

# Changing By The Minute

## Discussion Guide for Use with Teacher Candidates (62min film)



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### Pre-Readings

Suggested reading prior to viewing the film.

#### Articles

- Rebora, A. (2020). How teens' brains are different. *Educational Leadership*, 77(8), 58–59.  
[https://files.ascd.org/staticfiles/ascd/pdf/journals/ed\\_lead/el202005\\_brain.pdf](https://files.ascd.org/staticfiles/ascd/pdf/journals/ed_lead/el202005_brain.pdf)

- Roehlkepartain, E., Pekel, K., Syvertsen, A., Sethi, J., Sullivan, T., & Scales, P. (2017). *Relationships first: Creating connections that help young people thrive*. Search Institute. <http://page.search-institute.org/relationships-first>
- The Pennsylvania State University. (2017). *Promoting social and emotional learning in the middle and high school years*. [https://www.prevention.psu.edu/uploads/files/penn\\_state\\_middle\\_high\\_brief\\_final.pdf](https://www.prevention.psu.edu/uploads/files/penn_state_middle_high_brief_final.pdf)
- Williams, J.L., Mims, L., & Johnson, H.E. (2019). *Young adolescent development*. [https://education.virginia.edu/sites/default/files/files/Youth\\_Nex\\_files/AR\\_MS\\_BRIEF1\\_D.pdf](https://education.virginia.edu/sites/default/files/files/Youth_Nex_files/AR_MS_BRIEF1_D.pdf)

#### Books

- Bishop, P.A., & Harrison, L.M. (2021). *The successful middle school: This we believe*. AMLE. [Should be read prior to the Gallery Walk Activity.]
- Brinegar, K.M., Harrison, L.M., & Hurd, E. (Eds.). (2019). *Equity & cultural responsiveness in the middle grades* (see especially pp. 3-21).

## **General Discussion By Sections of the Film**

Time permitting, have teacher and counselor candidates watch the entire film in one session or show the film in sections (sections and times listed below). Ask teacher and counselor candidates to respond to each question with evidence from the film.

### **Section 1: The School** (opening through 12:11)

*(Synopsis: Students create individual schedules, students work in mixed grade groups Science of Death class, students comment on working in mixed grade groups, teachers discuss teaching multiple subjects.)*

### **Possible Discussion Topics:**

- Physical environment
- Scheduling
- Unstructured times (class transitions, recess, before/after school)
- Student grouping (mixed grade, multiage, interest-based)
- Teacher-student relationships
- Curriculum
- Instructional strategies
- Academic expectations
- Behavioral expectations

## Questions:

- What do you notice about teaching and learning at the school in the film?
- What do you notice about the school's physical environment?
- In what ways is the school environment welcoming and inclusive?
- How might school environments influence teaching and learning?
- What do you notice about the school's schedule? How does it reflect school priorities?
- What do you notice about the unstructured times of day (e.g., class transitions, recess, before and after school)?
- In what ways were students grouped at the Center School and why? How does this compare to your experience when you were a middle school student?
- In what ways do teachers foster relationships with students in the film?
- What do you notice about the curriculum at this school? What instructional strategies do you observe? In what ways were these responsive to these students?
- What academic and behavioral expectations do you notice in the film? What kinds of expectations are developmentally and culturally responsive?

## Section 2: Friendship (4 mins long, begin 12:11 – end 16:09)

*(Synopsis: Students discuss making and keeping friends, friend groups, and social drama.)*

## Possible Discussion Topics:

- Friendships
- Peer relations
- Social emotional learning
- Choices

## Questions:

- What stands out to you about the young adolescent experiences highlighted in this film?
- What do you notice in the film about friendships, peer relations, and social drama?
- How important are friendships during early adolescence?
- How might such experiences impact young adolescents' schooling? Personal lives?
- How might these experiences impact the way you teach?
- Based on students' experiences, what might be good topics to include in advisory?
- What social emotional skills do students exhibit (e.g., self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, social awareness, and relationship skills)?
- How can educators support the development of positive peer relationships and social emotional skills?

## **Section 3: Identity** (15 mins long, begin 16:09 – end 31:41)

*(Synopsis: Students discuss the Odyssey in Latin Class, student wears camouflage to Bird Science, principal discusses giving students space to “be whoever they are,” Science of Death class discusses brain exchange, students and parents discuss the role of Theater Arts, students complete Self Assessments.)*

### **Possible Discussion Topics:**

- Developmental domains (e.g., physical, intellectual, moral, psychological, social-emotional)
- Social and cultural identities (e.g., gender identity, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, religion, (dis)ability, citizenship status, grade, history of academic achievement)
- Self-expression and self-definition (e.g., clothing, outside interests, activities, hobbies)

### **Questions:**

- What developmental characteristics and social identities of young adolescents do you observe in the film?
- In the film, a teacher asks students, “What makes you YOU?” Why is this an important question to ask young adolescents?
- What roles do self-expression and self-definition play in early adolescence?
- In what ways do the various characteristics of young adolescent development affect the lives of middle school students?
- Which social or cultural identities carry greater privilege than others? How does this play out in classrooms?
- How can teachers create opportunities for young adolescents to explore who they are, who they want to be and do not want to be, and how they express their identity?
- How does the school in the film support the development of student voice and confident self-expression?
- What is the purpose of Theater Arts at Center School (TACS)?
- How can teachers use student self-assessment to promote greater self-awareness?
- In the film, a student reads from a letter to families about the upcoming family conference night. The letter says: “Our main objective is for the students to learn that learning is their responsibility.” What could this mean for a student’s sense of identity?

## **Section 4: Choices** (15 mins long, begin 31:41 – end 46:29)

*(Synopsis: Teachers discuss frequent schedule changes and the need for flexibility, students play dodgeball, students attend a bake sale, students discuss common mistakes made by middle schoolers, students get in trouble, teacher comments on the morals of friendship vs. morals of the classroom, students write anti-valentine Valentines and decorate for the Valentine's Day party.)*

### **Possible Discussion Topics:**

- Adult rules and expectations
- Social norms, expectations, impulses
- Teacher-student relationships
- Romantic interests

### **Questions:**

- What choices do young adolescents face in middle school?
- In the film teachers and students comment on frequent changes to the schedule “so it’s all just about changing and being ready to change.” What choices are involved in coping with this kind of environment for both students and teachers?
- What choices (positive and negative) do students make in the film?
- What social emotional skills do students exhibit in this section of the film (e.g., self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, social awareness, and relationship skills)?
- In what ways do peers influence young adolescents’ choices?
- Educators often have different social norms than students. How do educators take that into consideration when evaluating students’ choices?
- In what ways do teachers foster relationships with students in the film?
- What do you notice about romantic interests?
- What might be the purpose of the anti-valentine Valentines?
- How can teachers create a supportive environment for students to make healthy choices / decisions?

## **Section 5: Community** (16 mins long, begin 46:29 – end film)

*(Synopsis: Students participate in Facing History class, parent comments on her son's diverse friends and "a level of acceptance that is hard to find in world," students reflect on a friend's pronoun change, students participate in a People Hunt, two girls discuss a disagreement they had over social media, 5th grade Huck succeeds in math, two girls discuss a friend who takes pills, the principal comments on the mix of pains adolescents go through, school year comes to a close, students discuss moving up and moving on.)*

### **Possible Discussion Topics:**

- School culture
- Instructional strategies
- Diversity of peer groups
- Gender identity
- Social media
- Acceptance and inclusivity
- Student responsibility

### **Questions:**

- What stands out to you about the school community in the film?
- In what ways do teachers teach about community? Inclusivity? Responsibility for others?
- What do you notice about diversity of friendships and peer groups in the film?
- Two girls in the film discuss their friend changing pronouns. What did you notice about that conversation?
- How do school practices and traditions help establish a sense of community?
- What do you notice about how students treat one another?
- How does social media affect a sense of community? What can you infer about the role of social media in young adolescents' lives?
- One teacher says, "We want kids to come out of this school loving learning and knowing how to learn." Do you see teachers cultivating a love of learning in this film? What strategies do you see employed in the school to help students learn how to learn?
- What is the relationship between a sense of school belonging and individual student responsibility?



## **Discussion by Middle Grades Concepts**

*(The middle grades concepts addressed in this section are defined in the pre-reading text: "The Successful Middle School: This We Believe." AMLE.)*

### ***Culture and Community***

#### **Possible Discussion Topics:**

- School environment
- Teacher knowledge of and respect for young adolescents
- Teacher-student relationships
- Academic and personal development
- Adults who advocate for students
- School safety
- Advisory

#### **Questions:**

- What can you infer about the school culture / school community at The Center School?
- What do you notice about the school environment at The Center School?
- In what ways is the school environment welcoming? Inclusive?

- In what ways may a school environment foster a sense of belonging?
- How might school environments influence teaching and learning?
- What is the purpose of Theater Arts at Center School (TACS)?
- How do teachers in the film demonstrate understanding of young adolescents?
- In what ways do we see teachers foster relationships with students in this film?
- In what ways do adults in the film support student social-emotional growth?
- How do teachers advocate for students in the film?
- What other ways can teachers advocate for their students?
- In what ways do adults in the film foster a sense of physical and/or psychological safety for students?
- How do students foster a sense of physical and/or psychological safety for their peers?
- What is the role of advisors and advisory in middle school?
- What behavioral expectations do you notice in the film?

## ***Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment***

### **Possible Discussion Topics:**

- Classes
- Curriculum
- Teaching strategies/methods
- Academic expectations
- Behavioral expectations
- Assessments
- Teacher understanding of content area

### **Questions:**

- What do you notice about the curriculum at this school? What instructional strategies do you observe? In what ways were these responsive to students?
- How important is it for teachers to have depth of content knowledge?
- What academic expectations do you notice? What kinds of expectations are developmentally and culturally responsive?
- How could you leverage students' curiosity to design engaging curriculum for classes?
- To what extent were learning opportunities differentiated or personalized?
- How do teachers support Huck's academic journey through the math curriculum?
- How might you design lessons and units that connect to and build on the cultures and identities of students?
- In what ways do teachers in the film make use of young adolescents' needs for socialization to support student learning?
- What forms of assessment and evaluation do you notice?



## ***School Leadership and Organization***

### **Possible Discussion Topics:**

- Principal
- Teacher leaders
- Multiage grouping
- Scheduling

### **Questions:**

- What do you notice about school leadership at The Center School?
- What is the role of the principal?
- What is the role of teacher leadership in middle schools?
- What does the schedule tell us about the priorities of the school?
- In what ways can the school schedule support or hinder learning?
- What do you notice about the unstructured times of day (class transitions, recess, before/after school)?
- What do you notice about the grouping of students?
- How can grouping be used to foster relationships between students? Between teachers and students?
- In what ways does the multiage grouping at The Center School foster a sense of student responsibility?

# Suggested Activities

Four activities that may be used in conjunction with the film.

## Activity Option #1: Middle School Experiences

### Before Viewing the Film:

- Have each teacher candidate create a collage of their own middle school experience.
- Have each teacher candidate share his/her/their collage with the class.
- As a class, reflect on the experiences shared. Ask the class to identify commonalities among teacher candidates' middle school experiences.
- Have each teacher candidate create a Venn diagram (see Fig. 1) and fill in the left circle with the list of common experiences of middle school just discussed.

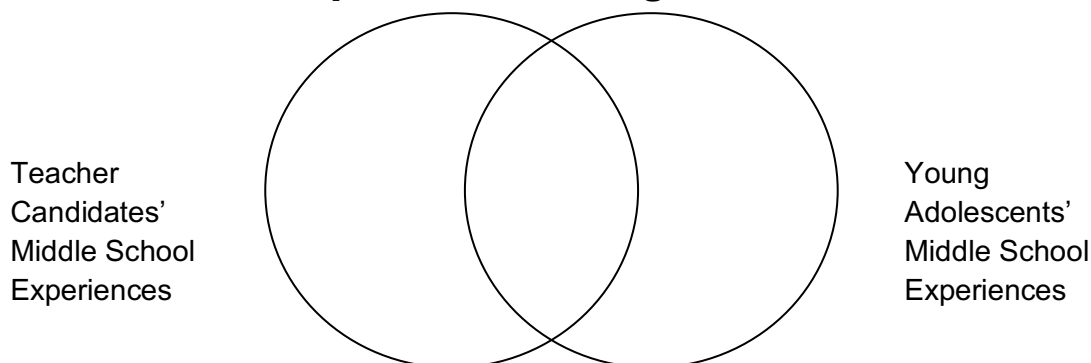
### While Viewing the Film:

Ask teacher candidates to pay close attention to the various types of young adolescent experiences highlighted in the film.

### After Viewing the Film:

- Have teacher candidates work in pairs and come to consensus on the experiences represented in the film. Have each pair partner with another pair and repeat the process.
- Have each quartet share out with the class. As a class, complete the right side of the Venn diagram without duplicating responses.
- Have the entire class discuss the commonalities and differences between teacher candidates' collective experiences in middle school and the experiences of the young adolescents in the film. Complete the center portion of the Venn diagram.
- Ask teacher candidates to write down what these findings may mean for himself/herself/themselves as they prepare to become a middle school educator. Have teacher candidates pair up and share their responses. Conclude with a class discussion on the importance of truly understanding young adolescents.

**Figure 1. Middle School Experiences Venn Diagram**



## Activity Option #2: KWLQ

### Before Viewing the Film:

- Have each teacher candidate create a KWLQ table (see Table 1)
- Ask teacher candidates to write down everything that they know, or think they know, about young adolescents and middle school.
- Ask teacher candidates to write down what they want to know about young adolescents and middle school.
- Engage the class in a Stand and Share activity where teacher candidates share what they know about young adolescents and middle school (K column of the KWLQ Table). Make sure all ideas have been shared. Create a comprehensive classroom list on the board. Repeat this process for the “W” column of the KWLQ Table.

### While Viewing the Film:

Have teacher candidates write down what they learned about young adolescents and make note if it answers anything in their “W” column.

### After Viewing the Film:

- Have teacher candidates complete “L” column of their KWLQ Table.
- Repeat the Stand and Share process to create a comprehensive classroom list on the board for what teacher candidates learned (L column of KWLQ Table). Engage in class discussion about “L” column, pointing out connections to “K” and “W” columns, as appropriate. Questions for whole class discussion:
  - a. Did you learn something new about young adolescents and middle school?
  - b. Did you learn anything that contradicts what you thought you knew about young adolescents and middle school?
- Ask teacher candidates to write down questions they still have about young adolescents and middle school in “Q” column. Have teacher candidates share their questions about young adolescents and middle school. Make sure all ideas have been shared. Create a comprehensive classroom list on the board. Determine the most salient questions and engage the class in a conversation using the film to support the conversation.

**Table 1. KWLQ**

<b>K</b> <b>KNOW</b>	<b>W</b> <b>WANT TO KNOW</b>	<b>L</b> <b>LEARNED/ OBSERVED</b>	<b>Q</b> <b>QUESTIONS</b>

## Activity Option #3: Notice and Wonder

*\*NOTE\** This activity can be done with each segment, or as a culminating activity.

### Before Viewing the Film:

Have each teacher candidate create a Notice and Wonder Table (see Table 2).

### While Viewing the Film:

Ask teacher candidates to write down everything that they notice students doing, adults doing, and what the candidates wonder.

### After Viewing the Film:

Engage teacher candidates in a whole class conversation about their notices and wonderings.

**Table 2. Notice and Wonder**

	What do you notice the students doing or saying?	What do you notice the adults doing?	What do you wonder?
The School 00:00 – 12:11			
Friendship 12:11 – 16:09			
Identity 16:09 – 31:41			
Choices 31:41 – 46:29			
Community 46:29 – end of film			

# Activity Option #4: Gallery Walk

## Before Viewing the Film:

- Ask teacher candidates to read “*The Successful Middle School: This We Believe*” prior to class and have a copy of the text readily available during class.
- Divide teacher candidates into groups (of four people or fewer). Assign each group one of three categories (see p. 9, “*The Successful Middle School: This We Believe.*”)
  - Culture and community
  - Curriculum, instruction and assessment
  - Leadership and organization
- Have each teacher candidate create a Successful Middle School Characteristics Table (see Table 3).
- Tell teacher candidates they will watch the film in its entirety in one sitting or by sections (depending on allocated time). Ask them to look for examples of each characteristic of their assigned category, write down all examples they find, and note the time/place in the film the example occurs.

## While Viewing the Film:

Ask teacher candidates to complete their chart with examples for the various characteristics of their assigned category (see Table 4, sample answers)

## After Viewing the Film:

- Have teacher candidates share out the examples from the film in their groups.
- Have each group prepare a “poster” (i.e., in PowerPoint, Google Slides, Padlet, Canva) illustrating how The Center School demonstrates given characteristics with specific examples from the film. (Possible roles: One teacher candidate defines overall category, others define the characteristics for their assigned category using text “*The Successful Middle School: This We Believe.*”)
- Challenge groups to come to an agreement on the best 4 examples from their category. Ask them to include examples from different characteristics and note them on the poster.
- Share posters as part of a “gallery walk.”

## During the Gallery Walk:

Have teacher candidates engage in a “gallery walk” where groups present their “poster” and then switch roles so that all groups present, and all groups view all posters.

## Options for Coordinating the Viewing and Gallery Walk:

### Option 1: Four 1-hour classes

- First class: View and discuss first three film segments (Intro., Friendship, Identity)
- Second class: View and discuss next two film segments (Choices, Community)
- Third class: Preparation of “Gallery Walk”
- Fourth class: “Gallery Walk” presentation

### Option 2: Three 1.5-hour classes

- First class: View and discuss first four film segments (Intro., Friendship, Identity, Choices)
- Second class: View and discuss the final film segment (Community) and prepare “Gallery Walk”
- Third class: “Gallery Walk” presentation

### Option 3: Two 3-hour classes

- First class: View and discuss film segments (The School, Friendship, and Identity, Choices, and Community) and begin to prepare “Gallery Walk”
- Second class: Continue preparing “Gallery Walk” and use second half of class for the “Gallery Walk” presentation.

**Table 3.** *The Successful Middle School Characteristics*

Culture and Community	
Characteristic	Examples from the film of how the school enacts this characteristic
Educators respect and value young adolescents.	
The school environment is welcoming, inclusive, and affirming for all.	
Every student’s academic and personal development is guided by an adult advocate.	
The school engages families as valued partners.	

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	
Educators are specifically prepared to teach young adolescents and possess a depth of understanding in the content areas they teach.	
Curriculum is challenging, exploratory, integrative, and diverse.	
Health, wellness, and social-emotional competence are supported in curricula, school-wide programs and related policies.	
Instruction fosters learning that is active, purposeful, and democratic.	
Varied and ongoing assessments advance learning as well as measure it.	
Leadership and Organization	
Policies and practices are student-centered, unbiased, and fairly implemented.	
Organizational structures foster purposeful learning and meaningful relationships.	

**Table 4.** *The Successful Middle School Characteristics Table with Sample Answers*

<b>Culture and Community</b>	
Characteristic	Examples from the film of how the school enacts this characteristic
Educators respect and value young adolescents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responding to Huck's body language, a teacher checks in with him and they work together to understand his schedule. (3:13- 3:29)</li> </ul>
The school environment is welcoming, inclusive, and affirming for all.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principal explains how they provide a place where students can explore who they are from one day to the next. (19:05- 19:21)</li> <li>• Parents talking about acceptance and diversity. (48:38- 49:01)</li> <li>• Students discuss how classmate helped them understand gender preferred pronouns followed by Chance explaining how he learned to be more accepting from the accepting nature of the school community. (49:00- 49:48)</li> <li>• Annual people hunt. (49:48- 50:12)</li> <li>• Student speaks to the ability to be herself with no one giving her a hard time about it at The Center School and how thankful she is for the opportunity. (59:26- 59:50)</li> </ul>
Every student's academic and personal development is guided by an adult advocate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress reports and student advisors. (26:36- 28:18)</li> <li>• If you get in trouble, there are consequences and you could get sent to advisor. (38:15- 42:02)</li> </ul>
The school engages families as valued partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress report meetings require students and parents to attend. (27:00- 27:27)</li> <li>• Math quiz requires parent and advisor signature. (29:15- 29:22)</li> </ul>
<b>Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment</b>	
Educators are specifically prepared to teach young adolescents and possess a depth of understanding in the content areas they teach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Math teacher demonstrates empathy when working with Huck on his math assignment. (30:20- 31:27)</li> <li>• Adults understand the dynamics and role of friendship in students' lives, teacher speaking on morals of friendship trump morals of classroom. (42:01- 42:20)</li> </ul>



Curriculum is challenging, exploratory, integrative, and diverse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latin class for 8th grade reading Ulysses. (16:17- 17:00)</li> <li>• A well rounded education is more important than the NY State test. (42:47- 43:02)</li> </ul>
Health, wellness, and social-emotional competence are supported in curricula, school-wide programs and related policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students reflect on their own progress in their courses in preparation for family conferences. (27:49- 28:16)</li> </ul>
Instruction fosters learning that is active, purposeful, and democratic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poses a question about “Who is it?” to a group of students that fosters critical and creative thinking. (20:05- 21:57)</li> <li>• Multiage grouping affords opportunities for older students to become experts and teach younger students to increase depth of understanding. (4:58- 5:38)</li> <li>• 5th grade math help is student led. (36:17- 37:14)</li> <li>• Keeping students out of the circle Facing History class (46:33- 48:30)</li> </ul>
Varied and ongoing assessments advance learning as well as measure it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly math assessments are given. (11:25-11:49 and 29:05-29:14)</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership and Organization</b>	
Policies and practices are student-centered, unbiased, and fairly implemented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers explaining how principal loves chaos and that it's good for the kids. (32:16- 33:31)</li> <li>• Not right shoes, no participation in gym. (33:32- 33:50)</li> </ul>
Organizational structures foster purposeful learning and meaningful relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each student's schedule is individually made. (2:31- 4:18)</li> <li>• Multiage grouping/students are taking mixed grades classes. (4:45- 6:26)</li> <li>• Teachers and students work together to solve scheduling problems. (3:53- 4:21)</li> <li>• Unstructured times (e.g., before school, recess) are highly preferred and allow opportunities for students to foster peer relationships. (12:56-13:16)</li> </ul>

## Changing By The Minute

A 62min documentary film providing an asset-based view of early adolescence, and part of the “Changing By The Minute documentary tool kit.” These resources are intended to help professionals, students, and families think optimistically and creatively about the middle school years with the hope of alleviating some of the stress and distress experienced by early adolescents.

### Film Credits

Producer/Director  
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Camilla Calamandrei

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