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## Yoga Before Naptime

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Yoga Before Naptime

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### Abstract

Naptime is a part of a developing child's day. At school, a child may face a lot of stimulation before transitioning into naptime. Due to the high state of stimulation, a child may need to be shown a way to help self-calm to prepare the child for a period of rest. This research focused on using yoga as a transitional activity and as a way to help children self-calm before naptime. For eight weeks, 12 children between the age of three and four in a Midwest Montessori school participated in a five-minute yoga session before naptime. Through the first four weeks of the research, the yoga session took place in the classroom before the children transitioned to the nap room. The yoga session took place in the nap room during the last four weeks of the research. Results suggested that yoga before naptime can support self-calming before nap, through other factors such as location contribute to this success.

*Keywords:* yoga, naptime, transitions, self-calming

Naptime is an essential portion of a young, growing child's day. The children are given a chance to reset their body to continue through the rest of the day. Regardless of the educational methodology or setting, naptime is incorporated into the day because educators and parents know how important it is for a child to have a period of rest. However, it is not well known on what works best to help children calm and settle for a nap. In most educational settings, a lot happens before naptime begins. Children could play outside beforehand. Children are then expected to calm their body quickly after being active outside. Some children eat lunch before naptime. The room can become chaotic while children clean up and use the bathroom, making children active before being expected to rest. Children could also be playing or working, have to stop, and switch their mindset to take a nap. There should be a transitional activity that works for the majority of children, helping them get into the mindset of napping. Is it reading a story, singing a song, relaxing in a calm space, or yoga?

Classrooms can differ on who does and does not nap. There can be classrooms where all children nap, the majority of children nap, or hardly any children nap. The research was conducted in a Montessori primary environment where not all children nap. There are children from thirty-three months to six years old in the same classroom. Dr. Montessori believed a wide age group of children should be in the same classroom together for children to learn from each other and work together. Typically, children in their final year of the classroom (also known as the kindergarten year) do not nap. The rest of the children in the environment are welcomed to have a period of rest, depending on the needs of each child. This means when the afternoon begins, some children are

getting ready to go back to their work or activity while others are getting ready for a nap. Different energy levels can cycle through the space at the same time.

Montessori environments can also differ because some environments have the naptime space incorporated into the classroom while other environments do not have enough space within the classroom. The children have to transition into a different sleeping environment. Adding another transition into a child's already transitioned filled day can be challenging if not done in a way to best support the child. For young children, sometimes it helps to have a transitional activity to help the child's body adjust and regulate to get ready for a nap. Regardless of where the sleeping space is, it should be a calm and relaxing space for the children. Lights should be dimmed to help create the ultimate sleeping space. Sometimes soft music or a sound machine is in the background to help children relax and drift into sleep.

In most homes, families set up bedtime routines to help the child get ready for bed. This routine can include taking a bath, putting on pajamas, brushing teeth, reading a story, talking about the day, and/or watching a TV show. This daily routine helps the child regulate and know what is next to come. In school, having a daily routine before naptime helps the child know what to expect. However, the routine might not be calming or work for every child. Time can also be an issue. There might not be enough time to read a story, talk about the day, or sing a song. What may be calming for some children might make other children energized. It is best to look at all of the children as a whole to see what will work best when establishing a pre-naptime routine.

Children also need to learn how to self-calm, regardless if they are getting ready for naptime or not. There may be various parts of the day where a child becomes very

energized or emotional and needs to calm down on the child's own. During early childhood is a keen time to teach children various self-calming strategies, so they can regulate their body on their own. One strategy is yoga. Yoga can be fun and engaging but also soothing and calming. Different poses can be used to help the child center its mind and body and bring the child back to center. If the child is shown calming poses that meet the needs of the child, the child then can feel free to use those yoga poses to help calm down when upset, frustrated, or before a period of sleep.

The research was conducted in a Montessori primary setting. In this classroom, children play outside, eat lunch, cleanup, and use the bathroom before taking a nap. The napping space was located outside of the classroom, in a different room, mixed with children from another classroom. During the lunch cleanup and transition into the nap room process, there was a lot of high energy as well as various behaviors amongst the children. The children would have to sit and wait for every child to be cleaned up before heading to the nap room. The waiting period could be as long as fifteen minutes. Transiting into another environment alone can have its challenges. The researcher wanted to find a transitional activity to provide a way for children to calm their bodies down to take a nap. Over the course of eight weeks, five minutes of yoga was implemented before naptime. The researcher looked to see if yoga could be a transitional activity to help the children self-calm before a period of rest.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Introduction**

Currently, there is not much information or research done about naptime or pre-naptime routines. However, there are other ways to look at the pre-naptime process. The

child goes through a massive transition from being very active to having to shift to being calm to rest and relax. The child may need to change rooms, which can also be stimulating. A consistent routine during this time of change helps the child know what to expect. If the child can self-regulate, then the child will know how to calm its body down when getting prepared for a nap. The child can also interpret other social cues from other children and adults in the environment to know how to self regulate during the time of transition. Yoga can help calm the child's body to be prepared to rest. It also is part of the consistent routine during this time of transition. With the ability to self-regulate, the child will be able to follow along to the various yoga poses to prepare the child's body for a time of rest. Through this new information, young children can be supported in a new way, creating a naptime routine. The literature revealed techniques for transitions, the importance for children to develop self-regulation at an early age, and how various yoga techniques can be effective or ineffective for young children.

### **Effects of transitions on children**

According to Banerjee and Horn (2012), a classroom transition is defined as “a teacher initiated movement from one ongoing classroom activity to another resulting in a change in the activity during a daily routine” (p. 3). Transitions take up a large part of a child's day, more than someone would expect. Children enrolled in early childhood programs can experience close to fifteen to twenty transitions a day (Banerjee & Horn, 2012). This means more than a quarter of a child's day is spent in transitions (Banerjee & Horn, 2012). This is why transitions are important, and the child needs to be taken into consideration while transitions happen.

Transitions can have quite an effect on a child. It can be stressful and a challenge for a child because the child has been interrupted from what the child has been doing and now has to shift focus on the new task at hand, which can cause stress upon the child. What adults may often forget or do not realize is children have little to no control over daily life experiences (Koralek, 2008). “Their (children) families and teachers lead them through established schedules and may not always remember that for young children routines and transitions take up much of the day and can be wonderful opportunities to support learning” (Koralek, p. 10, 2008). Since routines are so important for young children, it is best for the adults to carefully plan the routine and refine it to make sure it is best suiting all children.

A consistent routine is something that can help a child through a stressful period. According to Williams (2012), “often asking children to move from one activity to another present opportunities for disturbance, if not chaos, when not planned carefully” (p. 8). The adults need to create a routine or transition activity which lets the child know what is next to come (Williams, 2012). A routine is something a child can expect everyday to help the child regulate. For example, the routines can help the child understand lunchtime is approaching (Williams, 2012). Through a set schedule, a child can tell what time of day it is and predict what is next to come because of the various transitions happening. If there is going to be a change in the schedule, it is best to inform the children, so the children understand what to expect.

Time should not be a constraint during a transition. “Teachers should allow enough notice for the children to finish up what they are working on and prepare for the next activity” (Williams, p. 9, 2012). When a teacher announces what is going to happen

next, it should not start right after the announcement. The teacher should give the children enough time to process what is going to happen next and finish up their tasks. An example is a teacher might ring a bell which signals to the children they have five minutes left before it is time to switch to the next activity. This gives the child time to finish up work and process what is next to come.

Even though a child should not be rushed during a transition, too much downtime can be detrimental to children (Williams, 2012). There are various strategies and transitional activities that help reduce the amount of downtime between activities. Banerjee and Horn (2012) suggested the usage of verbal or nonverbal signals as a way for the children to hear or see the end of one activity and time to shift or transition into the next activity. One example is there can be a song that is sung by everyone during the transitional period. An adult will start singing the song, and the children begin to join in once they hear the song. When the song is over, that means the children should be done with they are doing and ready to move onto the next activity. This has a clear beginning and end to the transition, making the children aware of what is happening and what is expected of the children. Too much downtime can also cause chaos. Children should have a clear understanding for when the transition begins and when it ends (Williams, 2012).

When a transition goes wrong for a child, (meaning the child acts in a disruptive manner, refuses to cleanup, refuses to participate in the transition, etc.), it is best to look at the child and understand what the child is going through, rather than trying to change the child (Williams, 2012). There is a particular reason why the child is acting in this manner, and as an adult, the adult needs to look at the child as a whole to see what may

be going wrong (Williams, 2012). There may be something wrong with the transition or the routine that needs to be changed to better suit the child. According to Williams (2012), the best thing to do is to respect the child and notice the child has the best intentions. Through this respect and understanding, the adult needs to see the child through the child's eye to better understand what is going on during the transition for the child. The transition is about the child, not about the adult. Pairing up a child with another child could be useful to help ease the transition for the child. When you partner one child up with another child, it aids in promotion of independence during the transition as well as provides an opportunity for children to engage socially with each other (Banerjee & Horn, 2012).

As a teacher, it is best to monitor transitions to make sure it is successful for all children involved, and not a stress filled situation. Adults can take notes during the transition to see what is and is not working to help better structure and change the routine (if needed) to help the children be successful, independent, and joyous during this change (Banerjee & Horn, 2012). It is best to make sure the transitions and expectations are appropriate for the age level and experience level of the children. Sometimes more support may need to be given during the transition, which can slowly be faded out to make the children successful and independent in the future (Banerjee & Horn, 2012).

### **Supporting self-regulation**

According to Jahromi and Stifter (2008), self-regulation is the control or organization of behavior, or the active suppression of process engaged for the purposes of a goal and involves control over a variety of

processes, including emotion (i.e., emotion regulation), motor (i.e., behavioral control), and cognition (i.e., executive function) (p. 126).

Self-regulation is a skill children need to master early on to help them in the future. When a child is two months old, the child has the ability to self regulate (Jahromi & Stifter, 2008). Between the ages of three and six-years old, a child has the greatest developmental growth in self-regulation skills (Jahromi & Stifter, 2008). A child needs to self-regulate at various points throughout the day. A child self-regulates when waiting in line for the bathroom, waits for a toy/material to be available, when is in conflict with another child or adult, and more. If self-regulation is not taught and understood at a young age by a child, it can impact a child for the rest of the child's life. Self-regulation skills are constantly growing and changing in a young child (McClelland & Cameron, 2011).

Through the child's self-regulation, the child knows what to expect. The child can tell what time of day it is through the ability to self regulate through various daily transitions. However, a child being able to self-regulate does not mean the child is strictly a rule follower. The child participates in the transitions because the child is able to regulate behavior, not just blindly going through the motions of following the directions. It also means the child can regulate and organize the child's behavior during various parts of the day. Through self-regulation success in early childhood, the child is set up for success in the future (McClelland & Cameron, 2011). Early childhood self-regulation success can also lay the foundation for a positive schooling experience, which can contribute to academic achievement (McClelland & Cameron, 2011). If a child cannot adequately self-regulate when entering kindergarten, the child is at risk for

rejection by peers as well as low academic success (McClelland & Cameron, 2011). Self-regulation needs to be modeled for early childhood children. Adults and other children in the child's life help teach the child how to self-regulate through transitions by modeling positive behavior during a transition at an early age (Williams, 2012).

The child learns self-regulation through example. The child learns how to regulate emotions, control, and cognition through watching how peers and adults react during various situations. If the other children and adults overreact, become emotional, and/or lose control of their body (on a regular basis), then the child will see that this is the appropriate reaction. If the child sees others self-regulate in a calm, collected manner, the child is then able to self-regulate in the same way. "Self-regulated behaviors thus include delaying gratification, being able to rapidly switch between different tasks, focusing attention and controlling one's emotions" (Bodrova & Leong, p. 33, 2006). By having a child watch how others self-regulate in a positive manner, it helps set the child up for success for life.

## **Yoga**

According to White (2009), "The goal of yoga was originally to provide a guide for wholeness, happiness, and well-being" (p. 277). Yoga can be thought of from a religious standpoint. It is also a tool that helps connect the mind and the body to help refocus an individual. It has become increasingly more popular, especially with children in schools. Some high schools have a yoga program for students to partake in (White, 2009). Schools are offering yoga to students to aid in stress management, well being, and behavior (White, 2009). The focus and main goal of yoga is not about perfection but the connection between postures and breathing (White, 2009).

Yoga for young children is a newer phenomenon. “The effects of yoga in children remain unsupported due to small sample sizes, inconsistent intervention description, varying outcome measures, and low power” (White, p. 279, 2009). This makes it challenging to see if there are any effects of yoga to help children calm before resting. However, it has been shown that through yoga, children can learn how to “control impulses, multitask, follow directions, and focus” (Danahy, p.9, 2015). With more research being done in this field, yoga is something that may be found in more school settings and for all ages in the near future.

Yoga needs to be completed in a calming atmosphere to aid in the child’s focus on the poses and breathing. In a chaotic environment or the child’s working environment, the child may be distracted and not have attention on what the child’s body should be doing (White, 2009). The lights should be dimmed with quiet music or calming sounds in the background (White, 2009). Children should also be reminded that yoga is not something that is competitive (White, 2009). It is something each child does at its own pace and ability. The beauty of yoga is each pose is different and unique. Each child making the poses can make the poses unique to the child’s own body and specialized to what the child needs. While the child is in a pose, the child should be reminded to continue to breathe at a regular pace (White, 2009). Having a child breathing too quickly or forget to breathe can be harmful.

To make yoga more restful, it is best not to introduce children to animal poses. Some poses can help calm children down while the same pose might make a child more energized (Danahy, 2015). When looking at poses to select, it is best to look at the classroom as a whole as well as each child’s individual needs (Danahy, 2015). Poses

before naptime should be calming and relaxing in order to aid the child's learning of self-regulation to calm down before nap. However, all poses are not going to work for the entire classroom. When poses do not work for a particular child or group of children, it is best to look at why the poses do not work and select new poses based on what is going well with the other poses. Animal poses can be useful in helping the child identify with what position the child should be making. However, with an animal pose, the child may feel compelled to make the noise of the animal. This is distracting the child away from the main goal of doing yoga (Rosanova, 2004). Rosanova states (2004), "Performance art is a wonderful thing, but in a Montessori environment, 'performance yoga' is a distraction that hinders the very real contribution to children's development of yogic practice offers" (p. 40).

Mindfulness practices can have a positive effect on further developing self-regulation among children (Razza, Bergen-Cico, Raymond, 2013). An example of a mindfulness practice is yoga. When children are self-regulated, they are able to control or inhibit impulses (Razza, Bergen-Cico, Raymond, 2013). This is due to children being able to be fully aware of their mind and body. When teachers are aware and trained in yoga practices, they can implement strategies to fit the needs of the children to support self-regulation development (Razza, Bergen-Cico, Raymond, 2013). Over time, this can be a natural practice in the classroom as well as support young children as they learn to self-regulate. When a child becomes more aware of its mind and body, the child can use the yoga practices taught in order to self-regulate in various situations.

## **Conclusion**

“When children are more self-aware, they can better regulate their feelings and reactions” (Danahy, p. 11, 2015). Yoga is a tool that can help children learn how to self-regulate. Having yoga before naptime is a clear routine for the child and is something the child can expect on a daily basis. The children participating in yoga know naptime is soon approaching because yoga is the transitional activity. When the yoga period ends, it is clear to the children it is naptime. The teacher models the yoga poses in a calm manner and models how to regulate the teacher’s body to the children who are participating. Depending on what poses are selected, yoga can aid a child in calming down during the naptime transition period, preparing the child for a period of rest. The mind-body connection of yoga helps the child become more self-aware of how its body and what the child needs to do to regulate emotions. When the child’s body and mind are calm, the child is under more self-control and has the ability to function at a higher level (Danahy, 2015). With all of this in mind, the child has the ability to relax and calm before a period of restfulness. Through this, it is best to keep the child in mind and follow the child’s individual needs. As a teacher, it is best to be aware of the surroundings, what is and is not working, and continue to adjust until a routine works for all children involved to help through the transition.

### **Methodology**

Yoga was performed before naptime for eight weeks. In the eight-week period, it was broken up into two different phases. The first four weeks, yoga was performed in the classroom before transitioning into the nap room. For the last four weeks, yoga was performed in the nap room. I did this to see if there was a difference between the atmospheres and how the children responded to yoga. I also made the switch because

yoga in the classroom did not seem to be working. The children seemed calmed and settled in the classroom while the yoga was happening. The transition down the hallway and into the nap room became chaotic, making the children unsettled. I made the decision to switch locations of where the yoga happened to see if it would help the children continue to settle after the yoga was completed. Thirteen children from the classroom napped on a daily basis. The number of children who participated on a daily basis fluctuated based on interest and attendance.

In the classroom, the children finished their work, got ready and played outside, and came inside to eat lunch. The children cleanup when lunchtime is completed. The non-napping children help restore the room back to order by sweeping and cleaning tables and chairs. The napping children use the bathroom and select a book from the library to sit and read on the carpet while waiting for the rest of the children to clean up. During the first phase of this process, once all of the children had gathered with a book on the carpet, I would collect the books from the children and start doing the five-minute yoga routine. The children would have the option to either follow along with the yoga poses or sit quietly on the carpet and watch. My voice was at a normal tone. I wanted it to be softer, however there was a lot of background noise. I wanted the children to focus on my words and movements and not on what was going on around them. A child would be excused from the yoga session if the child was being too disruptive or distracting and given a handful of reminders (4-5 reminders) during the yoga session. The child would be asked to sit at an assigned table if this happened. Other children and adults would be moving around in the background to restore the classroom back to order for the afternoon work time. After we finished our five minutes of yoga, I would call each child by name

to line up at the door. We would transition down the hallway, into the nap room. The children would enter a dark room with a sound machine on and lie down to sleep.

During the second phase, I would collect the books once all of the children were ready on the carpet, have the children line up at the door, and we would transition down the hallway into the nap room. Once in the nap room, the children were told to stand in front of their cot to perform the yoga poses. There would be one light on while the rest of the room was dark, and the sound machine would be playing in the background. Once each child was at their cot, each child had a choice to participate by standing in front of their cot or lie down on their cot and not participate. I tried to keep my voice as soft as possible. I wanted the children to really focus on what I was saying and not have my voice be a distraction. If I were too loud, I felt it would not feel as calming to the children. When a child was disruptive or distracting after several reminders (4-5 reminders) given, the child would either be asked to lie down on the cot or be removed from the nap room until the yoga session finished. After the five-minute session was over, children would lie down on their cots, I would cover them up, and then I would turn the light off to initiate naptime. I would invite the children to breathe in and out with me while I covered up all of the children. The children would be asked to close their eyes when I would turn off the light. I would continue to invite the children to breathe in and out with me two more times after I turned the light off.

I was careful in my yoga pose selection (see Appendix A for an example). As stated in the Literature Review, I did not want to choose any animal poses because I wanted this to be a calming exercise. Animal poses can be fun, engaging, and an easy way for children to remember the poses. However, I did not feel animal poses would be

a good way for the children to calm their bodies down after being highly stimulated during the lunch cleanup process. I also did not choose poses that were very challenging because I wanted the focus to be on calming and not trying to master difficult poses. I also personally felt any yoga poses with children standing on one leg would not be a good idea for this particular purpose. In my previous experience, when children have a yoga pose where they stand on one leg, they can fall over and make it a silly experience, rather than a calming one.

I looked online to find various yoga poses. A colleague of mine had suggested a book, *Good Night Yoga: A Pose-by-Pose Bedtime Story* by Mariam Gates. I looked through the book to see what yoga poses were used. I did not use the specific book during the yoga session. I did use some of the poses from the book as well as other yoga poses I found online. I decided I would use ten yoga poses for a week. We repeated each pose three times within the session. After a week, I would evaluate how the yoga poses went. If I felt a particular yoga pose went well, I would keep it. If I felt the children seemed distracted or became silly by a particular yoga pose multiple times during the week, I would get rid of the pose and find a new pose to put in its place. After the first two weeks of yoga, I found the children responded better to the poses that were sitting and lying down compared to the poses that involved standing. The routine consisted of three standing poses, six poses sitting down, and one pose lying down. The routine stayed the same from week three onward. I was telling the children to breathe in and out during each pose.

I used four different tools to collect data during this process: yoga grading scale, sleep time record, naptime tally marks, and daily reflection journal. The yoga grading

scale was used every day after each yoga session (see Appendix B). The yoga session was graded on a one-five scale on how I felt the overall yoga session went. I circled a one if I felt the yoga session went poorly. I circled a two if the session went below average. I circled a three if the yoga session felt average. I circled a four if the session felt above average. I circled a five if I felt the yoga session went great. When the session was completed, I would circle a number and jot down any quick notes I had about the session. I would write down if a child decided not to participate in the session, if a particular yoga pose felt distracting, if a child was excused from the yoga session from being too silly, or anything else I felt I needed to remember explicitly from the session.

The sleep time record was also used daily (see Appendix C). Every day, I would record when the children entered into the nap room and what time each child fell asleep. I did this to see if there would be an increase, decrease, or no change over the course of the eight week period of the length of time it took each child to fall asleep. If the child did not nap that day, I would write NS, which stood for no sleep. During the first four weeks, yoga had been done in the classroom. The time I recorded was the time the child entered the nap room, after transitioning down the hallway. The child then laid down and began to rest. I would then record what time I saw the child fall asleep. During the second half of the eight-week period, we did the yoga session after transitioning into the nap room. I would write down the time we finished the yoga process and the children would lie down, which was five minutes after first entering the nap room. When I saw the child fall asleep, I would record the time. After thirty minutes of resting, if the child was not asleep, the child was invited to go back to the classroom to be part of the afternoon work.

In Appendix D, the naptime tally marks sheet can be found. I would give a child a tally mark when they would make a disruptive noise or movement while in the nap room. Disruptive noise or movement consisted of screaming, singing, talking to self, jumping on the cot, running around the nap room, and/or clapping. A child would receive a tally mark each time a disruptive noise or movement was made. If a child were moving on the cot to try to get comfortable, I would not give the child a tally mark because the child is preparing the body for sleep and not disrupting others.

When all of the children fell asleep, I would write in the daily reflection journal, found in Appendix E. I would review the entire yoga and naptime process. I would honestly write about how I felt the yoga session went. This section would be more detailed documentation compared to the yoga grading scale. I would write about if the poses seemed distracting or successful. If a pose were distracting, I would elaborate why. I would do this to help the review process at the end of the week. If I only wrote the pose was distracting one time, I would keep the pose because it could have been a fluke on a particular day. If poses had been distracting on multiple days, it would help me decide to eliminate the pose and find a new pose in its replacement. I next would look at if I had to give a lot of reminders to children to follow along to the yoga or not. If a child was given too many reminders, the child would be excused from the yoga session, and I would take note of that in this portion of the journal. I also reflected on how naptime went. I would record how the transition down the hallway and into the nap room went. If children were noisy and the transition did not go well, I thought it might affect when children fell asleep. I would write if the children seemed settled or unsettled when lying down and how long it would take for the children to settle down. The last item I would record in

my reflection was if there was any outside factors in the daily routine. Some outside factors could include a two-hour delay, substitutes in the classroom, fire drill, or indoor recess.

The four data tools were used on a daily basis during the eight week period to see if yoga before naptime can be a transitional activity to help children learn how to self-calm before naptime.

### **Analysis of Data**

The data was collected for eight weeks. The first four weeks the data was collected, the children performed yoga in the classroom before transitioning into the nap room. The second four weeks, the children performed yoga in the nap room, after the transition from the classroom had already occurred. The data analyzed is broken up into two segments: the first four weeks of yoga in the classroom and the second four weeks of yoga in the nap room. I wanted to see if one of the locations was more, less, or had the same level of effectiveness as well as if yoga before nap was effective overall or not.

I first analyzed the rating scale. I wanted to see if one of the locations overall felt better for the participants while the yoga was happening. Having the yoga session in two different locations was not the original intent of the research. However, having the yoga session in the classroom did not feel very successful. I was often leaving the process frustrated because it was hard to get the children to focus on the yoga session because there were so many other distractions happening. After changing to having the yoga session in the nap room, the yoga session seemed better for the participants.

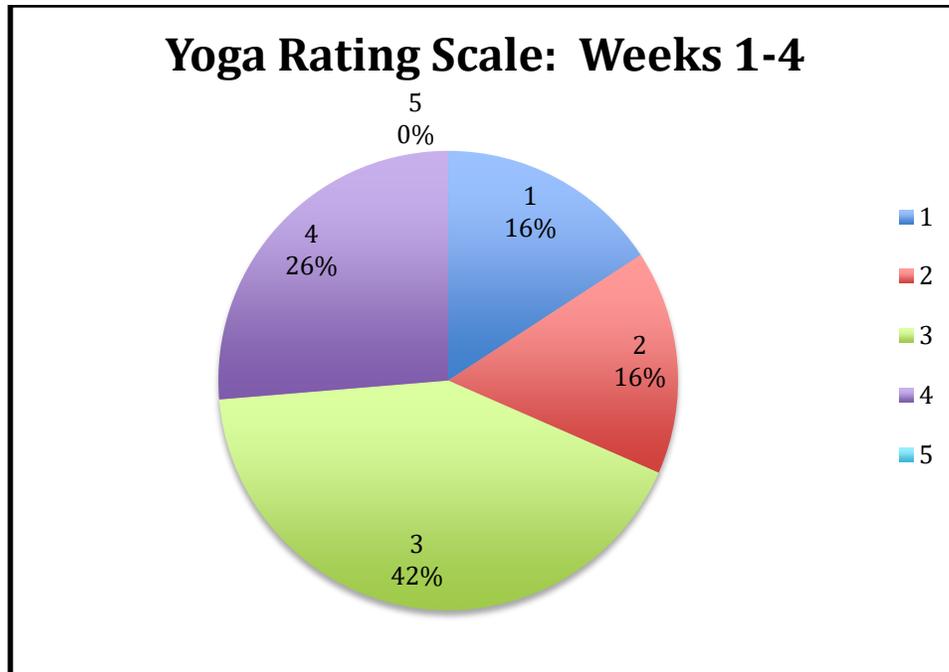


Figure 1.1 displays the percentage of how each yoga session was rated over the 19-day period.

During the first four-weeks, I rated how I felt each yoga session went right after the yoga session happened. Over this four-week stretch, we had school for nineteen out of twenty possible days. The pie chart displays a three was rated the most. A three on the yoga grading scale means the children somewhat followed along to the yoga session. A one meant the children did not follow along at all. A five meant the children followed along well. During the entire four-week process, there was not a five. This means the children did not follow along to the yoga session well.

The children were able to choose where they wanted to stand or sit during the yoga session. Looking back at my notes from the yoga rating scale and my journal, an average of two children per session had to be removed from the yoga session over the course of the nineteen-day period. The children that were removed were given more than four reminders to follow along in the yoga session. In my notes, I was always giving

reminders to children to follow along to the yoga session or for those not participating to sit patiently and not bother the children who were participating. Each time I had to stop to redirect a child, it would take time away from the calming yoga experience. By the time I would start the yoga session back up, I would have to redirect another child. It was a continuous cycle that sometimes would not stop. If a child was removed from the yoga session, the child was asked to sit at a table. The table would often be near the yoga session. There were 30 instances where children were removed from the yoga session over the four-week period. Sometimes, the child would continue distracting the yoga session.

I was also adjusting the yoga routine during this four-week period. In my notes I stated the children more freely participated in any yoga poses that were sitting or lying down. I would start with standing poses. Some children opted to sit out at the beginning. However, as the yoga session continued and we moved to poses sitting down, more children would join in. I noticed this pattern and altered my yoga session to only having two standing poses, and the rest of the poses sitting or laying down. Once this change was made, I started to notice more success with the poses and how yoga session went overall. I also saw this on the rating scale. I rated yoga sessions higher than a one after the change was made.

As I looked over my reflection journal, I noticed it was a challenge to get the yoga session started when it was in the classroom. On a few occasions, I have written down children were distracted by materials on the shelves, other children on the carpet participating in yoga, or other children in the background cleaning up. These distractions

also lead to more reminders to children about staying on task with the yoga session at hand.

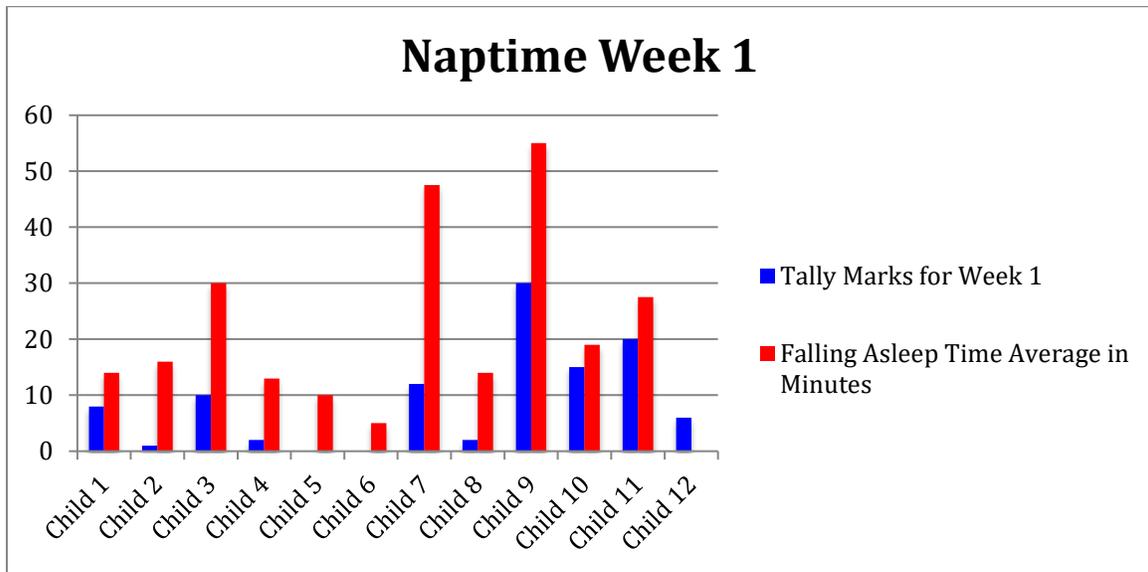


Figure 2.1 shows the data of the participating children during the first week of having yoga before naptime in the classroom. If the child does not have a bar, it means the child was absent, did not have any tally marks, or did not fall asleep.

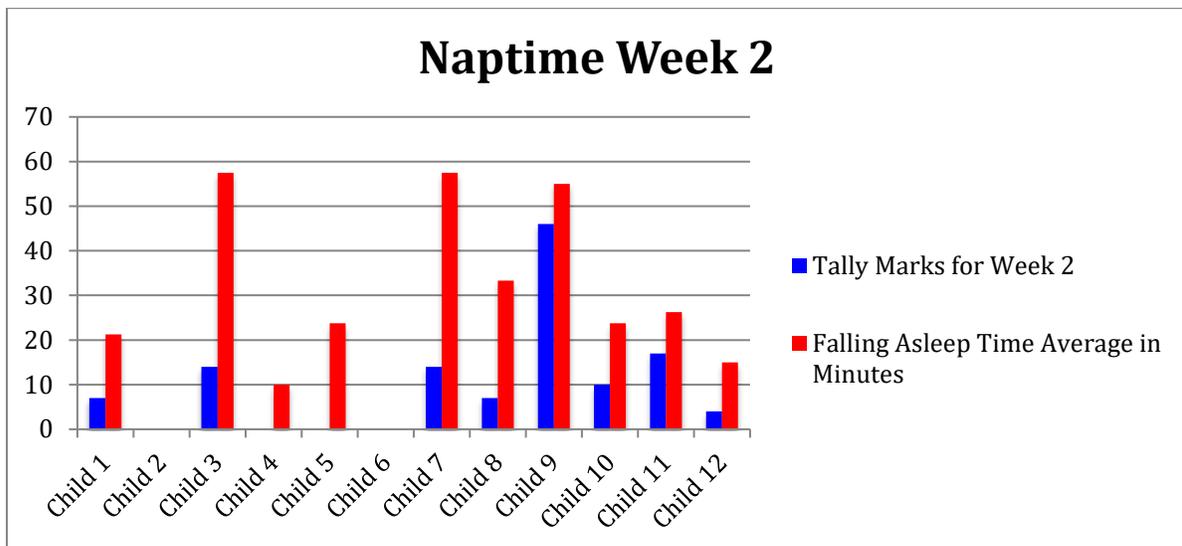


Figure 2.2 shows the data of the participating children during the second week of having yoga before naptime in the classroom. If the child does not have a bar, it means the child was absent, did not have any tally marks, or did not fall asleep.

Note: this was a four-day school week

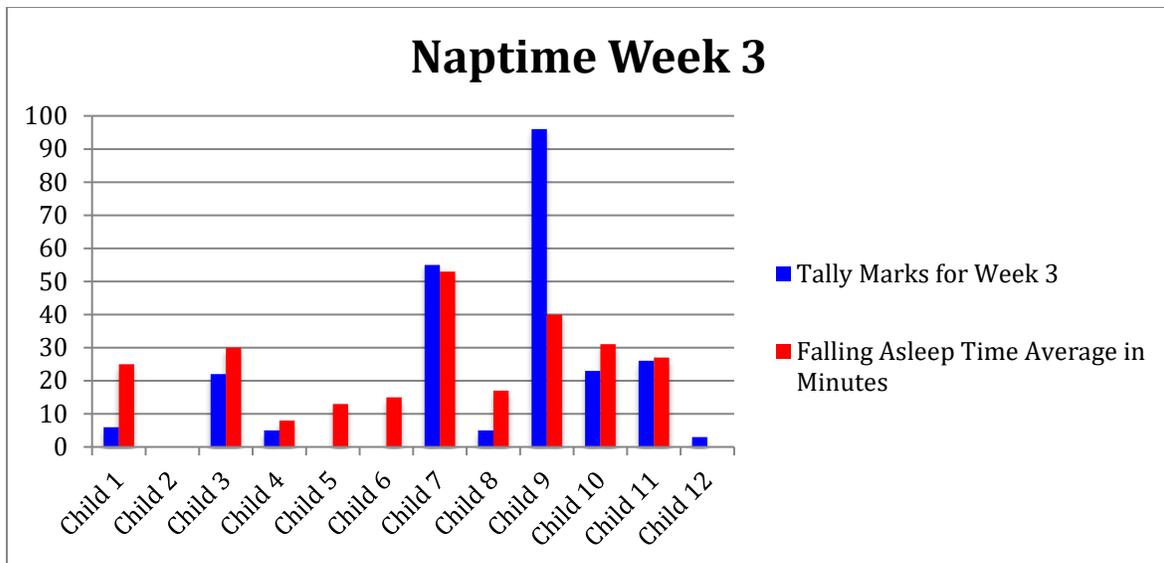


Figure 2.3 shows the data of the participating children during the third week of having yoga before naptime in the classroom. If the child does not have a bar, it means the child was absent, did not have any tally marks, or did not fall asleep.

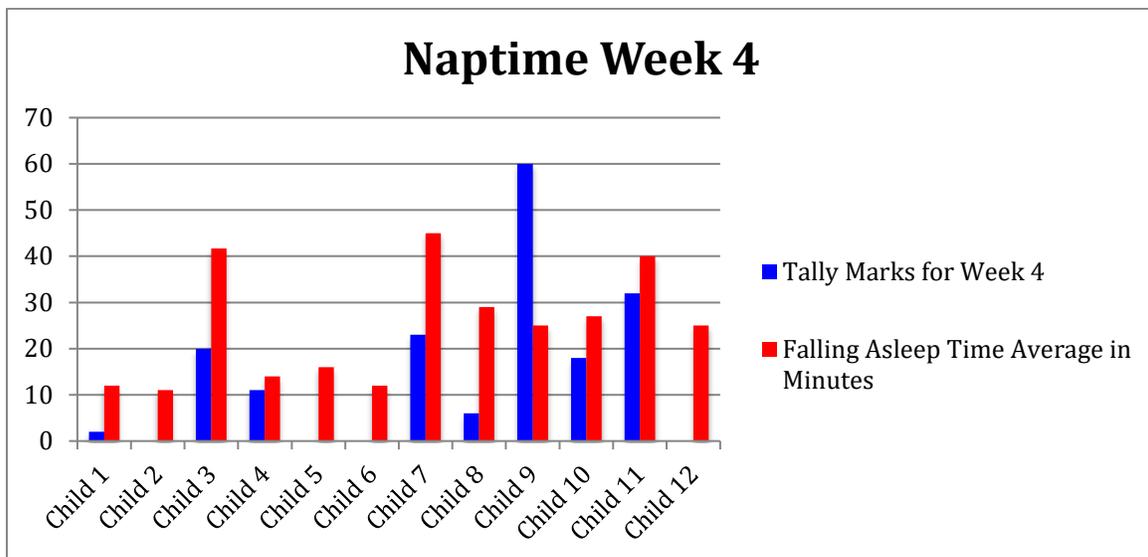


Figure 2.4 shows the data of the participating children during the fourth week of having yoga before naptime in the classroom. If the child does not have a bar, it means the child was absent, did not have any tally marks, or did not fall asleep.

Looking at the four charts for the first half of the yoga series, the number of tally marks somewhat correlate to the average time it took the particular child to fall asleep. The less (or not any tally marks), the faster the child was able to fall asleep. The more tally marks, the longer it took the child to fall asleep. I also noticed in my notes, there

were many instances where children did not fall asleep. A child may have had a lot of tally marks during that day and did not fall asleep during the thirty minute window the child was in the nap room. Some children who had a lot of tally marks were occasionally removed from the nap room for up to ten minutes to help the rest of the children settle down and relax before having the child brought back into the nap room to try to rest again.

My daily reflective journal stated many times how naptime did not go well. I noted there were many instances of playful screaming, singing, talking, and/or kicking going on by various children. It often took anywhere from five to fifteen minutes in the nap room for the children to settle down and begin to rest on the cot. Another factor was the transition from the classroom to the nap room. The yoga session could have gone okay, but the transition may not have been smooth, making the children unsettled again and some time for the children to calm and settle down in the nap room. There were also times when the transition down the hall went well, but as soon as the children entered the nap room, they would become unsettled and playful. During this four-week period, there were twenty-four times when an outside factor was present. Outside factors included a child from another classroom joining the yoga session, substitutes, indoor or no recess, observer in the classroom, and fire drill. Regardless if there were outside factors present or not in the day (meaning no substitutes and outdoor recess) the children were still unsettled. Having a typical day did not change how the children performed in the yoga session.

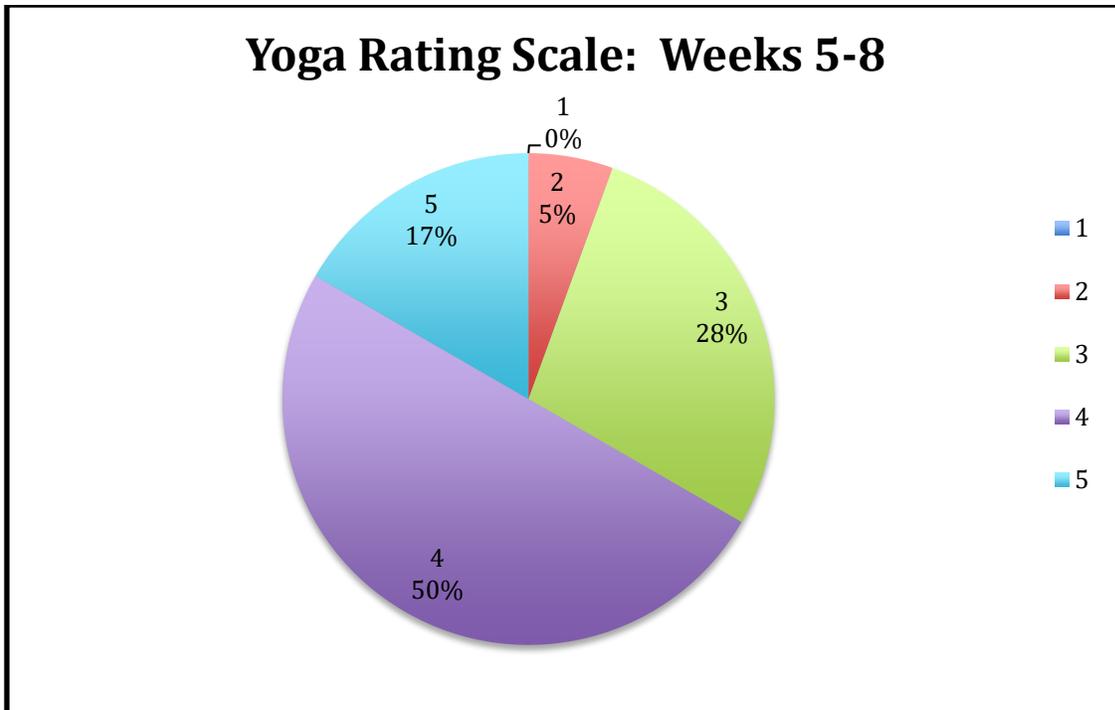


Figure 1.2 displays the percentage of how each yoga session was rated over the 18-day period.

In the second phase of the research, yoga was performed in the nap room. This means, the children finished and cleaned up from lunch, used the bathroom, read books on the carpet while waiting, and then transitioned down the hallway and into the nap room. The mood was much different in the nap room compared to the classroom. In the nap room, only one light was on while the sounds of waves crashing on the shoreline played in the background on the sound machine. Children had a designated spot to stand (in front of their cot) instead of standing next to whomever they wanted to in the classroom.

During the last four weeks of yoga, I again rated how I felt each yoga session went on the yoga grading scale right after the session had ended. Over the four-week stretch, we had school eighteen out of twenty possible days. This time around, a four was rated for half of the yoga sessions. This means the children generally followed along to

the yoga session. Throughout this period of yoga in the nap room, there was never a rating of one given to the yoga session. This means for the majority of the sessions, children had some degree of following along.

By this point in the research process, I had a set yoga routine set for each session. I had found yoga poses that fit the needs of the children the majority of the time. If a child was not interested in participating in yoga during the session, the child was asked to quietly lie on the cot. If a child was given at least four reminders to follow along, the child was either asked to lie on the cot or moved into the nap room next door. The notes on my yoga grading scale form indicate the children followed along to the yoga session fairly well during four out of the five yoga sessions in a week. This indicates to me having yoga in the nap room was a better option to help the children relax before nap. Many of my notes on this form during weeks five through eight were fairly positive, as well as how I graded the yoga sessions. Having yoga in the nap room felt more natural and felt similar to a yoga studio. As the adult leading the yoga sessions, the tone of the session felt more peaceful and less chaotic compared to in the classroom. The figure 1.2 also demonstrates a higher percentage of the higher scores compared to figure 1.1.

As I reflect on my daily reflective journal, I noticed I only had to give a few reminders to children to follow along and not many children were asked to leave the session. Over the eighteen-day period, only four children were removed from the yoga session. This is drastically lower compared to the first four weeks. Since a child was removed from the room, the child was not able to continue to be a distraction to the rest of the children.

In the nap room, it was easier for me to get the yoga session started. I was able to begin as soon as the children were standing in front of their cot. I did not have to wait for children to finish cleaning up and join the session. I ended the yoga session with children doing three deep breaths on their cot with their eyes closed. I would turn off the light and complete one more deep breath to end the yoga session. Some children were slightly disruptive when the light was initially turned off but then settled back down for the period of rest. As the adult guiding the yoga session, it felt more natural to have the children end the yoga session on their cot and have the nap process begin immediately afterwards. It also seemed more successful to the children.

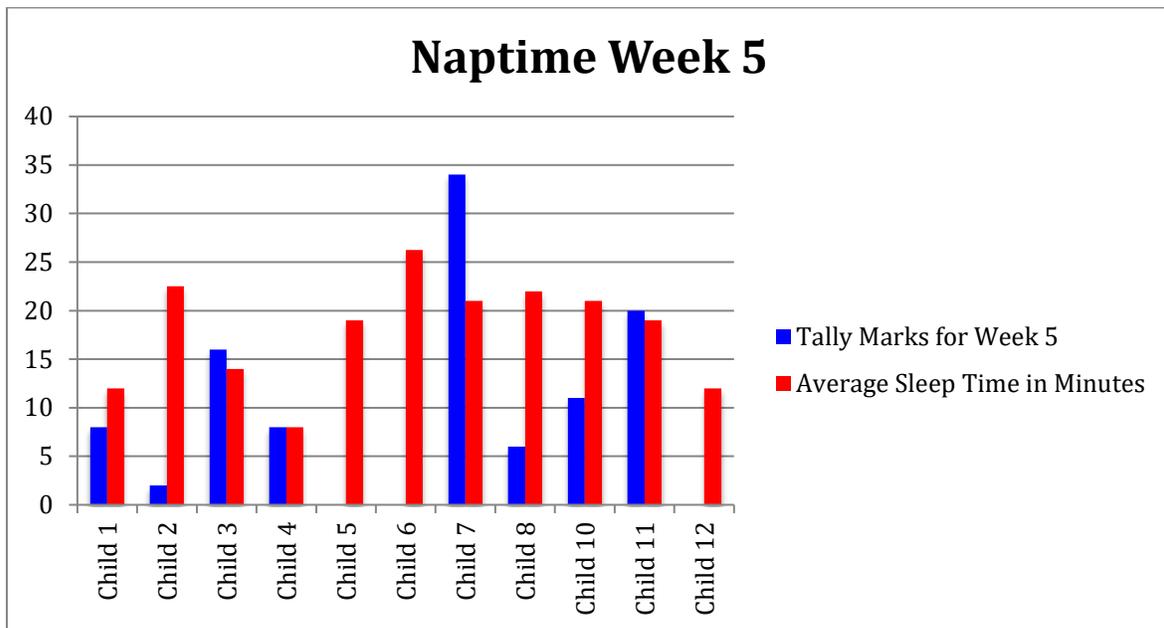


Figure 2.5 shows the data of the participating children during the fifth week of having yoga before naptime in the nap room. If the child does not have a bar, it means the child was absent, did not have any tally marks, or did not fall asleep. Note: one child stopped participating due change in schedule

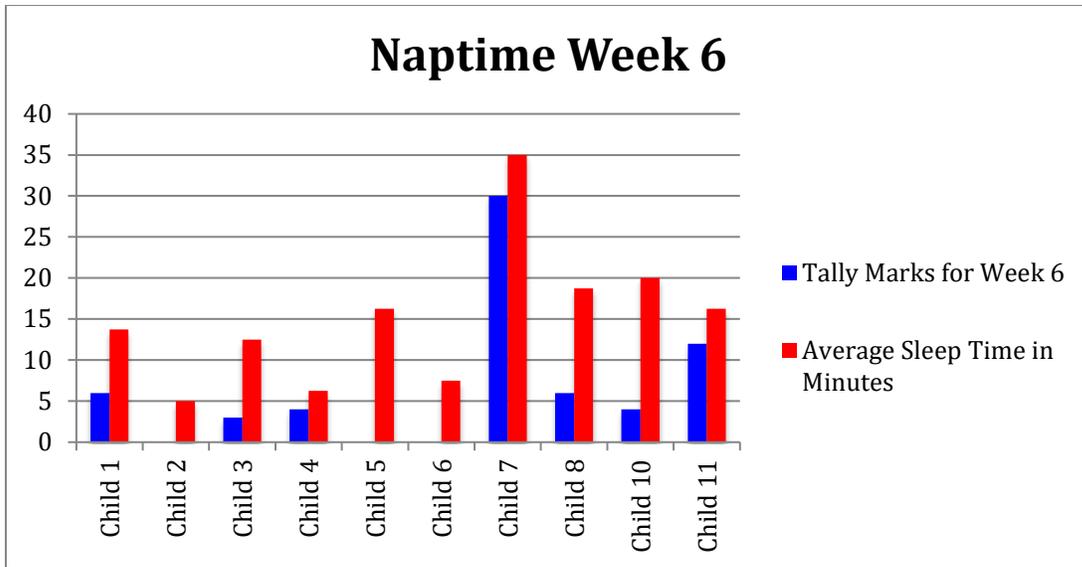


Figure 2.6 shows the data of the participating children during the sixth week of having yoga before naptime in the nap room. If the child does not have a bar, it means the child was absent, did not have any tally marks, or did not fall asleep.

Note: one child stopped participating due change in schedule

Note: this was only a four-day school week

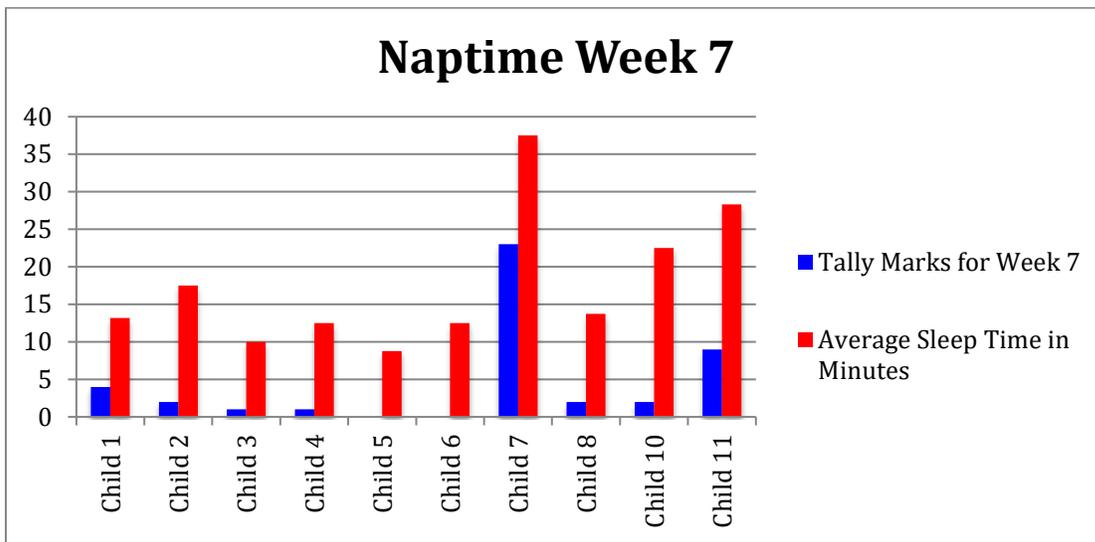


Figure 2.7 shows the data of the participating children during the seventh week of having yoga before naptime in the nap room. If the child does not have a bar, it means the child was absent, did not have any tally marks, or did not fall asleep.

Note: this was only a four-day school week

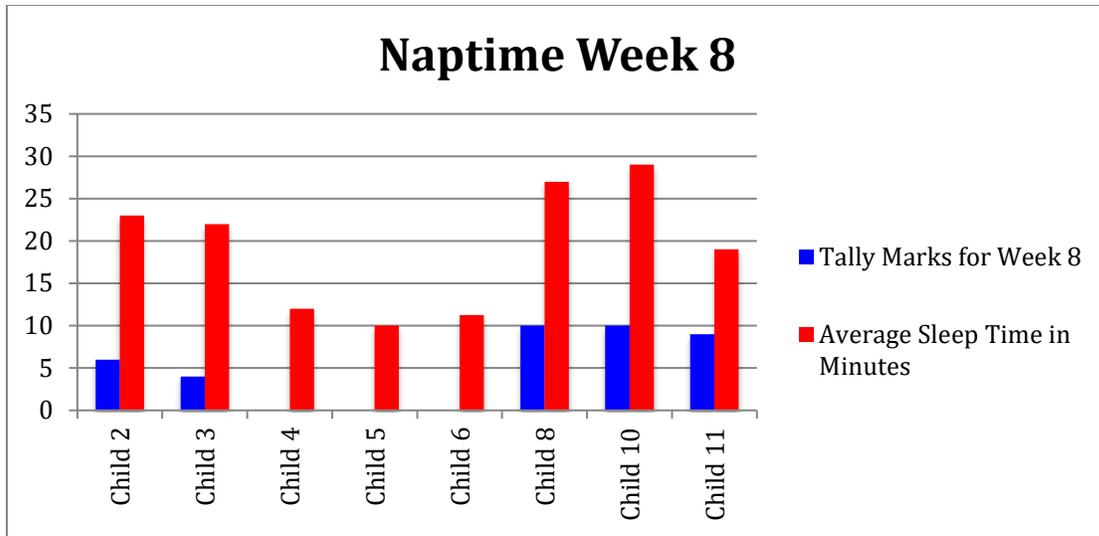


Figure 2.8 shows the data of the participating children during the eighth week of having yoga before naptime in the nap room. If the child does not have a bar, it means the child was absent, did not have any tally marks, or did not fall asleep.  
 Note: two children stopped participating due change in schedule

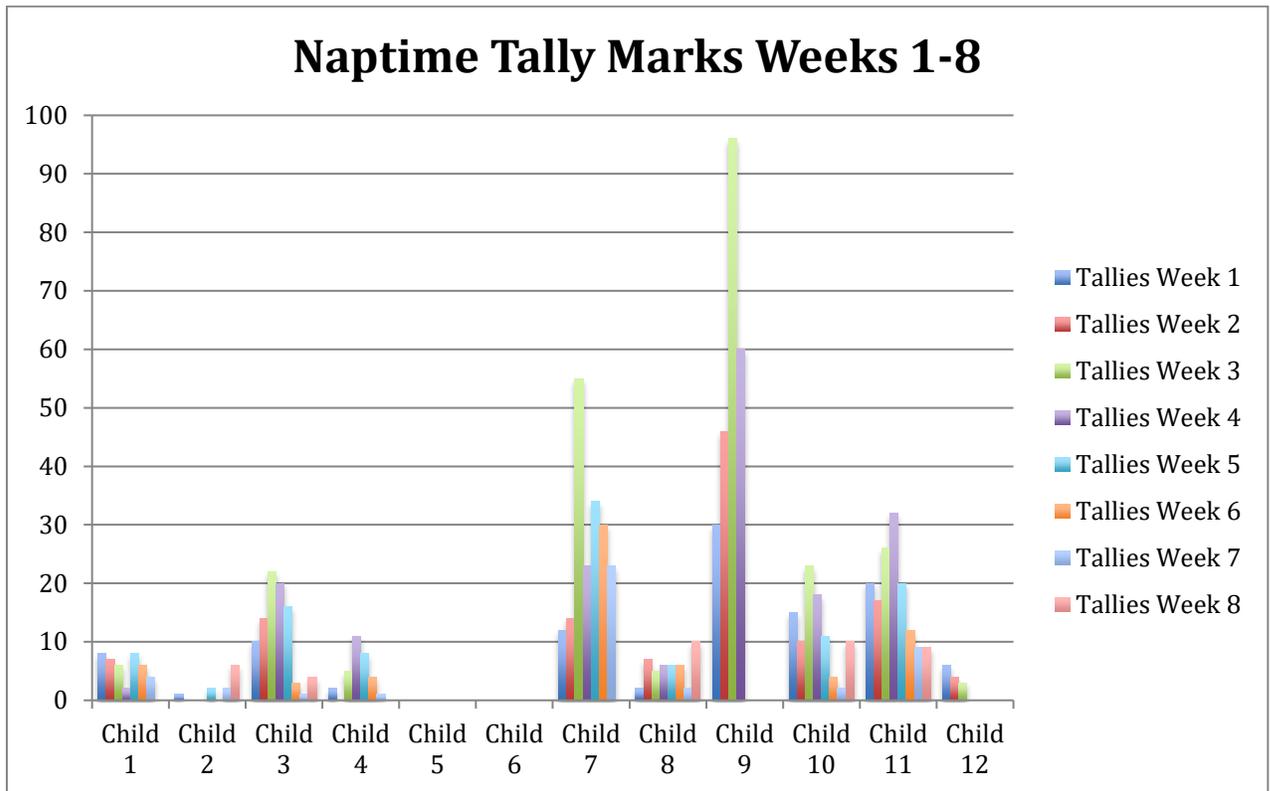


Figure 3.0 Displays all of the tally marks each child received over the eight-week period.

As the weeks progressed, fewer children participated due to changes in schedule. In the first four weeks of the research, all twelve children participated almost on a daily basis (due to attendance and interest in the yoga session). During the very last week, only eight children were actively participating. During the last four weeks, there are significantly less tally marks (see Figure 2.9). Looking back in my daily reflective journal, children seemed to be more settled and settled down on their cots within the first five minutes of the yoga session ending. This is an improvement compared to the first four weeks where it could take up to fifteen minutes for the children to settle down. Children fell asleep slightly faster during the second half of the research compared to the first half. On average, it took less than forty minutes for the all of the participating children to fall asleep.

In the second half of the yoga session, there were also fourteen instances of outside factors that occurred. These outside factors included indoor recess, an observer for an entire week, and a substitute. Even with the same amount of outside factors as the first half, the children were much more settled and calm after the yoga session was completed. I noticed I wrote down in my daily reflective journal that naptime did go well most of the days. The most disruptive behavior happened right after the light had been shut off and it was officially time for rest. Otherwise, the nap room was fairly quiet and calm.

Overall, my research shows having yoga before naptime in the napping space is a success. It helps the children prepare for a period of rest, by being in a dimly lit environment, calming sounds coming from a machine, and very little outside distractions. However, it does not answer my question of is yoga a way for children to help self-calm

before naptime. With having fewer children participate in the second phase of yoga, it is hard to concretely say if yoga was a success or not. The success of the second phase could have been contributed to the environment, the yoga, the fewer children participating, or a combination.

As stated in the literature review, transitions can be challenging for children. Having the transition right after the calming activity ended contributed in the children being stimulated, causing the children to be unsettled in the nap room. In the second phase of the research, the children ended yoga right on their cot, making the transition from the end of yoga into naptime smoother.

### **Action Plan**

From the very beginning, I was not sure what my results would look like. I knew working with children the results could potentially be inconsistent. I was positive and hopeful from the beginning that yoga would be a success as a calming tool before nap. As the weeks progressed, the yoga sessions became more successful, and the children and I were really enjoying them. It was a new way to connect with the children. Instead of the hustle and bustle of the day, it was nice to be able to calm down and relax with the children. It felt very refreshing in the middle of the day.

Overall, I was excited to partake in this research. In my career thus far, naptime has always interested me. I have always been interested in why it takes some children longer to settle and fall asleep than others, why some children need adult assistance in falling asleep (rubbing back, laying next to child, etc.), and why some children seem to have a lot of energy before naptime. We know it is best for young, developing children to nap. However, what is really best to help children transition into naptime? The intent

of my research was to investigate the effects of yoga on the nap transition. After changes throughout the eight-week process, the data showed I was able to find yoga a success in helping children calm down before nap.

There potentially is a better way to conduct yoga. This could mean changes in the environment, the amount of children and adults in the yoga session, and/or yoga poses. I made changes and adaptations throughout the research process based off of the needs of the children. I saw through the children there was more of a need for seated and lying down poses, so I incorporated more in the yoga routine. I saw a need for a quieter and less distracting environment, which is why I moved the yoga session into the nap room. Even though I was following the needs of the children, there could have something I was missing in the yoga session. When I do this research again, I would like to conduct more research on ideal environment settings for yoga and the benefits of poses that are sitting or lying down in relation to relaxation.

Now looking back at my research, there are a couple of approaches I would do differently. First, I would like to have the nap room set up like a yoga studio. The children's cots would still have to be set up to make the transition into naptime smoother. I would like to have dim lights and some sort of calming sounds in the background. When the children would walk into the nap room, the lights would be all the way off. For the second phase of the yoga session, I would have to come in with the children and turn one panel of lights on so we could see what we were doing. The one light panel was very bright. The other set of lights have a dimming switch. Next time, I would have the lights on the dimmest setting for when the children walk in, having it ready for the yoga session. I would also like to do future research to see what sounds and/or music are the

most calming for the children to listen to while relaxing. I used ocean waves crashing on the shore for my sound since it is the sound we have been using in the nap room all school year, but it may not have been the most relaxing. We also used the same sound during naptime. I am curious to see if using one set of sounds during the yoga session and a different set when it came to be time for nap.

I am curious to see the effects of either have a smaller group of children during the yoga session or having another adult help guide the yoga session. Each time I had to stop to redirect a behavior, I felt it took away from the yoga session. I am hoping with a smaller group of children, there would be a smaller chance of challenging behaviors happening since there would be less children present to be distracted. Or, if I have another large group of napping children, it would help to have another adult present to support the session. If a child was being disruptive during the yoga session, the other adult could help the child by redirecting the child's focus to the yoga session. I could then keep the yoga session going, making it feel smoother for the other children participating.

Through the results of my literature review, it stated animal poses were not best used for calming yoga because it could stimulate the child to act like an animal. I specifically chose not to use animal poses for this reason. While looking up yoga poses, the majority of yoga poses suited for young children are animal poses. I would be interested to see if doing the animal yoga poses without calling the poses by the animal name would still be calming or not. For example, cat and cow poses are very popular in yoga. Cat pose is when you are on your hands and knees and you round your back. Cow pose is when you are on your hands and knees and you arch your back. While partaking

in the cat and cow poses, they do not completely resemble the animals after the poses were named. I am curious if I could either find or come up with a different name for those poses if they would work with children before naptime or be too stimulating.

I would also like to look into why the sitting and laying down poses were more successful compared to the poses standing up. A colleague of mine recommended starting with standing poses, move to sitting, and then laying down. I followed this advice while conducting the yoga session. As the sessions continued, the children did not respond well to the standing poses. After three weeks of adaptations, I had only two standing poses in the yoga session. I would like to continue researching this concept to see why this is the case.

I hope one day in the future naptime has more information about how to best suit the child's needs. I know naptime is something that will never be streamlined or one right answer because all children are different and they all have different needs when it comes to sleeping. However, I hope one day there is more information to better help and suit children during naptime while at school. This is part of the day where the children are supposed to recharge for the rest of the day. I know from personal experiences it can be hard to relax and recharge when I am over stimulated or in an environment that is not relaxing to me.

As I continue my work with early childhood education, I hope to continue to research to find more answers about naptime and suiting the needs of children. As I work in the environment, I always try to suit the needs of the children to give them the best schooling experience possible. Yoga may not have best suited the needs of all of the napping children. However, I wish to continue to either find poses to captivate all

children or find something else to suit the needs of all of the napping children. This may mean reading a story, using essential oils, listening to music, or something else I have not discovered. Each day, we strive to serve the needs of the child. Why is the same not true about when the children rest at nap?

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## Appendix A

Here is a list of poses used in the first week of yoga to test out how the children would respond to the yoga poses. Poses were then altered afterwards to respond to the needs of the children I was working with.

Each pose is repeated three times, containing three deep breaths before moving onto the next pose.

1. Upward salute
2. Extended mountain pose
3. Crescent moon pose
4. Star pose
5. Standing forward fold
6. Kneeling pose
7. Hero pose
8. Child's pose
9. Corpse pose (with eyes closed; optional)
10. Easy pose (with eyes closed; optional)

Poses were sourced from:

Kids Yoga Stories- <https://www.kidsyogastories.com/kids-yoga-poses/>  
*Good Night Yoga: A Pose-by-Pose Bedtime Story* by Mariam Gates-  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4IfjNAXGPzA>

Appendix B

Yoga Grading Scale

Each yoga session will be rated each day on a scale from 1-5 to see how well the children listened to directions and followed along with the poses and breathing done. Any items that feel note worthy will be added to the notes session (if lots of children were not following along, other distractions from children not participating in yoga, if a child did not participate in the session, etc.)

**Monday:**

1	2	3	4	5
Did not Follow along		Somewhat followed along		Followed along well

**Notes:**

**Tuesday:**

1	2	3	4	5
Did not Follow along		Somewhat followed along		Followed along well

**Notes:**

**Wednesday:**

1	2	3	4	5
Did not Follow along		Somewhat followed along		Followed along well

**Notes:**

**Thursday:**

1	2	3	4	5
Did not Follow along		Somewhat followed along		Followed along well

**Notes:**

**Friday:**

1	2	3	4	5
Did not Follow along		Somewhat followed along		Followed along well

**Notes:**



Appendix D

Naptime Tally Marks

Tally each time a child makes a disruptive noise (yelling, singing, loudly talking to self, etc.) and/or disruptive movement (kicking, not laying down, getting off of cot, etc.) while trying to calm down for nap.

Child's Name	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Child 1					
Child 2					
Child 3					
Child 4					
Child 5					
Child 6					
Child 7					
Child 8					
Child 9					
Child 10					

Appendix E

Daily Journal Reflection

How did yoga go today? Did the poses seem like they were successful or too distracting? Did you have to give a lot of reminders to children to follow along or were only a few reminders given? How did naptime go? Were children settled or were they very unsettled? Were there any outside factors that could make the children unsettled (fire drill, major change in routine, etc.)?