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Transition Strategies in Early Childhood Settings

An Action Research Report

By Crystal P. Cunningham (Black)

Transition Strategies in Early Childhood Settings

Submitted on May 22, 2016

in fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree

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Advisor _____

Date _____

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to determine if daily lessons in yoga, mindfulness, and transition skills positively affect the transition from lunch to recess in a Montessori environment. The seven-week study involved 17 children between two and a half to five years old. Data collection included a pre-and post-assessment and observations which documented the type of disruptions, amount of disruptions, and the resolution to the disruptions. Results of the pre-and post-assessments revealed that practice of the skills needed in a transition resulted in more independence. The mindfulness exercises resulted in less distractions while waiting in line during a transition. Observation data showed there was little decrease in the amount of disruptions during a transition, but an overall increase in the children's independent and child assisted resolutions to disruption. Suggestions for further research include a longer length of time for a study, more clarified data collection, a video recording for observing, and further study concerning needed and unneeded adult interventions.

Keywords: *mindfulness, routine, transitions, yoga, grace and courtesy, adult interventions, redirection, primary, preschool, Montessori, disruptions, resolutions*

In a single day, young children experience many transitions. Transitions occur between activities or routines and can be a difficult time for adults and children. Children have various attention spans, levels of patience, will power and independence. Typical transitions and routines in a preschool include before or after work time, group activities, lunch, recess and nap. Transitions are often viewed as a time between activities, rather than an activity itself. Similar to activities and routines for preschool-aged children, successful transitions require a specific set of skills.

Transitions require the child to have a combination of many abilities including self-regulation, mindfulness, independence, and social cohesion. Using a combination of strategies for children to develop skills may have positive effects on daily transition times in early childhood settings. Grace and Courtesy lessons are an important part of the Montessori Method. These lessons allow children to be given the language and opportunity to practice social and independence skills during neutral times of the day. Grace and Courtesy lesson provide children the opportunity to practice skills with each other at neutral times, providing the knowledge of how to handle situations when they arise.

Children may display challenging behaviors in early childhood environments. This challenging behavior can be heightened during times of transition. These behaviors affect the individual child's success during a transition, as well as the other children in the classroom. Some children display physical behaviors such as hitting, biting and yelling. They may also have tantrums, be withdrawn or be noncompliant. While some behaviors may be typical for young children, it is a concern that excessive problem behaviors affect their social development. Children need help managing themselves to

benefit themselves and the overall social cohesion in the classroom. (Benedict, Horner, and Squires, 2007).

Transitions require children to work cohesively. Working cohesively can be difficult when children display challenging behavior. It can be difficult for children to work cohesively during a transition because multiple skills are needed to complete the routine. It is also important for a child to be independent. In the past ten years, research has revealed positive connections between self-regulation and mindfulness, developing prosocial behavior, and yoga in the classroom. These techniques may be used as preventative interventions to help children develop individual skills needed to participate positively in transition times.

This study was conducted in a small private preschool located in a south metropolitan neighborhood. The early childhood environment included 17 children ages three to five years old. I am the lead Montessori guide and I have an assistant. We do not have a separate room for lunch. We have an aid that comes in before lunch for 30 minutes to set up lunch and 30 minutes after lunch to move the tables back to the appropriate arrangement for worktime.

The purpose of this research is to determine if daily lessons of Grace and Courtesy, mindfulness activities, and yoga positively affect the daily transition from lunch to recess in a primary Montessori environment with children ages three to five years old. While we continued to practice our regular Grace and Courtesy lessons daily, I planned specific lessons to build skills that were needed during the transition.

I first observed the children as they transitioned from lunch to recess. This is the most disruptive or challenging time of the day in my environment. I noted obstacles

which seemed to disrupt the transition. After understanding the areas that needed skill building, I planned Grace and Courtesy lessons that were specific to the transition time and routine.

In addition to the Grace and Courtesy lessons, I implemented yoga and mindfulness exercises daily. While the Grace and Courtesy lessons provided the children an opportunity to practice the social and physical skills needed to complete the transition, the yoga and mindfulness activities provided the children with the opportunity to practice self-regulation and calming skills.

It may benefit children if transitions are treated as activities which have their own skills needed in order to be successful. Thus, I investigated if a combination of yoga, transition specific Grace and Courtesy lessons, and mindfulness exercises positively affect routine transition times.

Literature Review

Transitions in Early Childhood Settings

In a research article based on transitions in inclusive classrooms, Guardino and Fullerton (2014) focused on adult-led modifications that aid in transitions in an early childhood classroom. During transitions, children are typically understood to be moving from one activity to another. The time of transition between activities is not typically thought of as an activity itself. In an inclusive classroom, teachers must be able to support children of various abilities and skill levels throughout the day.

Sainato (1990) also researched classroom transitions with children with special needs. This research article focused on reviewing research addressing interventions that helped preschool environments to encourage positive behavior during transition times.

While this study is based on research on preschool aged children with special needs, this research may be beneficial if applied to the whole classroom. Many children are of various needs or are at various developmental stages while in a preschool classroom (Sainato, 1990).

Guardino and Fullerton were interested in the loss of academic time due to increased time spent on multiple transitions throughout the day (p 211). They hypothesized that if transition times were minimized, there would be more productive academic and group time. The study took place at a kindergarten classroom and at a first grade classroom.

The study implemented strategies such as visual cues for activities, more organized space and materials, staggered dismissal from group time with set rules, and furniture rearrangement. Guardino and Fullerton found that combining multiple strategies lead to more organized and faster transition times.

Sainato discussed several aspects of the classroom which may affect the daily transitions. First, there are environmental arrangements, which include the schedule and routine, staff arrangements, and room arrangements. Second, there are antecedent interventions, which include the instructions of the transitions, the time it takes to completely move from one task to the next, and the actual task that the child needs to complete in order to move on to the next. Third, there are peer-mediated procedures. These interventions involve children holding each other accountable for their actions and carrying out a task, rather than relying on adult supervision and intervention.

When children were paired with others and encouraged each other, there was a reduction of inappropriate behavior during transition times. Children took on peer-

monitoring and peer-mediating roles and held each other accountable for completing the task that was required during the transition (Sainato, 1990).

While examining what children spontaneously learn from each other in a preschool setting, Williams (2001) found that activities associated with routines were an important time in which children spontaneously learn from one another. As children learn from one another, they begin to feel connected to the community. Teachers provide structure and ensure meaning in the daily routines. This provides predictability and skills to carry out the activities independently and as a group.

Williams conducted a study at two early childhood settings in Sweden. One group was children ages one to three years old; the other group was children ages three to six years old. She recorded the children's daily activity and collected observations and data to further her understanding about opportunities during the day in which the children learned from one another.

During group activities and routines, rules and guidelines are put in place for the group of children. However, children also learn appropriate behavior from one another. As the children learn the norms of the group dynamic, they build social relationships. Williams found that when children are given the opportunity to question the meaning of what they are doing and why expectations are in place, they are more cooperative and cohesive during routines and activities throughout the day (Williams, 2001, p. 336).

Sainato found there was not much research on classroom transitions. Although Sainato's research article is from 1990, there is still a lack in research in daily transitions for children in the preschool age. Sainato points out that transition times occur throughout the day, but are often not handled in the same manner as typical skill-building lessons.

Preventative Strategies

A research article by Benedict, et al. (2007) discusses that many classroom management interventions are used in response to a behavior, rather than used as a preventative measure for the whole group. Prevention models are needed to support teachers in classroom management for problem behaviors. This research article focuses on a specific model called the positive behavior support (PBS), which is a three-tier prevention model. Carter, Van Norman and Tredwell (2010) also implemented a program-wide PBS in a program serving children ages six weeks to five years of age.

The first level of prevention involves providing all the children with a safe environment, so the children know what to expect and feel comfortable. The teacher provides organization in the environment and encourages positive interactions. The children are given clear expectations for how they should behave in the environment. The second level of prevention involves small group interventions for the children that display challenging behaviors or who have special needs. The third level involves individualized prevention for specific children who have not responded to the first and second level.

The research of Benedict, et al. focused on the PBS and its correlation with reducing problem behaviors. The research also wanted to understand if teachers found PBS to be effective and appropriate. (Benedict, et al., 2007, p 177). The research found there was no functional relationship between PBS consultation and challenging behavior (Benedict, et al., 2007, p. 186). This result may be due to the limitations of the study. The researchers found that the methods were not being consistently used. Another limitation in this study was that there was an overall low level of problem behavior at the beginning of the study. (Benedict, et al., 2007, p.190).

Similar to Benedict, et al., Carter, et al. (2010) discussed the negative effects of children with challenging behaviors that may lead to on-going challenges as the child grows older. This research focused on sharing lessons learned after implementing a program-wide behavior support program that was carried out over the course of a year.

The research involved assessments of the level at which PBS was being implemented. These assessments took place at the beginning, middle and end of the research. The research involved training the staff who would be implementing the PBS model. The staff were trained on the emotional and social development and needs of children, the reasoning for using PBS, and the types of activities that would be required. (Carter, et al., 2010).

The implementation of PBS involved many steps and focused on supporting teachers through on-going training. The researchers recommend setting up a strong leadership team that will communicate and provide support for the teachers throughout the year. They found that teachers that participated in individual support had more success implementing PBS than teachers who only participated in group sessions (Carter, et al., 2010, p 354).

A limitation of this research was that they provided teachers with assessments that were designed for K-12, rather than early childhood settings. They have revised an assessment that is specific to early childhood settings for future research and implementation. Overall, this research article suggests focusing on creating a strong leadership team that will support teachers, encourage strong teacher commitment to the program and implementation and individualizing the implementation of PBS for each classroom's overall needs (Carter, et al., 2010, p 354).

In a research article by Wilder, Nicholson and Allison (2010), the primary question asked was if advance notice of upcoming instructions lead to an increase in compliance among children who had a history of showing noncompliance. Wilder, et al., discussed in their article that there has been research conducted on advance notice with children with disabilities and tantrums, but very little research done on advance notice effects on the compliance of typically developing children. Despite little research to be found, the article points out that many teachers and parents are often given the advice of providing young children with advance notice to influence compliance (Wilder, et al., 2010, p 751).

This study included three children ages four to five years old. The study involved asking children to put away toys at the end of a play time. This research concluded that the intervention of advance notice alone was ineffective for all three children because there was no increase in compliance. However, the study found that physical guidance (modeling or hand-over-hand assistance) combined with advance notice or physical guidance only increased compliance.

In 2006, Wilder had been part of a team who researched tantrums associated with transitions in preschool aged children. Wilder, Chen, Atwell, Pritchard and Weinstein (2006) conducted research using functional analysis to determine the cause of tantrums in children before and after transition times.

The study involved researching children during different transitional situations. These included transitions when there was no set activity planned, transitions to a preferred activity, transitions to non-preferred activities, transitions to meal or snack time and transitions to an interaction with another person. This study included using and not

using advance notice during transition times. Similar to the previous study, this research concluded that advance notice was ineffective in decreasing tantrums during pre and post transition times (Wilder, et al., 2006).

The study also concluded that by studying different transitions, it is possible to analyze if there are specific situations or times of the day that cause tantrums or if a child has tantrums at every transition. The study found that one child only displayed tantrums when asked to do a non-preferred activity and concluded that he was escaping a task, rather than having challenges with transitions. The other child displayed tantrums pre and post transition during both preferred and non-preferred activities (Wilder et al., 2006, p 107).

While understanding possible strategies to ease the stressful transition times, it is important to also look at the child's inner motivation for completing a task or activity. In their research article, Carlton and Winsler stated, "Motivation can be defined as the process by which children's goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained" (159). The research article focused on identifying factors that strengthen and weaken a child's motivation and give suggestions for activities that may foster intrinsic motivation.

Children's early experience with sources of motivation will affect the type of motivation the person will have later in life. They questioned what happens to a child's motivation and how the development of motivation is fostered (Carlton & Winsler, 1998, p 159). Their research was based on studies of children from birth to five years of age. The research article focused on three types of motivation: intrinsic, extrinsic and a combination of both. They discussed activities, ideas and principals that that could possible encourage the development of intrinsic motivation in young children.

The research article focused on literature from many sources. Carlton and Winsler found that when preschool aged children have developed the ability to self-regulate, they may feel they have control over their environment. This leads to the development of a stronger sense of independence. When children feel competent, they will most likely be motivated intrinsically, rather than extrinsically motivated.

Carter and Winsler found that children are very verbal at this age and often use self-talk while learning new skills. Children benefit from having the freedom to do so, rather than work quietly. In addition to allowing children the freedom to self-talk, the role of the teacher and the appropriate use of rewards are significant. The child's teacher plans the activities and interacts with the children in such a way that either encourages the child to be motivated extrinsically (by outside sources, objects, rewards or praise) or intrinsically (by the child's internal pleasure of the activity or action). The teacher should provide structure and assistance as needed, but should set up activities in a way that the child is able to independently participate and succeed in the tasks (1998, p164).

In addition, Carter and Winsler state that a caregiver should not reward a child for every task, as it will reduce the child's ability to be self-motivated. The article explains that caregivers should never reward children for completing a task or activity that they already enjoy and are self-motivated to do. By rewarding them for something they enjoy, the child may become focused on the external reward, rather than the joy or fun they had while completing the task. Instead, adults should focus on how the child feels after completing the task, which will lead to a stronger feeling of self-worth (1998, p. 164).

Mindfulness Activities

Zelazo and Lyons researched mindfulness training as an exercise to develop self-regulation in children. Self-regulation refers to the ability to control thoughts, actions and emotions. The level of self-regulation abilities may predict developmental outcomes in early childhood education and development (Zelazo & Lyons, 2012, p. 154).

Age-appropriate meditation and yoga practice may aid in the development of mindfulness and self-regulation in children. In 2013, Steiner, Sidhu, Pop, Frenette and Perrin conducted a study on a yoga intervention at an urban school, focusing on children with emotional and behavioral disorders. While this study was focused on children with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD), it can be applied to both inclusive classrooms and classrooms with children of varying abilities.

Zelazo and Lyons discussed adapting mindfulness practices for children and adolescents. Zelazo and Lyons found very limited research on the effects of mindfulness training on preschool children (Zelazo & Lyons, 2012, p. 158). Mindfulness exercises for adults, such as breathing and sitting meditations may be adapted to children by shortening the length of time and incorporate more body movements. Children have difficulty remaining still for extending periods of time, so requiring stillness during childhood mindfulness training exercises may have negative outcomes (Zelazo & Lyons, 2012, p. 157).

In addition, this article explains that instructions should be simplified and may include props or age-appropriate metaphors that allow the children to better understand what the goal of the exercise is. For example, to help a child focus on his breathing, the child could lay on his back with a stuffed animal on his stomach. As the child breathes,

he can watch the stuffed animal rise and fall slowly. Mindfulness training for children may begin with exercises that encourage the children to focus attention on the senses. This will prepare the children to later be able to focus attention on emotions and thoughts (Zelazo & Lyons, 2012, p. 157).

The study by Steiner, et al. (2013) explained that 12-13% of school aged children have emotional and behavioral disturbances. This number may be higher in disadvantaged urban communities, due to lack of mental health services (p. 815). This study explained that teachers at urban schools are challenged with balancing disciplining and promoting prosocial behavior with teaching. They often find they spend less time teaching. Because of the lack of funding for specific programs that children could benefit from (such as counseling, one-on-one services, etc.) this research proposed a feasible method that could be implemented and benefit the children through mind-body practices.

The study included fourth and fifth graders, aged eight to eleven, in an urban elementary school, who had been identified as having EBD such as anxiety, depression, hyperactivity, and attention difficulties. The yoga intervention included relaxation training, breathing techniques, child-adapted exercises and postures, social components with partners and imaginary techniques and meditation. The teachers reported an increase in attention, adaptive skills, and reduced depressive symptoms, behavioral symptoms and internalizing symptoms. (Steiner, et al., 2013, p. 815)

Teachers, parents, students and yoga instructors completed pre and post-intervention assessments. Parents reported positive changes in their children, increased calm and relaxation, increased happiness, increased energy, increase in positive and helping behaviors, and improvement in attitude. Students stated that it was easier to relax

and that it was helpful. Teacher assessment showed significant improvement on internalizing problems, adaptive skills, externalizing problems and an increase in attention (Steiner, et al., 2013, p 821).

This study states that children with EBD may be resistant to participate in traditional special education interventions because they do not want to be seen more different than the other students. However, yoga is a highly popular practice and can be done as a whole group. Because of this, children with EBD may be more likely to participate if other children are doing it also. In addition, children with a range of abilities and disabilities benefit from the calm breathing techniques, postures and meditation. (Steiner, et. al, 2013, pp. 822-823)

Flook, Goldberg, Pringer and Davidson (2015) conducted research on the effects of a mindfulness-based kindness curriculum (KC). The study focused on the role of attention and executive function (EF) in self-regulation. Executive function refers to cognitive processes such as cognitive flexibility, inhibitory control and working memory. “Mindfulness training enhances attention and EF by bringing awareness to a particular attentional object, whether it is the breath, external stimuli, thoughts, or emotions” (Flook et al., 2015, p 45). Flook, et al. wrote that through mindfulness, a person is able to cultivate kindness and care towards oneself and to others.

The KC involved 12 weeks of lessons that included mindfulness training, focusing on kindness. The study included seven classrooms at different elementary schools. Three classrooms participated in the KC and four classrooms did not receive the curriculum. The KC had specific lessons and focused on increasing attention, self-regulation, empathy, sharing, gratitude and emotion regulation (Flook et al., 2015, p 45).

The KC consisted of two 20-30 minute lessons each week over the 12 week study. The results were tracked through activities such as sharing tasks, delay of gratification tasks, dimensional change card sort tasks, flanker tasks, and school grades.

The classrooms that implemented the KC resulted in improvements in academics and social-emotional development. The control group showed more self-centered behaviors. (Flook, et al., 2015, p. 44) The KC group showed improvements in sharing tasks and school grades. There were no significant differences in the delay in gratification, dimensional and flanker tasks. (Flook et al., 2015, p. 47-48)

One task involved sharing activities. In both groups, the children were given stickers and were told they could either share with others or keep them for themselves. The study showed that the children with the KC shared more with others, overall. In addition, the KC group showed higher overall grades in approaches to learning, health and physical development and social and emotional development at the end of the year. There were no significant differences in grades for cognition and general knowledge or language development and communication.

Both groups improved in delay of gratification tasks, dimensional change card sort tasks and flanker tasks. The delay of gratification task involved the children choosing if they would like a smaller reward immediately or a larger reward later. The dimensional change card sort task was computer simulated and was meant to show cognitive flexibility. The flanker task was also computer simulated and was used to show inhibitory control (Flook et. al., 2015, p 48).

In their research, they found that self-regulatory skills help develop social, emotional and cognitive functioning over time. (Flook et al., 2015, p. 49) The study

explored promoting prosocial behavior and self-regulatory skills in preschool children through a KC. While there were some areas that resulted in no significant differences, this study shows that the kindness curriculum had benefits even after a short (12 week) intervention. Providing mindfulness and lessons in kindness may help children with self-regulation, independence and social cohesion during transition times.

While researching transition times in an early childhood setting, it was difficult to find extensive research. While there was research on transitions for children with special needs and inclusive classrooms, these techniques seemed to be reactionary rather than preventative. There is a gap in preventative strategies for developing self-regulation and independence in children during times of transition.

Because transitions require children to self-regulate and complete steps that lead them to the next activity, it may be helpful to implement mindfulness exercises, meditation, and yoga. There was a small amount of research on yoga and mindfulness and early childhood settings. There was also a small amount of research that had been done on how mindfulness positively affects young children. However, there was no research found about the effects of these exercises on transitional times for children ages two and a half to six.

Children experience many transitions throughout the day. Transitions are often viewed as a time in between activities, rather than an activity itself. By separating the skills that are needed in children to be successful during transitions, it may be possible to understand how mindfulness, self-regulation, independence and social cohesion lessons may positively affect transitions in an early childhood setting.

Methodology

From previous observations and informal discussions with the classroom assistant, I chose to focus on the transition after lunch, as it was consistently the most challenging transition time of the day. It seemed as though the most disruptions and requested adult assistance occurred during the transition at the end of lunch while the children were preparing for the next activity.

The setting was a Montessori preschool classroom located in a metropolitan city in the Upper Midwest. The participants in this project included 17 students varying in ages from two and a half to five years old. Data was collected pre-assessment (one week) and after the intervention for six weeks during the months of February and March, 2016.

Before research was conducted, all parents were given a passive consent form. This consent form gave a summary of the intended research with descriptions of the interventions that would be implemented. All parents gave consent to allow their children to participate in the study.

After exploring transitions in early childhood settings, I found that many techniques were utilized as solutions for disruptions with individual children. I chose to study the impact of preventative techniques that could be beneficial to the whole class of various ages and abilities. Because the transition was requiring assistance from adults, I wanted to find a way the children could improve on their independence, self-regulation, and social cohesion during this time. While developing my research topic and data tools, I wanted to incorporate tools and techniques that were familiar to the children. This study was conducted mid-year and the children already had established routines in place.

However, I aspired to use these tools in a specific manner that applied to the daily transitions the children experienced in the day.

I first collected a baseline data of the number and type of disruptions which occurred during the transition after lunch. During this pre-assessment, I observed the period of time after lunch, taking note of the challenges that arose (See Appendix A). Lunch began at 11:15am and ended at 12:00pm. The children then cleaned up after themselves, washed their dishes, and packed up their lunches. They used the bathroom if needed, then looked at books or were read stories until all children had finished. After all children were finished, they prepared to go outside for recess.

I used a tally sheet to document disruptions and resolutions as the children ended lunch and prepared to go outside for recess, as well as the transition's start and end time (See Appendix B). I also took note of when the children asked adults for help. I noted that there were combinations of challenges. For example, some children had difficulty patiently waiting in line to wash dishes or use the bathroom. Some children did not know how to put their lunch containers away. Some children asked for help by crying, rather than communicating their needs. I noticed that the older children often finished first before offering help to the younger children. Some children distracted other children throughout the transition through play or refusal to complete tasks.

Next, I used the baseline data to separate the types of needs the children were displaying. I noticed that there were opportunities to develop mindfulness skills that could help in self-regulation, calmness, and focus during the transition. This transition required the children to develop skills in independence, communication, the ability to self-help, and social cohesion to carry out the tasks of a transition.

After observing for one week, I spent time writing down these specific skills that I saw lacking or that could be improved. While there was a need to encourage the development of internal skills such as self-regulation and patience, there was also a need to develop the skills to carry out specific tasks and follow instructions to accomplish the physical act of the transition (such as cleaning up a spill, asking for help, or washing dishes).

I collected examples of yoga and mindfulness activities that the children could practice. I then planned exercises for each day of the intervention. These were intended to provide the children with tools to develop self-regulation, patience and calmness. I planned to have a daily yoga and mindfulness exercise. Every morning, I would invite all the children to gather together. My assistant and I would teach a breathing technique or other mindfulness exercise. Then, we would do a yoga pose together.

I recorded the type of exercise that was offered to the children and documented how many children chose to participate (See Appendix C). All the children had the choice to participate or chose another individual activity. Every day, all children participated. We would often encourage the children to remember the breathing exercises and invited them to use the techniques if they were having a difficult time being calm and peaceful while waiting in line or finishing tasks throughout the day.

I also broke up the transition into teachable moments. I wrote lessons that I would practice with the children that would allow them to practice the physical tasks that are required to complete all that is needed to move through the transition. For example: What to do when you are done with your lunch, how to pack up your lunch, how to wash your

dishes, how to clean up your lunch spot, how to wash your hands after lunch, what to do while we are waiting for others to be done with lunch, etc.

Before lunch, our classroom would have a group gathering. After doing activities together, I would then teach a lesson that applied to the transition. I had initially thought all lessons would be Grace and Courtesy, but I found I also needed to include re-presentations of preliminary exercises they practiced and learned early in the year (such as how to clean a spill, how to carry a pitcher, how to wash a dish, how to push in your chair, and how to sit at a table). Each child had the opportunity to practice the lesson during the group time that I presented. I was interested if the children would later remind each other of what we practiced together. I documented which lesson was presented (See Appendix E).

I documented what mindfulness exercise was taught to the children and how many children chose to participate (see Appendix C). I had a space to tally if children were later observed independently repeating the exercise while waiting in line during the transition.

I documented how many disruptions occurred while waiting in line during the transition (either to the bathroom or to wash dishes), what mindfulness technique was used to encourage calmness while waiting, and if the children chose to repeat the technique independently or by a verbal prompt from an adult (see appendix D). I was interested to observe if children independently chose to use the techniques to calm themselves. I was equally interested in understanding if the children responded to a suggested technique if they were being disruptive or unfocused.

I documented the date each Grace and Courtesy lesson was presented. Then, I tallied every time I noticed a child repeat the lesson (or reminded another child to repeat the lesson) to resolve a disruption throughout the six weeks (see Appendix E and B). This allowed me to document the type of disruption and how it was resolved. The types of disruptions were labeled: “Child needed assistance”, “child refused to complete a task”, “child was disruptive to other children”, and “other”. I then circled the resolution: “Independently”, “with other child’s assistance”, “with adult’s verbal prompt”, “with adult’s verbal prompt and physical assistance”, or “with adult’s physical assistance”. I also documented if a Grace and Courtesy lesson was used to help assist the child through the task. For example, I documented if the adult reminded the child to use a technique we practiced or did the child independently use a Grace and Courtesy lesson to resolve the issue.

I had intended to keep data on what lesson was presented and how often it was repeated. This was too challenging to chart because of the difficulty in tracking so many children, the disruptions, and resolutions during a very busy routine, I focused only on if the children used a Grace and Courtesy lesson to resolve an issue. It would be interesting to have the data of how frequently children repeated a Grace and Courtesy lesson and how many possible disruptions were avoided due to the use of a Grace and Courtesy lesson. To keep track of this data, I would have needed to either solely observed or have video recorded the transition, as it was much too difficult to watch all children and collect accurate data on total repeated Grace and Courtesy lessons.

I continued to collect data using tally sheets (see Appendix B, C, D and E) and teacher observation journal (see Appendix A). I documented the daily start and end time

of the transition to see if the length of time decreased (see Appendix B). In the observation, I noted details that were not included in my other data sheets. I described situations that occurred and events or activities that changed the regular routine of the day.

These data sheets were used to plan the following week's lessons. I used the type of disruptions from week one to plan week two's lessons, for example. If I noticed that a lesson was not being used and there were still related disruptions, I either represented it or found another lesson that could model appropriate behavior.

Data Analysis

The purpose of the data collected was to observe if the overall transition time after lunch was positively affected by providing opportunities to practice the skills needed for the transition routine. I wanted to measure if the Grace and Courtesy lessons inspired independence and if mindfulness would inspire self-regulation skills. While I wanted to observe the overall amount of disruptions, I also wanted to understand how the disruptions were resolved. Because Montessori focuses on encouraging children to become independent, I tracked if the children resolved disruptions independently and with other children, or if the resolution needed adult's assistance.

I focused on tracking the effects of the Grace and Courtesy lessons on disruptions while completing tasks of the transition. I focused on tracking the mindfulness effects on the disruptions while the children waited in lines during the transition. After establishing a baseline, beginning on week one of the intervention, the children were given the opportunity to practice physical and social skills needed to complete tasks within the transition after lunch. They practiced as a group during neutral times. At the beginning of

the day, the children were invited to practice a mindfulness breathing exercise and a yoga pose. There was 100% participation for both group activities.

The first step of data collection was to create a baseline. For one week, I used a tally data sheet to document how many disruptions occurred during the transition after lunch. Disruptions were labeled as, “child needed assistance”, “child refused task”, “child was disruptive to other children”, and “other”. I tallied the type of disruption and the resolution to each disruption. Resolutions were described as “independent”, “with other child’s assistance”, “with an adult’s verbal prompt”, “with an adult’s verbal prompt and physical assistance”, or “with an adult’s physical assistance only”. To supplement my data tools, I kept an observation journal.

During the first week, there was a total of 62 disruptions. As seen in Figure 1, of the 62 disruptions throughout the week, 14 were resolved independently or with the assistance of another child. The other 48 disruptions required an adult to either verbally prompt or physically assist a child during the transition.

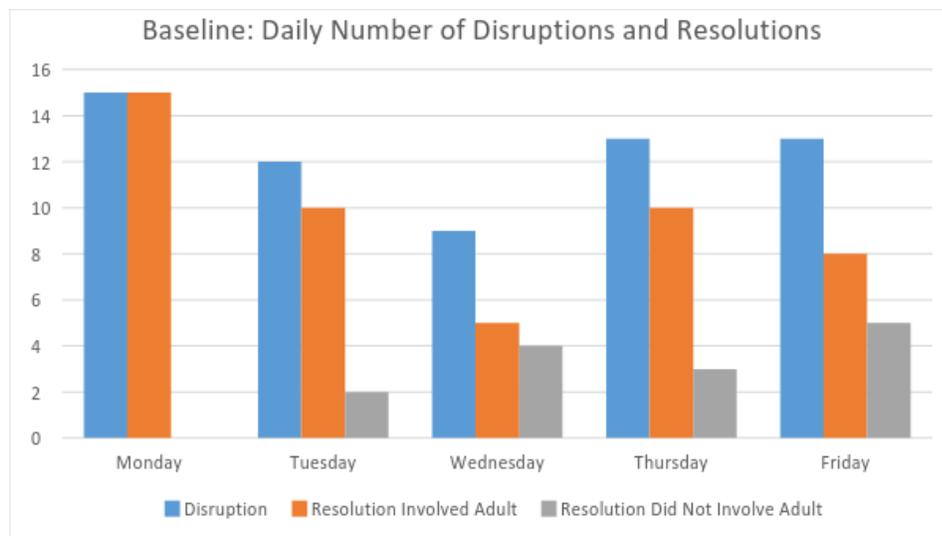


Figure 1. Baseline: Daily Number of Disruptions and Resolutions.

While implementing the daily Grace and Courtesy Lessons, mindfulness exercises and yoga, I continued to document how many disruptions occurred during the transition after lunch throughout the six weeks of the research study. In Figure 2, the total disruptions are shown in light blue.

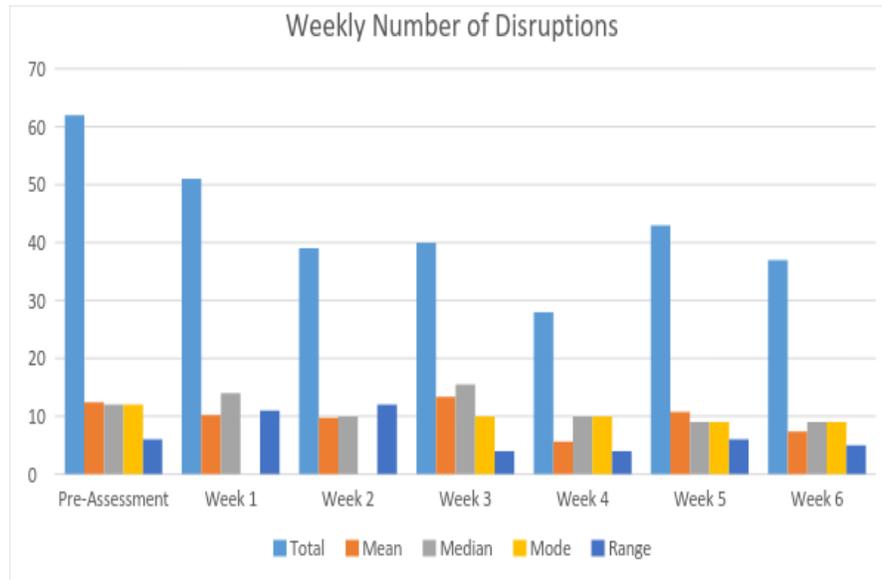


Figure 2. Number of Weekly Disruptions.

Without the interventions, there was a total of 62 disruptions during the pre-assessment week. By the sixth week of implementing the interventions, the total disruptions decreased to 37. There was a daily average of 12.4 disruptions during the baseline week, without any intervention. Throughout the study, the average number of disruptions varied each week. Week 3 was slightly higher than the baseline, but overall the average number decreased throughout the study. My journal observations noted there was a field trip on one day and a staff illness for two days during week three. These changes and events may have caused inconsistency in the routine of those days, which may have led to more disruptions.

In the observational journal, I noted specific examples of disruptions so I would be able to focus on planning Grace and Courtesy Lessons based on the needs of the children. Some of the disruptions were distracting other children while packing up lunch, throwing dishes in the sink rather than washing them, asking for assistance opening and closing containers, playing with materials on the shelf, putting food in the sink rather than the garbage, wandering around the room instead of focusing on cleaning lunch, pushing others in line, leaving wet spills on the floor or table, jumping or yelling in line, and talking across the room to another child or adult. One child had a toileting accident and two children broke dishes while carrying them to the sink.

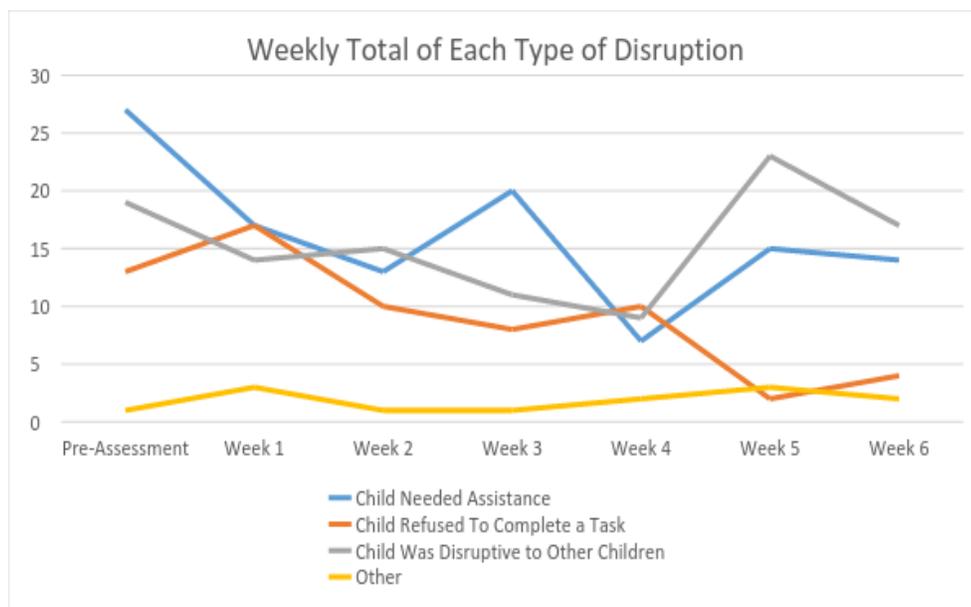


Figure 3. Weekly Total of Each Type of Disruption.

When documenting a disruption, I tallied which type of disruption occurred. Figure 3 represents the type of disruptions that occurred. During the pre-assessment week, 27 children requested assistance, 13 children refused to complete a task, 19 children were disruptive to other children, and three children were tallied as “other”. Most resolutions involved an adult in some manner.

Figure 3 indicates that there was no pattern to the type of disruption overall. While some types of disruptions decreased over time, they varied in frequency from week to week. There was a decrease in children who refused to complete a task. I had been curious if the Grace and Courtesy interventions would lead to less children needing assistance with tasks throughout the transition. I did note in my journal that over time, I felt the children asked adults for help less often than they did during the pre-assessment week. Although they still requested assistance throughout the study, they often asked other children. I was also interested to observe if children were less disruptive to others as they practiced mindfulness daily. I did not see a decrease in this behavior while the children were completing tasks of the transition.

I used the data and observational notes about the type of disruptions that occurred to plan the following week's lessons. I used the type of disruptions from week one to plan week two's lessons, for example. If I noticed that a lesson was not being used and there were still related disruptions, I either re-presented it or found another lesson that could model appropriate behavior. In my notes, I reflected that children often repeated and helped each other with the lessons that they most recently practiced. This was found with children of all ages. I often observed even the youngest children reminding the older children of lessons we had practiced.

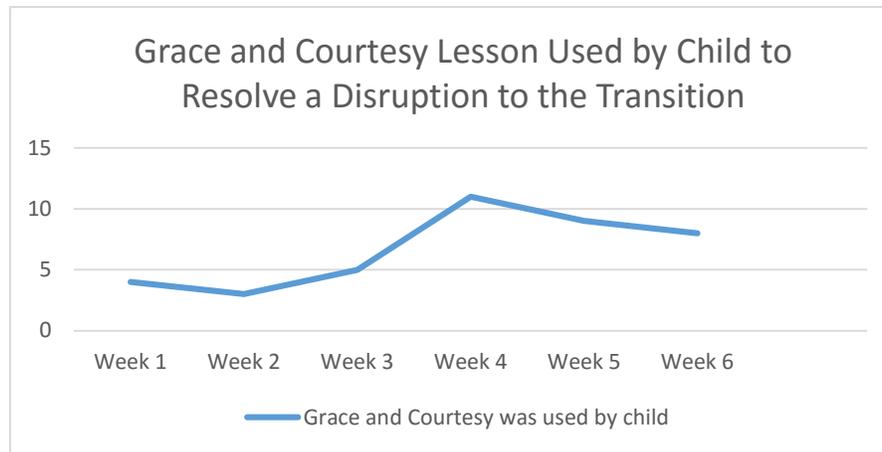


Figure 4. Grace and Courtesy Lesson Used by Child to Resolve a Disruption to the Transition.

Of the total times children resolved their disruptions without an adult, I tracked if they repeated a Grace and Courtesy Lesson that we had practiced as a group. Figure 4 displays the total number of times children resolved their own issues during the transition (independently or with the assistance of another child) and if they used a Grace and Courtesy lesson.

I had originally intended to track every time I saw a Grace and Courtesy Lesson repeated during the transition, but it was too difficult to track. In my observation journal, I noted that children often independently completed tasks by repeating Grace and Courtesy Lessons before a disruption occurred. Because of the amount of times I saw Grace and Courtesy Lessons repeated independently, I focused only on when there was a disruption and the child resolved the issue on her own; I then noted if and what Grace and Courtesy was used to resolve what was going on.

In journal entries, I noted that it was important to know when it was actually needed for an adult to verbally prompt or provide physical assistance. I had written throughout the baseline and the first two weeks that as I waited to provide assistance, the

children often resolved disruptions on their own or with the assistance of other children. However, because adults were giving more time before providing assistance, there were more frequent disruptions.

As time went on, I noted daily that I felt children were asking adults for assistance much less frequently. Some examples of “adult verbal prompts” and “adult physical assistance” involved the adults reminding children it was time to clean up, showing children how to complete a task or prompting the child with “first-then” statement to remind children of tasks needed to complete the transition. I also noted that as we continued to practice Grace and Courtesy daily, children often reminded each other of what they should be doing. For example, children reminded each other to hold dishes with two hands, to sweep up spills, to ask to pass pitchers, and to raise their hands to be excused.

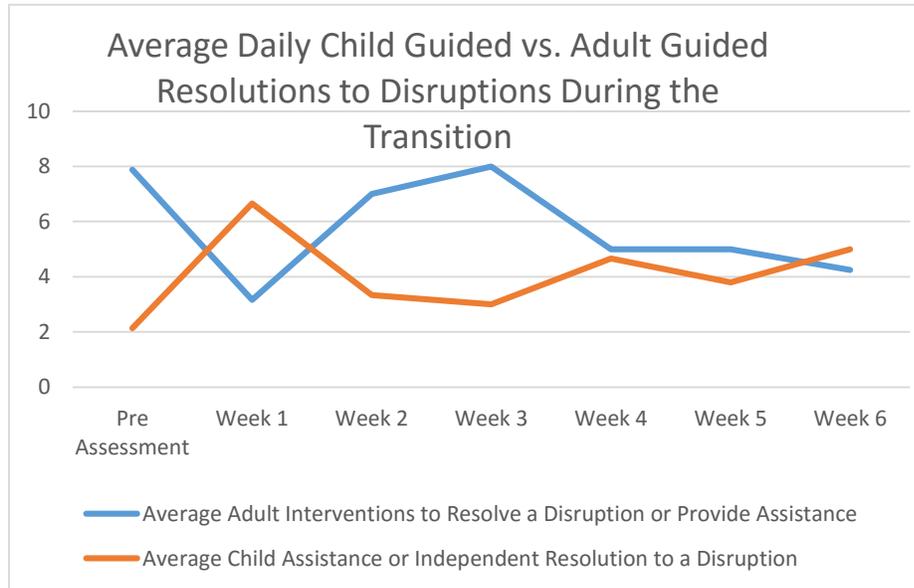


Figure 5. Average Daily Child Guided versus Adult Guided Resolutions to Disruptions.

The average times adult guided the resolutions and the average times children resolved disruptions are shown in Figure 5. This figure supports my observation journal notes. There were still disruptions, but children helped each other more frequently, while adult interventions decreased over time. Again, this may also be due to the adults becoming more critical of how and when they intervened.

In addition to tracking how many disruptions occurred while completing tasks during the lunch transition, I also kept specific data on how many disruptions occurred while children were waiting in lines. I separated these times during the transition, because I had originally observed the disruptions while waiting in line were much different than the disruptions that occurred at other times during the transition. While disruptions while completing tasks of the transition often involved children refusing to complete tasks, disrupting others, or needing assistance (all which could be aided by practicing how to complete the tasks), the disruptions while waiting in line involved difficulties in patience, having calm bodies, and having self-control.

Because waiting in line is such a big part of our transition (either they wait in line to wash dishes or wait in line to wash their hands/use the bathroom), I wanted to observe if the yoga and mindfulness exercises would help with the self-regulation skills needed during this part of the transition. I documented if children independently repeated mindfulness exercises to calm themselves while waiting in line.

This mindfulness and yoga activities were presented early in the day. The class practiced a yoga pose daily, followed by a mindfulness, mantra or meditation technique. All children who were present chose to participate each day. When children were standing in line, a teacher would encourage children to use the technique they learned

earlier. It was difficult to encourage yoga (other than standing poses), so teachers focused on the other techniques that were taught. This chart was created to understand if specific exercises decreased disruptions more than others.

The children never independently used a mindfulness exercise while standing in line. Beginning on Monday of week one of the intervention, the teacher invited the children (who were standing in line to wash their hands or use the bathroom) to use a mindfulness technique while standing in line. Children were invited to do breathing technique or the teacher repeated the mindfulness activity from earlier in the day. While it was not part of the study, I had written in my observation notes that children often repeated these exercises independently during the work time. Children often chose to do yoga or quietly repeated a breathing technique while working.

From the data collected, Figure 6 shows that when an adult encouraged children to use a mindfulness exercise while waiting in line, there were less disruptions than when an adult had not implemented the mindfulness exercises.

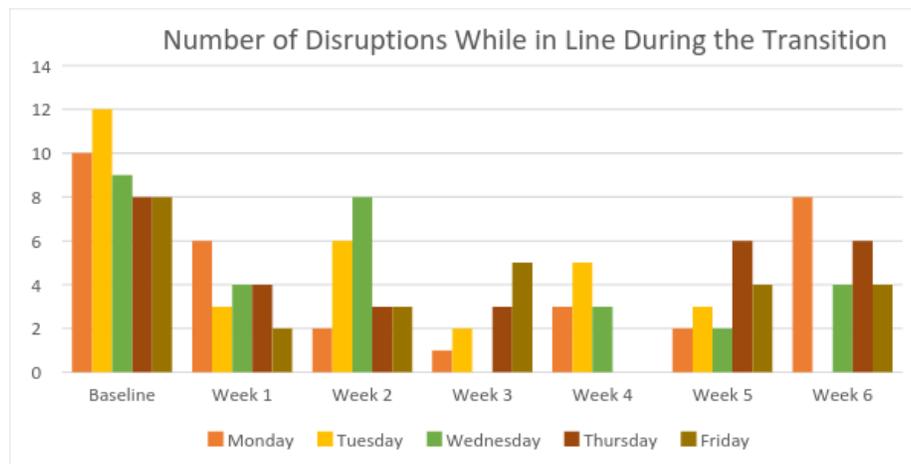


Figure 6. Number of Disruptions While in Line during the Transition.

Beginning with the baseline week, I documented the total minutes the transition took each day. I questioned if the length of time correlated to the amount of disruptions

during a transition. At 11:50am, the children are informed that they have 10 minutes of lunch, but may begin to pack their lunches if they are finished. At 12:00pm, the children are then told that it is time for everyone else to begin cleaning their lunches and prepare to go outside. I kept track of when the first child began to clean up, which was typically at 11:50am. I then documented when the last child was finished.

Figure 7 shows the length of time was slightly shorter by the end of my data collection. The average length of time before implementing the interventions was 31 minutes. The averages for the week one through week six were week one, 28 minutes; week 2, 25.75 minutes; week 3, 23.5 minutes; week 4, 24 minutes; week 5, 22.25 minutes; week 6, 23.4 minutes.

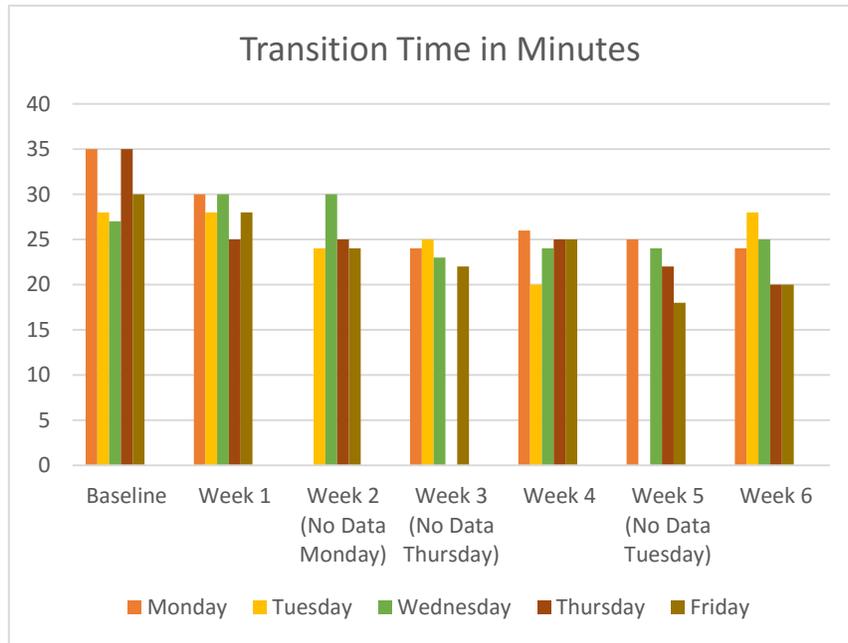


Figure 7. Total Transition Time in Minutes.

I noted in my observation notes that there were four children that consistently finished with their lunches and began the transition at the first opportunity (11:50am); there were three children that were consistently the last to finish eating and to begin the transition. Despite the length of time decreasing after the initial baseline data, my daily

notes indicate the length of time of the transition may not correlate with the amount of disruptions because some children are just typically faster and slower than others. Also, I noted that some days the total time of the transition was affected by circumstances that were not typical of a normal transition. For example, there were several occasions the assistant was ill, so an adult less familiar with the routine and children supervised the room with the lead teacher.

Throughout the six weeks of observational journaling, I frequently noted that the mindfulness exercises seemed to calm both adults in the environment. In casual conversations with my assistant, we discussed that the yoga and mindfulness allowed the adults to encourage calmness in the children without using directives. Also, throughout the study, the data tools and observations taken helped to pay attention to possible underlying causes of disruptions. For example, I noted that a particular child frequently placed dishes full of food in the sink, which caused other children to refuse to wash their dishes in the sink. When we practiced scraping leftover food into the garbage or back into their containers, the children began to repeat or remind each other to repeat. As they repeated these steps, there were less disruptions while washing dishes.

I noted that some children refused tasks or did not pay attention to certain tasks, such as wipe up spills. For example, I represented “how to wipe up a spill.” As we practiced wiping up wet and dry spills, the children began to help each other complete these tasks. If a child did not notice it, another child would remind him to do it. By observing the disruptions more thoroughly, we were able to understand reasons children possibly avoided or were reluctant to complete tasks that were required during the transition.

One of the key observations I noted involved adult interactions to resolve disruptions. As I observed and collected data, I found that I became more aware of how often the adults intervened during a disruptions. Because the data collection was based on observational data collection, I found that I became increasingly aware of when an adult was actually needed to resolve a disruption. While collecting data, it was necessary to decide if a verbal prompt or physical assistance was actually needed, or if I could wait to see how the children would handle to situation.

Through conversations with my assistant and reflections in the observation journal, I noted that there were many times adults offered prompts and assistance when unneeded due to time restraints. For example, if there were two children who were taking a very long time to finish the transition routine, an adult would typically use a verbal prompt to remind the children it was time to finish what they were doing. Other adult interventions included safety needs, such as if a child broke a dish, if a child was leaning back on a chair, or if a child was running in the room.

Action Plan

While collecting and analyzing the data for this study, I found I gained insight on the children's behavior during transition times within three areas: The impact of group transition specific Grace and Courtesy lessons, the impact of yoga and mindfulness exercise, and the adult role during a transition.

Transition Specific Group Grace and Courtesy Lessons

When children were given the tools to practice and develop self-regulation, mindfulness, independence, and social cohesion, there were still disruptions. However,

the children resolved the disruptions more independently or with the assistance of another child through the collective practice of Grace and Courtesy lessons.

While I had initially intended on providing Grace and Courtesy lessons, I saw needs for lessons and representations of preliminary lessons (such as how to push in a chair, how to carry a dish, how to wash a dish, how to wash your hands, etc.). With continued group practice, the children's independence and social cohesion increased throughout the study through independent resolutions and assistance from other children; the children also decreased their requests for adult assistance.

I found that when the children practiced a Grace and Courtesy lesson together, they frequently repeated or reminded others to repeat the lessons for a few days. As days went on, the children started to repeat these lessons less frequently while resolving a disruption to the routine. For example, I would observe a heightened awareness of being careful with the dishes for a few days. I would then need to represent the lesson yet again several days later as I observed more dishes being dropped, broken, or thrown in the sink. I began looking at the "disruptions" as opportunities for what to plan for.

If repeating this study, I would be more flexible with my planning. I had planned many lessons in advance, then found myself changing the lessons based on the needs I observed from week to week; the needs of the children changed from week to week. It is difficult to plan too far in advance because the children are a dynamic, ever-changing group of individuals.

Although there were still disruptions throughout the study, I found that children resolved the disruptions and fulfilled their needs with help from each other more often than requesting help from an adult. As the children practiced tasks at a neutral time in the

day, they became more independent as a group. I found that by providing the children with tools to practice and help each other, many of the children became more confident in themselves and with helping each other.

While the Montessori Method encourages small group Grace and Courtesy lessons, I felt collective lessons influenced the children to be aware that the expectations were the same for everyone. For example, they all knew they had just practiced how to scrape food from their dish, so when children saw another child put food in the sink, they reminded the child that we had just practiced how to do it. If we all practiced walking in the classroom, children would remind each other to walk if they saw someone running. I had not created a baseline of how often children used Grace and Courtesy lessons prior to the study, as I was mainly collecting data on the disruptions and basic resolutions during a transition.

However, moving forward, I will not have a collective lesson daily. I found it to be very difficult to incorporate whole class lessons daily due to time restraints and varying attention spans. These group lessons took up much of the collective and we did not have much time for other discussions or activities. However, I was happy to see that the children all chose to participate and practiced patience while watching others and waiting for their turn to practice the lesson.

Group Yoga and Mindfulness Exercises

A transition also requires children to have a certain level of self-regulation to be a part of a group transition. The yoga and mindfulness activities were provided to help assist in this area. The children did not independently repeat the mindfulness exercises during the transition, but when an adult encouraged the children to use a breathing

exercises or mantras, the children repeated and focused on calming their bodies while waiting in line. I had initially planned to prompt children to use yoga exercises to calm themselves during a transition, but quickly realized this was not possible because they simply cannot do a yoga pose while standing in line (except some standing poses).

All children participated in the morning group yoga or mindfulness exercise. It was encouraging to observe all children participated in repeating a mindfulness activity when prompted by an adult. For example, if there were multiple children waiting in line to wash dishes, they often became disruptive. Rather than the adult telling the children how to stand or to wait patiently, the adult stood by the children, reminded the children of a breathing exercise and asked the children to repeat the exercise. The children would then focus on the breathing, rather than being disruptive while waiting in line. The adult did not have to ask the children to end the disruptive behavior that was occurring (pushing each other, leaning on each other, playing with materials on the shelf, etc.)

One factor in this part of the study may include the length of time. There was one week of creating a baseline and six weeks of implementing the intervention. It would be interesting to continue to observe how the mindfulness and yoga exercise affected self-regulation during a transition time over a longer length of time.

Another factor in this study concerned when the study occurred during the school year. We started this intervention after the children had returned from winter break. If the children began these practices in the beginning of the year, there may be different results. The children had already developed a routine in the previous months.

The mindfulness exercises helped the adults as well as the children. In the future, it would be interesting to study the benefits of mindfulness practice for adults during a

transition. Through conversations with my assistant and reflections in my observational journal, I noted that the adults felt calmer while encouraging children to use breathing exercises during heightened times of chaos during the transition. While leading the children in breathing exercises, the adults also participated in the breathing exercises which seemed to create an overall calming effect at that particular moment.

In the future, I will continue to use these techniques, but will make adjustments to my interventions. I will continue to provide the children with opportunities to practice yoga, mindfulness and transition specific Grace and Courtesy. However, I will create a plan that is more fluid with the Montessori Method. I will provide less frequent collective lessons, but continue to implement these tools in small group lessons during the work cycle. For example, I may incorporate a daily yoga pose into the collective, but will do small group or individual lessons on mindfulness during the work cycle or vice versa.

I plan to do mindfulness lessons in a similar manner as Grace and Courtesy throughout the day and with small groups. I often questioned why the children did not chose to independently repeat mindfulness exercises, but realized that while I had been presenting the children with how to do the exercises, I had not focused on explaining when to use the exercises. Moving forward, when I present the mindfulness exercises, I will use examples of when to use them. For example, we could say, “Sometimes it is difficult to wait in line. If I’m feeling restless or impatient, I can focus on my breathing. I am going to show you” I will model “When I’m feeling _____, I can do _____”.

In addition to presenting mindfulness exercises to the children, I will create more opportunities for the children to learn to use mindfulness independently. The children were already offered yoga throughout the day, but I will add mindfulness tools. For

example, I may create cards with a symbol that represents a particular breathing exercise. These cards will be available as a material they may use during the work cycle. This may give the children an opportunity to remember and practice a mindfulness activity after it is initially presented.

Children's Behavior and Adults' Roles during the Transition

If repeating this process, I would focus on collecting data on only one activity at a time. Or, I would video record the transition rather than collect data during the transition. It was difficult to be an active person in the transition, while observing and collecting observational data. I found that I became very aware of the adults' presence during the transition, which may have affected how I responded to disruptions.

While observing the children, I found it equally important to observe and be aware of the adult presence in the environment. My research involved collecting data on disruptions to a transition and documenting the resolution. Within the first week, I found myself questioning how to document this. I had created data tools that listed the resolutions as "independent", "with another child's assistance", "with adult verbal prompt", "adult verbal prompt and physical assistance", and "adult physical assistance".

Through my observation notes and daily reflections, I decided early on that I was intervening too often. An intervention from an adult was, at times, a simple verbal prompt. I reflected on how necessary the adult intervention was. As the study continued, my assistant and I chose to wait to intervene unless a child was showing unsafe behavior or if the child had displayed an attempt to resolve the disruption independently but still needed help. At times, it was a challenge to wait longer before intervening. Although an

adult intervention could have reduced disruptions, the children learned more from solving obstacles in the transition independently or with other children.

I found that I should have had (and communicated with other adults) a more clear idea of when an adult should intervene. This study required me to document when an adult helped or reminded a child of a task or guideline of the transition. I found that if I waited to intervene, the children often resolved their own need, or helped another child. I had not planned for the varying teaching styles of other adults. Moving forward, I will be sure to communicate my expectations of the adult role to the other adults who supervise in my environment.

During the study, there was a reported 60 staff call-ins due to illnesses. This created changes in staffing in my room. For example, I have an assistant who works daily in my room, but have an aid that comes in during the transition for 30 minutes before lunch and 30 minutes after lunch to help assist the set up and clean-up of the environment. If there was a staff illness, the person who was in my room varied from day to day. While I had explained the study to my assistant, I had not explained it thoroughly to the other adults who filled in. While my assistant and I challenged ourselves to intervene less, the other adults continued to help or verbally prompt children when it may not have been needed.

Along with the varying styles between the adults in the room, the constant change in who was in the room may have disrupted the children's routine. They may not have felt as comfortable with certain adults who they were not as familiar with. At the same time, adults who were not as familiar with the children responded to the children's needs in different ways. For example, my assistant and I understood that there were certain

children that consistently finished or cleaned up lunch slower than others. We would inform the whole group that lunch was over at a certain time, but would not continue to verbally prompt these children to begin the transition, as we knew they just took more time to do it. The adults who were less familiar with these children gave more verbal prompts to these children when it may have been unnecessary.

Another example involved a two and a half year old child who would cry and refuse to complete tasks. My assistant and I had observed throughout the previous month that she would refuse tasks if she needed to use the bathroom, but would not independently stop what she was doing to use the bathroom without a prompt. She rarely chose to use the bathroom on her own during a transition. My assistant and I had discussed that this was a reoccurring behavior as she is learning to understand what her body's needs. If we saw her having problems with the transition, we would encourage her to use the bathroom. She would use the bathroom, then continue to complete the tasks needed for the transition without refusal. An adult unfamiliar to this would often continue to verbally prompt her to complete the task, she would either continue to refuse to complete the task and/or have a toileting accident, then take more time to change her clothes and complete the transition.

When creating my data tools, I had been thinking of what I was going to observe to help with my action research project, but I had not defined my definitions clearly. For example, what is a disruption? I had created categories, "child requested assistance", "child refused a task", "child was disruptive to other children", and "other". Through my observations, I found children often refused tasks or were disruptive because they didn't know how to do it or may have not understood expectations. Through observation and

my data tools, I was able to use this information to plan the next Grace and Courtesy lessons. I found that children were less defiant during the transition as they felt more confident in completing tasks on their own.

By practicing grace and courtesy lessons that were transition specific together, I saw that children increasingly reminded each other of guidelines as the study continued. Often, children repeated grace and courtesy lessons before there was a disruption. Again, further and more thorough communication with other adults is an important in this area. I plan to discuss with adults who aren't usually in my environment how I define a disruption and my expectations of when an adult intervenes to resolve a disruption to create more consistency in my classroom between the adults and the children.

I found the disruptions still occurred throughout the study, but the children asked each other for help and helped each other more often by the end of my study. There is a need for further study concerning the impact of peer teaching and the frequency of adult interventions during transition times. This study could be applied to different transition routines throughout the day.

Further research could include the impact of outside sources and circumstances on the transition time. At times, there are both planned and unplanned circumstances that change the routine of the day. This may be school events, field trips, and changes in staffing, parent visitors, and other special activities. It could be beneficial to understand how much these changes impact the children's sense of order in their routine.

It also may be beneficial to involve the children and families more with this study. It would be interesting to understand the impact of families reinforcing mindfulness during transition times at home such as getting ready to leave the house, saying goodbye

to parents, and getting picked up from school. I did not include children's responses to the intervention in my study. It would be informative to understand how they feel when practicing Grace and Courtesy or mindfulness.

The integration of yoga, mindfulness activities and practicing the skills needed for a transition was insightful. As I focused on the transition and the needs of the classroom, I was able to dissect the transition routine into the many obstacles which were creating a chaotic experience for the adults and the children.

Ultimately, the goal of observation in the Montessori classroom is to understand and respond to the children's needs. By being aware of the children's needs, the adult is able to recognize and prevent and/or remove hindrances and obstacles in the child's development and growth. These hindrances or obstacles include the adult.

Observation allows the adult to recognize the true nature of the child. The child is a worker, has a need for order, is perseverant, is able to concentrate, is reflective, is a social being, is developing judgment and reasoning, is able to make decisions and be independent, is spontaneous, is able to be patient, and communicates needs. Children naturally want to do things on their own and are capable of doing so if given the tools and independence to do so. Observation does not end at the task of watching the child, it is followed by insightful reflection on the information gathered. Montessori (2007) wrote,

The little child's first movements were instinctive. Now, he acts consciously and voluntarily, and with this comes an awakening of his spirit.... Conscious will is a power which develops with use and activity. We must aim at cultivating the will.... Its development is a slow

process that evolves through a continuous activity in relationship with the environment (p. 231).

This study sought to understand if the use of mindfulness exercises, yoga, and Grace and Courtesy lessons would positively affect the transition times in an early childhood educational setting. While I had initially intended to decrease disruptions, I found a very valuable result emerged throughout the study. While the disruptions did not decrease overall, the children became more independent in resolving issues that arose. Instead of relying on the adults for help, the children requested help from each other or chose to solve their problems on their own. Although the children did not repeat the mindfulness exercises independently during the transition, the exercises did provide the children with the tools to become calm during moments of restlessness. Through observation, I will continue to understand the needs of the children and the role of the adult in the environment.

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Appendix

A: Daily Observation Sheet for Pre-Assessment and Data Collection

Daily Observations

Date and Time:

B: Disruptions during the Transition Used for Pre-Assessment and Data Collection

Disruptions and/or needs of Children and Resolution Using Grace and Courtesy

Day and Date: _____ Transition Start and End Time: _____

Independent = I with other child's assistance= CA Adult verbal prompt= VP

Adult verbal and physical prompt= VPP Adult physical prompt= PP

<p><u>Type of Disruption</u> (circle)</p> <p>Child needed assistance</p> <p>Child refused to complete task</p> <p>Child was disruptive to other children</p> <p>Other</p> <p><u>Resolution</u> (circle): I CA VP VP PP</p> <p><u>G and C used</u>: yes or no</p>	<p><u>Type of Disruption</u> (circle)</p> <p>Child needed assistance</p> <p>Child refused to complete task</p> <p>Child was disruptive to other children</p> <p>Other</p> <p><u>Resolution</u> (circle): I CA VP VP PP</p> <p><u>G and C used</u>: yes or no</p>
<p><u>Type of Disruption</u> (circle)</p> <p>Child needed assistance</p> <p>Child refused to complete task</p> <p>Child was disruptive to other children</p> <p>Other</p> <p><u>Resolution</u> (circle): I CA VP VP PP</p> <p><u>G and C used</u>: yes or no</p>	<p><u>Type of Disruption</u> (circle)</p> <p>Child needed assistance</p> <p>Child refused to complete task</p> <p>Child was disruptive to other children</p> <p>Other</p> <p><u>Resolution</u> (circle): I CA VP VP PP</p> <p><u>G and C used</u>: yes or no</p>

C: Yoga and Mindfulness Participation during Data Collection

Yoga and Mindfulness Participation

Day and Date:

Number of children who chose to participate:

Type of Exercise:

Was the exercise independently repeated later (tally):

Day and Date:

Number of children who chose to participate:

Type of Exercise:

Was the exercise independently repeated (tally):

Day and Date:

Number of children who chose to participate:

Type of Exercise:

Was the exercise independently repeated (tally):

Day and Date:

Number of children who chose to participate:

Type of Exercise:

Was the exercise independently repeated (tally):

Day and Date:

Number of children who chose to participate:

Type of Exercise:

Was the exercise independently repeated (tally):

Day and Date:

Number of children who chose to participate:

Type of Exercise:

Was the exercise independently repeated (tally):

D: Disruptions While in Line during the Transition and Mindfulness Exercise Used

Independent (Did a child chose to do exercise while waiting in line) = I

Adult verbal prompt (Did adult lead the exercise while children wait in line) = V

<p><u>Date:</u> Used (circle)</p> <p>Yoga Pose</p> <p>Mantra</p> <p>Mindfulness</p> <p>Meditation</p> <p>Prompt (circle): I or V</p>	<p>Technique</p> <p>Number of disruptions while in line (tally)</p>
<p><u>Date:</u> Used (circle)</p> <p>Yoga Pose</p> <p>Mantra</p> <p>Mindfulness</p> <p>Meditation</p> <p>Prompt (circle): I or V</p>	<p>Technique</p> <p>Number of disruptions while in line (tally)</p>

E: Grace and Courtesy Lessons Given and Repeated During Data Collection

Evidence of repeated Grace and Courtesy Lessons (Tally):

Lesson name _____ Presented on _____

Week 1: Number of children who independently repeated

Week 2: Number of children who independently repeated

Week 3: Number of children who independently repeated

Week 4: Number of children who independently repeated

Week 5: Number of children who independently repeated

Week 6: Number of children who independently repeated