What changes are you seeing? How are you different? We would love to hear! Share your experience on Twitter with #5toThrive.

“ *To handle yourself, use your head; to handle others, use your heart.* ”

—Eleanor Roosevelt

CONGRATULATIONS!

Motivation. Engagement. Performance.

You committed to 5 minutes a day to begin to shift your school culture and you stuck with it. For many previous participants, this month-long challenge marked the beginning of a transformation at their schools. We'd love to hear about your experiences on Twitter – use #5toThrive.

If you are not ready to stop, here are a few more ideas to keep you going!

- [Order a desktop tool](#), with 32 weeks' worth of strengths-based culture change activities and reflections.
- [Visit our website](#) or contact us at TLC@mayersonacademy.org to see how you can bring Thriving Learning Communities™ to your entire school.
- Tweet about your experience with #5tothrive.
- Take the VIA Survey of Character Strengths [here](#).



The VIA Classification of Character Strengths

Every individual possesses 24 character strengths in varying degrees, giving each person a unique character profile. The VIA Survey of Character Strengths has been used in hundreds of research studies and has been taken by over 5 million people in over 190 countries. The 24 character strengths fit into six broad virtue categories:

Wisdom and Knowledge

Creativity, Curiosity, Judgment, Love of Learning, Perspective

Courage

Bravery, Perseverance, Honesty, Zest

Humanity

Love, Kindness, Social Intelligence

Transcendence

Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence, Gratitude, Hope, Humor, Spirituality

Temperance

Forgiveness, Humility, Prudence, Self-Regulation

Justice

Teamwork, Fairness, Leadership