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Modeling Grace and Courtesy in a Montessori Classroom

and its Influence on Children’s Social Behavior

Submitted on December 16, 2019

in fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree

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Abstract

It has long been known that teachers have a large influence on students, however, little is known about the effect that teachers may have on students’ ability to develop positive social behaviors. Accordingly, there is a need to collect data regarding the effect that a teacher modeling grace and courtesy may have on how students interact with their peers and teachers. Therefore, the purpose of this action research is to analyze the effects of intentional teacher role modeling of grace and courtesy on children’s social behaviors. A classroom of 24 lower elementary, mixed age children from five to eight years old were observed for six weeks in the mornings of every school day to see if demonstrating and modeling grace and courtesy would affect children’s interactions with peers and teachers. An observation log for frequency-count was used to record negative instances of behaviors related to grace and courtesy. Results indicated a positive relationship between children’s social behaviors and teachers modelling grace and courtesy in the classroom. The two conclusions are that children were not sensitive regarding improvements in their social behaviors, and children can be influenced to exhibit positive social behaviors by teachers. Implications of this action research paper show that for children to learn positive social behaviors, teachers should be patient and consistent when modelling, reinforcing, and encouraging children to behave with grace and courtesy.

*Keywords:* Montessori, grace, courtesy, social behavior, model, role-model, children, teacher
It was the fifth month of the school year, the children in a lower elementary Montessori classroom were having a hard time respecting people and things. They used loud voices during the period where everyone was supposed to work quietly, rolled their eyes at others, and even hit others when frustrated. When children were done with materials, they did not return them back to their original designated spaces. Children also did not clean up after themselves.

There were three teachers in this classroom. One teacher tended to ask a child to put away the materials she took out for her and sometimes walked over children’s work rugs to go across the classroom. Another teacher tended to roll her eyes at her co-teachers when she disagreed with them and shout at the children when they were out of control. And the last teacher tended to avoid communicating with the teacher who rolled eyes at her.

According to Dr. Montessori, grace is when one spontaneously shows respect to things including the environment around them, such as using gentle and delicate movement and being responsible for keeping the environment orderly, quiet, and calm (1914). While courtesy is one with independence, good conduct, and moral and shows respect to people (1912). These teachers did not model grace and courtesy to the children and their co-teachers.

At the same time, in another lower elementary Montessori classroom, children were working independently with concentration. They talked with each other in soft indoor voices, used courteous language such as “please” and “thank you,” moved gracefully by walking respectfully around people and things. Moreover, they interrupted politely when drawing people’s attention for help, and made eye contact with the person they were having a conversation with as well as when they were called on.

There were also three teachers in this classroom. One teacher was sitting at a corner observing the class, and she would provide the children explicit guidance once she noticed that
they needed redirection or support. Another teacher was walking around the classroom gracefully assisting the children who needed help on their work. And the last teacher was giving a lesson for a small group of children. They communicated with the children and each other politely and respectfully. They were all modeling grace and courtesy to the children.

In the first classroom mentioned above, the teachers were not good role models for the children. It seemed they did not implement grace and courtesy education in their classroom. If the teachers had been modeling grace and courtesy to the children since the beginning, the children should be able to develop positive social behaviors and self-regulation by the fifth month of the school year. However, if the teachers were showing the children negative social behaviors, it would be hard for children to develop positive social behaviors in this kind of environment. In contrary, the latter classroom showed a peaceful and respectful atmosphere as an ideal Montessori classroom. The teachers stood out as good role models to the children by demonstrating and modeling grace and courtesy. This reflected on the children’s positive social behaviors.

Dr. Montessori stated, “The teachers’ appearance is the first step to gaining the child’s confidence and respect. The teacher should study her own movements, to make them as gentle and graceful as possible (1995, p. 277).” Specifically, Dr. Montessori used the term the absorbent mind to refer to the ways that young children learn about and adapt to the world around them. According to Dr. Montessori, when children are young, they have a special kind of sensitivity which allows them to absorb everything from the people who are in the environment around them (1995).

Therefore, Dr. Montessori integrated grace and courtesy education into her pedagogy. She believed that the children would develop positive social behavior and self-regulation when
The teachers provided them a peaceful and healthy community and modeled grace and courtesy to the children.

The purpose of this research was to analyze the effects of intentional teacher role-modeling of grace and courtesy on children’s social behaviors. Specific behaviors were demonstrated and modeled for the children. Then these behaviors were recorded over a six-week period to see if there was trend in the way the children interacted with their peers and teachers.

**Theoretical Framework**

Maria Montessori (1995) used the term *the absorbent mind* to refer to the ways that young children learn about and adapt to their world. When children are young, especially in the absorbent mind stage, they have a special kind of sensitivity, which leads them to absorb everything from people who are in the environment around them. According to Montessori, there are two absorbent mind stages: unconscious absorbent mind stage and conscious absorbent mind stage. Children from birth to age three absorb information unconsciously. For example, babies and toddlers can learn to use their hands without conscious effort. While children from three to around age six, they seek particular experiences consciously. They desire to accomplish tasks by themselves, such as balancing themselves on a line and refining their control of movement. They can still absorb information from the environment easily. They learn by watching and listening to how people interact and communicate. By observing and absorbing, children will learn to adapt themselves to life.

Albert Bandura (1977) proposed that people learned from one another through observation, imitation, and modeling. He named this theory *Social Learning Theory*. Social learning theory explains how people learn new behaviors, attitudes, and values. Bandura’s theory was built on three main concepts. The first main concept is observational learning, which
means learning can occur through observation. For example, a child might learn gentle movement by observing others if the observed person in their environment was using gentle movement. The second main concept is mediational processes, which are attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. This concept emphasizes mental states are essential to learning. Specifically, intrinsic reinforcement, such as pride, satisfaction, and a sense of accomplishment, which are fundamental forms of internal reward a child would need to experience in order to learn. The last main concept states learning doesn’t always lead to a change in behavior. People can learn new information without demonstrating new behaviors, especially when there is no role model in the child’s life to imitate specific behavior. Besides, social learning theory cannot explain how people develop various behaviors such as thoughts and feelings. People can have lots of cognitive control over their behaviors. For example, a child who has experiences of abuse does not mean they will copy such behavior and become abusive. That’s one of the reasons why Bandura revised his theory and renamed it to Social Cognitive Theory in 1986 (Fryling, Johnston, & Hayes, 2011; McLeod, 2016).

According to Montessori’s absorbent mind theory and Bandura’s social learning theory, there is a high possibility that children may learn from and imitate their teachers’ etiquette and social behaviors if the mediational processes occurred and they cognitively reproduce the behavior. Therefore, intentional teacher role modeling of grace and courtesy may have an influence on children’s social behavior.

**Review of Literature**

Numerous studies have been conducted on how Dr. Montessori’s grace and courtesy education demonstrates influences on children’s social development (Chitwood, 2013; Ringgenberg, 2016; Aarre, 2016; Lillard, 2017). Martinez (2018) defined grace as the way
people hold themselves physically. It can be considered as a relationship between mind and body, as well as the way people control their bodies and move more gracefully. He defined courtesy as how people handle themselves and the energy they put forward for the benefit of others, which provide themselves the courtesies of social life. Grace and courtesy education, as an essential part of the Montessori pedagogy, begins in the early childhood level and continues through the elementary levels. It scaffolds children in building their self-awareness and responsiveness of those around them through lessons with explicit instructions on how to interpret and respond to different social circumstances and behaviors. It helps children to gain a better sense of orientation in their social structure by offering them the language, actions, and steps required for them to build their mindfulness in their environment (“Introduction to Grace and Courtesy,” n.d.). For example, teachers can demonstrate and model with detailed vocabulary and steps to children about when and how to take action if they feel they’re interrupted by others when they are working.

Chitwood (2013) found that children gained self-confidence and enhanced their sense of dignity through grace and courtesy education. Ringgenberg (2016) indicated that grace and courtesy education taught children “conflict resolution, social skills, awareness and empowerment” (p. 14). Aarre (2016) stated that grace and courtesy education could promote children’s independence of social conflict resolution. For example, teachers can demonstrate and model with precise vocabulary and detailed steps to children about how to mediate an argument and resolve a conflict between their peers. Lillard (2017) indicated that grace and courtesy lessons were often presented as group lessons since gracious social behavior was a community endeavor. In a Montessori classroom, teachers implement grace and courtesy
education with the practical life curriculum, tailoring it based on the social development needs of the children.

Grace and courtesy education facilitates a peaceful and respectful learning environment and also provides children with crucial social strategies that they may learn and apply for their whole lives. It may be the key to teaching and modeling proper social behaviors to children. Learning how to act in different social situations, good manners, showing respect for self, people, and the environment can benefit the children throughout their life.

**The Role of a Montessori Teacher**

In an ideal Montessori classroom, teachers serve as good role models in the classroom. The environment of a classroom can be seen through the teachers’ interaction with the children and their interaction with each other (Orem, 1971). Bayer indicated that some experienced Montessori teachers who had faith in the pedagogy would “exude grace and courtesy” (2015, p. 18).

Aljabreen (2017) claimed that the responsibility of Montessori teachers was to instruct children regarding care for people and the environment. She instilled grace and courtesy education in the classroom by showing positive personality and appropriate social behavior herself. They modeled respectful language and gentle movement. They demonstrated positive social skills in order to teach children how to build good relationships with people.

Lapierre (2017) researched the spirituality of a Montessori teacher. She encouraged the teachers to study themselves as part of the preparation work as teacher. She stated teachers could envision themselves as role models for the children if they are spiritually ready and became “peaceful adults” (p. 24). According to Lapierre, Montessori teachers should demonstrate a
peaceful relationship with people, including their colleagues, the children and the parents of the children. The participants in her study emphasized the importance of being a good role model for the children at all times since the children learned everything from their teachers. In this way, the teachers could have a positive impact on children’s development.

**Social Development in Children**

Social development is an essential part of child development. It involves children’s ability to interact with people and regulate their own behaviors. Children’s social behavior and social skills are critical in their development. Social behavior reflects one’s way of presenting their manner and etiquette, while social skills reflect one’s way of interacting with others and how they respond to different social situations. For instance, having a conversation with others is social behavior, while communicating thoughts and exchanging opinions with others are social skills. Social behavior and social skills are necessary components for social competence.

Social development helps children build the foundation for developing healthy relationships with others, coping with different social situations independently, and cultivating social behaviors that show respect to others. Effective and respectful social communication skills, presentable manners such as interrupting politely, and peaceful interaction with people are embodied in proper social behavior. Because of the importance of nurturing proper social behaviors, teachers should “plan to enrich social relationships in the context of formal education” to strengthen the children’s social-emotional learning (Benvenuti, De Oliveira, & Lyle, 2017, p. 375).

A study of social development investigated Montessori’s planes of development regarding children’s social development. They found in the first plane of development (birth to age six), children with an absorbent mind lived socially on a concrete and sensorial level since
they could effortlessly absorb knowledge and language through their senses. In the second plane of development (age six to twelve), children with conscious imagination moved from concrete to abstract thinking and developed a focus on social relationships. They began to explore how society and individual roles interrelate and to understand the relationships between one’s actions and the needs of others (“Social Development,” n.d.). Teachers need to include a rationale when offering grace and courtesy lessons to elementary children to help them figure out what is appropriate to a particular situation and then behave accordingly (Huneke-Stone, 2015).

**Importance of Grace and Courtesy Education**

Grace and courtesy education is an essential part of the Montessori pedagogy. It provides children with practical social skills they will carry throughout their lives. As Montessori (2007) stated:

A child who becomes a master of his acts through…repeated exercises (of grace and courtesy), and who has been encouraged by the pleasant and interesting activities in which he has been engaged, is a child filled with health and joy and remarkable for his calmness and discipline (p. 93).

Aarre (2016) defined grace and courtesy as social manners. Van Fleet (2015) and Lillard (2017) believed grace and courtesy education was as important as the academic lessons. The result of Van Fleet’s study showed that children who had been presented the grace and courtesy lessons had more respect for the environment around them. Moreover, children would gain more self-confidence and enhance their sense of dignity through the lessons of grace and courtesy (Chitwood, 2013).

Ringgenberg (2016) deemed grace and courtesy education taught children about “conflict resolution, social skills, awareness and empowerment” (p. 14). She stated, by implementing
grace and courtesy education, the children could learn to cope with different social situations, including resolving conflict with communication and “recognizing and expressing their emotions with others” (p. 11). Aarre (2016) also believed that grace and courtesy education could promote children’s independence of social conflict resolution. For example, when a child feels frustrated and annoyed after their peer kept on interrupting their work, they know how to calm themselves down, express their feelings to their peer clearly, and ask their peer to stop; if their peer didn’t stop, they know how to find themselves a better place to work without interruption. In this case, they are trying to resolve the social conflict independently.

**Modeling Grace and Courtesy in a Montessori Classroom**

In Montessori education, social behavior is learned through observation and imitation. Teachers can model grace and courtesy by showing proper procedure of social etiquette (Chitwood, 2013; Aarre, 2016; Lillard, 2017). According to Bandura’s social learning theory, humans are social learners in that they have a strong ability to mimic and learn the behaviors of others around them. Therefore, to foster a polite, kind, and civilized child, the adults (teachers) should model how to be a person like that first (Shortridge, 2016).

Lapierre (2017) reflected on her experience and study that when the teachers modeled to children how to communicate with each other under different situations, the children would feel more peaceful and comfortable when facing different situations, including grievances. She indicated when teacher modeled being respectful of people, the children would not only “behave constructively” with people, but also “develop positive relationships” with people (p. 65).

The participants in Lapierre’s study believed that when the teachers modeled gentleness, calmness, peacefulness, kindness, caring, patience, and honesty in the community, the children would learn to behave in the same way. In this process, the children would develop self-
discipline and self-awareness, and show respect for people. Montessori teachers strive to be a role model for the children. For example, when the teachers show the children how to talk with a soft voice and a kind tone, and continually model it in any situation, the children would assimilate it and talk in the same way.

**Conclusion**

Montessori teachers have the unique opportunity to model grace and courtesy. This allows children to learn healthy social behaviors, build independence and self-esteem. Teachers also have the ability to guide children through various interactions in the classroom, keeping in mind grace and courtesy. This helps children to understand their place in the world, and how their behavior affects those around them. In turn children will be better prepared for future unknown situations and act with grace and courtesy in order to have the most positive outcome for themselves, and for others.

**Methodology**

This action research applied both quantitative and qualitative research design. Pre and post-assessments were presented in the form of a rating scale that features a series of closed-ended questions designed to gather information about the children’s performance in some social behaviors. In addition, classroom observation and self-assessment were also used.

The population of this action research was 119 lower elementary children in a private Montessori school. The sample was 24 children in a lower elementary classroom with a mixed-age setting of five to eight years old. There were nine first-year children, nine second-year children, and six third-year children. The class of 14 females and 10 males would be with the same group of children for the whole school year. Guiding the children were three Montessori credentialed teachers in the classroom.
This action research was designed to use inquiry data and observational data. Children completed pre and post-assessments (See Appendix A & D) which were designed to measure how much effort they put into grace and courtesy behaviors that the researcher modeled. Behaviors included using a kind tone and soft voice, using courteous language, moving gracefully, interrupting politely, and making eye contact. There were three tiers of the effort level: best effort, usual effort, and not usual effort.

An observation log (See Appendix B) for frequency-count was used to record the presented and modeled social behaviors from the children. It was conducted in the morning every school day for six weeks. Children were observed during the work period, the community meeting (class meeting), the lessons, and the transitions. Once the child did not apply any of the presented and modeled social behaviors in the classroom, a tally mark would be recorded on the observation log.

A rating scale (See Appendix C) was used for self-assessing the performance of the intervention. It was conducted in the afternoon every school day for six weeks. The researcher assessed herself how well she modeled the children to use a kind tone and soft voice, to use courteous language, to move gracefully, to interrupt politely, and to make eye contact.

In the first week of this action research, the researcher presented and demonstrated one or two grace and courtesy lesson(s) (See Appendix E) each day in the classroom. The lessons were: using a kind tone and soft voice, using courteous language, moving gracefully, interrupting politely, and making eye contact. She presented these lessons using clear spoken and body language, modeling, and leading by examples (role-play) as group lessons. She discussed with the children about the reasons why they should do it that way. Then she invited the children to practice with each other during the lessons. She modeled the presented grace and courtesy
behaviors in the classroom throughout the week. In the following five weeks, she intentionally role-modeled the presented grace and courtesy behaviors at school wherever the children were presented: she always used courteous language such as “please,” “thank you,” and “may I” with a kind tone and soft voice when I talk to people. She walked on her feet carefully and watched where she was going so that she would not bump into others or step on anyone’s work and materials; she walked around the children’s work without disturbing it. When she needed to gain a person’s attention, she waited patiently and politely for her turn to speak if they’re focusing on their work or talking to someone else; when another teacher or a child was leading the community meeting (class meeting), she raised her quiet hand and wait to be called on if she had a comment or a question; she also said “excuse me” and “I’m sorry” when interrupting. She made eye contact with people when having a conversation with them; when someone called her name, she acknowledged being spoken to by making eye contact. She gave demonstrations to the children whenever they needed her to reinforce the presented grace and courtesy behaviors. For example, if a child walked carelessly in the classroom and stepped on other’s work, she would go to him or her and demonstrate walking around people’s work carefully without touching their work. Then she would ask him or her to try again and practice walking around people’s work.

The researcher observed and recorded how children applied the presented grace and courtesy behaviors in their social life in the classroom.

**Analysis of Data**

The raw data from the pre and post-assessments and the rating scale were in a form of numerical responses to close-ended questions. For the pre-assessment, the actual numbers chosen by a child for each item were added up together as a total score. It was used for making a comparison with the total number in the post-assessment for the same child. The result revealed
if the intervention had an influence on the child in their perspective. The total number for the sample in the pre-assessment was averaged to compare with the average number of the post-assessment to see if the children found themselves improving in their social behavior. The results of the frequency-count from the observation log were summed, averaged, and compared to reveal if there’s a reduction on the total number of times a child did not exhibit modeled grace and courtesy behaviors after the intervention. As for the rating scale, the actual numbers chosen by the researcher were summed each day and averaged each week to compare with the frequency-count data to see if the researcher’s performance of modeling grace and courtesy behaviors related to the children’s performance of exhibiting modeled grace and courtesy behaviors.

**Findings**

The purpose of this action research was to investigate if intentional teacher role modeling of grace and courtesy influenced children’s social behaviors. The research design was descriptive. A pre-assessment and a post-assessment that utilized a series of close-ended questions were used to gather information about children’s perspective of their effort towards the presented and modeled behaviors. An observation log was used to record the presented and modeled behaviors of the children and a rating scale was used to self-assess the performance of the intervention.

The sample of this research were 24 lower elementary children at a private Montessori School for preschool through eighth grade in Palo Alto, California. A total of 24 children responded to the pre and post-assessments and they were observed for six weeks. As shown in Figure 1, fifteen students were female, and nine students were male. There were nine first graders, nine second graders, and six third graders.
Figure 1. Sample demographics of the research.

The Effect of Modeling Grace and Courtesy

The research question that this study addressed dealt with identifying the effect of intentional teacher role modeling of grace and courtesy on children’s social behaviors. To answer this question, the researcher provided students assessments with a series of close-ended questions regarding to the effort they put toward using a kind tone and soft voice, using courteous language, moving gracefully, interrupting politely, and making eye contact. The researcher observed the students during the work periods, the community meetings (class meetings), the lessons, and the transitions for six weeks and recorded a tally mark on the observation log once the child did not apply any of the presented and modeled grace and courtesy behaviors in the classroom. The researcher self-assessed the level of how well she modeled the students to use a kind tone and soft voice, to use courteous language, to move gracefully, to interrupt politely, and to make eye contact.

Pre-assessment and post-assessment. As shown in Appendix A and D, these assessments featured a series of close-ended questions about how much effort the students put toward the modeled grace and courtesy behaviors. There were three tiers of the effort level: best
effort, usual effort, and not usual effort. The corresponding scores of the effort levels are 3, 2, and 1. For example, if a child put their best effort in one modeled grace and courtesy behavior, they would have a score of 3; if a child put their best effort in all five modeled grace and courtesy behaviors, they would have a total score of 15.

![Comparison of Pre-assessment & Post-assessment](image)

*Figure 2-1. Comparison of pre-assessment and post-assessment.*

The average score in pre-assessment was 13.17, while it was 12.42 in post-assessment. As shown in Figure 2-1, twelve (50%) students assessed themselves putting less effort in exhibiting modeled grace and courtesy behaviors than before the intervention; ten (41.67%) students assessed themselves putting in the same effort as before the intervention; only two (8.33%) students assessed themselves putting in more effort than before the intervention.
Regarding to the average score for each modeled grace and courtesy behavior, there was a decrease in the majority of modeled grace and courtesy behaviors except for “interrupting politely.” As Figure 2-2 shows, the modeled grace and courtesy behavior of “using a kind tone and soft voice” had a highest decrease rate in the average score, it decreased by 11%; while “making eye contact” had a lowest decrease rate which was 1.67%. The average score of “interrupting politely” increased by 2.67%. The children believed they put less effort into using a kind tone and soft voice, using courteous language, and making eye contact, but more effort into interrupting politely.
There are differences among students from different grades regarding their perspective on the effort they put in exhibiting modeled grace and courtesy behaviors before and after the intervention. As Figure 2-3 shows, the first graders had a highest average score both before and after the intervention. The score of the second graders made the least change. It decreased by 3%. In contrast, the score of the third graders decreased by 12.47% and showed the biggest change among three grades. The third graders believed they put much less effort toward the modeled grace and courtesy behaviors after the intervention compared to the first and second graders.

**Figure 2-3.** Grade-level differences between pre-assessment and post-assessment.
In regard to gender differences between pre-assessment and post-assessment, female students assessed themselves a higher average score in both assessments than male students. As shown in Figure 2-4, female students scored 0.6\% higher than male students in pre-assessment, while in post-assessment, they scored 5.6\% higher than male students. Male students had a higher decrease rate than female students in post-assessment. Their average total score in post-assessment decreased by 8.13\%, while the female students’ scores decreased by 3.13\%. Female students believed they put more effort toward the modeled grace and courtesy behaviors compared to the boys both before and after the intervention. Male students had a higher decrease rate regarding to the effort they put toward the modeled grace and courtesy behaviors.

**Observation log.** The researcher recorded tally marks on the observation log to indicate and analyze if there were differences in children’s social behaviors before and after the intervention. As shown in appendix B, the observation log featured five modeled grace and courtesy behaviors in four sections for each day. Tally marks were recorded into each corresponding section slot once any of the students did not apply the modeled behaviors.
Figure 3-1. Comparison of modeled grace and courtesy behaviors in frequency count.

As Figure 3-1 shows, the majority of modeled grace and courtesy behaviors had a decrease in average number of occurrences from week one to week six of the intervention. The modeled grace and courtesy behavior of “using a kind tone and soft voice” decreased the highest average number of times, it decreased by 0.5 in the last week of the intervention compared to the first week. “Interrupting politely” decreased by 0.41, “using courteous language” decreased by 0.28, “moving gracefully” decreased by 0.24, and “making eye contact” decreased by 0.22. “Using a kind tone and soft voice” showed the highest number of times in average of six weeks, which was 3.01; while “making eye contact” showed the lowest number of times, which was 2.37. The occurrences of not exhibiting modeled grace and courtesy behaviors decreased weekly after the intervention.
Figure 3-2. Comparison of each section in frequency count.

All of the observed section showed a decrease in average number of occurrences when students did not apply modeled grace and courtesy behaviors. The children had a more difficult time of exhibiting modeled grace and courtesy behaviors during the work period compared to other activities in the classroom. As shown in Figure 3-2, the work period section decreased the highest average number of times, it decreased by 0.73 in the last week of the intervention compared to the first week; while the community meeting section decreased the lowest average number of times, it decreased 0.01 in average. The work period section showed the highest number of times in average of six weeks, which was 2.87; while the lesson section showed the lowest number of times, which was 2.53.

Teacher self-assessment. The researcher utilized a rating scale to assess herself the performance of modeling grace and courtesy behaviors to the students. As shown in Appendix C, there were five tiers of performance level. Each tier featured a score. They were 4–highly
effective, 3–effective, 2–improvement necessary, 1–does not meet standards, and 0–does not apply. For example, if the researcher modeled five presented grace and courtesy behaviors during the work period section on that day, she would assess the performance of her intervention as highly effective and she would have a score of four for the work period section. The total score for each day was 16 if the researcher performed the highest level for all four sections.

![Comparison of Each Week in Teacher Self-Assessment](image)

**Figure 4-1.** Comparison of each week in teacher self-assessment.

According to the teacher self-assessment, the performance level of the intervention increased gradually in general. As Figure 4-1 shows, the average rating increased by 2.5% in the last week of the intervention compared to the first week. The highest average rating was in week five with a score of 14, while the lowest average rating was in week two with a score of 12.6.
There were differences in performance level among different sections. As shown in 4-2, the average performance of the intervention during the transitions section increased by 15%, while it decreased by 5% during the community meeting section compared to the first week of the intervention. The average performance of the intervention during the work period section and the lessons section remained the same compared to the first week of the intervention. The performance of the intervention during the community meeting section and the lessons section showed the highest rating with an average score of 3.50 in six weeks, while the performance of the intervention during the transitions section showed the lowest rating with an average score of 3.00.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

This action research was conducted to analyze the effects of intentional teacher role-modeling of grace and courtesy on children’s social behaviors, especially on the way they
interact with their friends and teachers in the classroom. The question of this research was what the effects on children’s social behaviors would be when the teachers intentionally role-model grace and courtesy in the classroom. Through Montessori’s absorbent mind theory and Bandura’s social learning theory lenses, lessons were planned to demonstrate and model grace and courtesy to the children on a daily basis.

According to the pre-assessment and a post-assessment the children completed, I found that in the children’s perspective, they thought they put less effort toward the modeled grace and courtesy behaviors on average compared to how they did before the intervention. Whilst, according to the observation log, I found that the children did better in exhibiting modeled grace and courtesy behaviors after the intervention. Moreover, they had more improvement during work periods after the intervention. I also found that the researcher did a better job modeling grace and courtesy during community meetings and lessons.

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn:

- Children are usually not aware of their abilities in adopting social behaviors from others. If the teacher doesn’t give the child an affirmation when they exhibit grace and courtesy behaviors, they may not know what they have done was appreciated. Vice versa. This conclusion echoes Bandura’s social learning theory. Children need intrinsic reinforcement, such as pride, satisfaction, and a sense of accomplishment in order to learn.

- When teachers intentionally role-model grace and courtesy at all time in the classroom, children can be influenced and accordingly exhibit positive social behaviors, especially when they are in the absorbent mind stage. Children can absorb and learn certain social behaviors through observation and imitation.
Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- Teachers shall give children more recognition and encouragement in the practice of implementing grace and courtesy education. When children exhibit positive social behaviors, teachers shall provide them with an affirmation to let them know what they have done was appreciated. When children have a hard time exhibiting certain positive social behaviors, teachers shall let them know the better or appropriate way to do it, follow with demonstration, and provide support and encouragement when needed.

- Teachers shall take time to make observations and design a grace and courtesy curriculum to best meet the children’s needs to help them develop positive social behaviors and cultivate a peaceful and respectful atmosphere in the classroom. For example, if a classroom is always noisy during quiet work time, teachers in this classroom should first reflect on themselves and find out if they have demonstrated using soft voice in the classroom. If not, they should put this as a lesson in their grace and courtesy curriculum.

- Teachers shall reinforce grace and courtesy when they notice an improvement need for the children’s social behaviors. For example, if teachers have demonstrated and have been modeling how to move gracefully in the classroom, but children are still careless about how they move around in the classroom, such as stepping on materials or work rugs and bumping into people or things, teachers can discuss with the children about the importance of moving gracefully in the classroom and demonstrate again how to do it. They can ask the children to
practice again whenever they notice the children are not using their walking feet, for instance, until they can exhibit it.

- The teaching team should be accordant and consistent when demonstrating and modeling grace and courtesy behaviors to the children. They should have a meeting with each other and reach a consensus about how they implement grace and courtesy education in the classroom. They should work together to strive for modeling grace and courtesy to the children at all time. They should uphold this consensus and hold each other accountable to it.

**Limitations and Future Study**

This action research was conducted with a small sample of children over a short course of time and should not be expected as generalized. It was designed for a specific group of children, so it may not apply to others. The pre-assessment was given at the beginning of the school year, and many children had not had the experience to fill out a self-assessment form before. Even though instructions were given and examples were made, some of the children may not be able to interpret the instructions in the expected and guided way. Their answers may be partial, and observations were made fragmentarily which means it may not be beneficial to the completeness and accuracy of the data. Observations need to be replicated in a unified time frame for more accurate data in future studies. The intervention was conducted by the researcher who was one of the teachers in the classroom. Another limitation was that the modeling was only implemented by one of the guides in the classroom. As a result, the influence of modeling may not have been scaled fully for the children. It is the researcher's belief there is a need for future studies where all the teachers are demonstrating and modeling throughout the classroom day.
References


Appendix A

Grace and Courtesy Inventory
Pre-assessment

Name: __________
Date: __________

Directions:
Rate yourself on how much effort you put on the following social behaviors. Please be honest.

Circle:
3—if you put your BEST effort on it.
2—if you put your USUAL effort on it.
1—if you do NOT put your usual effort on it.

For example, if you often talk loudly in the classroom, you would rate yourself as follows:

**Using a Kind Tone and Soft Voice**—I talk softly with a kind tone rather than whining, shouting, or yelling.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>My Best Effort</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moving Gracefully</strong>—I walk on my feet carefully and watch where I am going so that I don’t bump into others or step on anyone’s work and materials; I walk around each other’s work without disturbing it.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interrupting Politely</strong>—When I need to attract a person’s attention, I wait patiently and politely for my turn to speak if they’re focusing on their work or talking to someone else; if I have a comment or a question during the circle time or a lesson, I raise my quiet hand and wait to be called on; I say “excuse me” and “I’m sorry” when interrupting.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Making Eye Contact</strong>—I make eye contact with people when having a conversation with them; when someone calls my name, I acknowledge being spoken to by making eye contact.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

Total Score: ___
## Appendix B

### Observation Log – Frequency Count

Observed Child: __________________

Week of: __________________

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<tr>
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<th>Modeled Grace &amp; Courtesy Behaviors</th>
<th>Tally Box: mark here each time the child does NOT apply modeled behaviors.</th>
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<td>Interrupting Politely</td>
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## Appendix C

### Teacher Self-Assessment

**Rating Scale**

**Rating standard:**
- **4—Highly Effective:** modeled 5 presented grace and courtesy behaviors.
- **3—Effective:** modeled 3–4 presented grace and courtesy behaviors.
- **2—Improvement Necessary:** modeled 2 presented grace and courtesy behaviors.
- **1—Does Not Meet standards:** modeled only 1 presented grace and courtesy behaviors.
- **0—Does Not Apply:** did not model presented grace and courtesy behaviors.

<table>
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<th>During Community Meeting</th>
<th>During Lessons</th>
<th>During Transitions</th>
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</table>

*Conduct in the afternoon every school day.

**Average:** _________
Appendix D

Grace and Courtesy Inventory
Post-assessment

Name: ________________
Date: ________________

**Directions:**
Rate yourself on how much effort you put on the following social behaviors. Please be honest.

Circle:
3 — if you put your BEST effort on it.
2 — if you put your USUAL effort on it.
1 — if you do NOT put your usual effort on it.

For example, if you often talk loudly in the classroom, you would rate yourself as follows:

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<td>1</td>
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Total Score: ____
Appendix E

**Grace and Courtesy Lesson Plan**

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<th>Lesson</th>
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