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Becoming and Belonging: The Effect of the Lessons of Grace and Courtesy on Peer Reverence
in a Montessori Primary Environment

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in fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree

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Date _____

Abstract

The purpose of this action research project is to determine the effect of the lessons of Grace and Courtesy on children's peer reverence in a Montessori primary (ages 3-6) environment. This research study was conducted at a private Montessori School in a midwestern suburb. The four-week study was completed in a Primary Montessori environment with 13 children, ranging in age from three to six years old. During the study, data was collected on behaviors related to peer reverence and the lessons Grace and Courtesy. Data was also collected on the collective attitude, as observed and reflected on, by the adult. Data from the study showed that the use of the lessons of Grace and Courtesy correlated to the decrease in number of undesired behaviors and increase in number of desired behaviors related to peer reverence. Further study could include the effect of lessons of Grace and Courtesy on conflict resolution; the effect of the lessons of Grace and Courtesy on social skills; the effect of daily repetition of the same lesson of Grace and Courtesy; the use of cards to follow-up on the lessons of Grace and Courtesy; and the use of the lessons of Grace and Courtesy outside a Montessori environment.

Keywords: Montessori, early childhood learning, the lessons of Grace and Courtesy, peer reverence

Education, from the Latin "educere," means "to lead out." The essential work of education is to lead learners beyond themselves. Each method of education moves to do this work in the learner's physical, intellectual, moral, or spiritual life. The Montessori method of education was developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, who had a vision for "education as an aid to life," that being an *integrated* physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual life. The key principles of the Montessori philosophy, multimodal learning, mixed-age classrooms, observation, developmental awareness, self-correcting materials, and the classroom community, each contribute to creating a method of education capable of aiding an integrated life. This method of education calls for responsibility on the part of learners and educators to prepare and cultivate both a physical and psychological environment and community where this method of learning can take place.

As a key principle of the Montessori philosophy, the classroom community is important in Dr. Maria Montessori's vision for "education as an aid to life." A Montessori classroom is prepared with the social, physical, and psychological conditions for the community's development of prosocial characteristics. In a Montessori Primary (ages three to six) environment, there are few adults and a mixed age group of children age, ideally thirty children and two adults. The few adults support the classroom community in making an authentic peer micro-society. The mixed-age group of children creates a natural community for children to learn from each other while working together. Rather than have adults command social situations or teach social development curriculum, the adult's role is to serve from the periphery. In the physical environment, the Montessori classroom is prepared with hands-on materials that provide concrete sensorial experience. In the classroom there is not a class set of each material, but only one of each material. As a child works with the single material, they are responsible for allowing

other children the opportunity to work with the material. In the classroom, the child chooses when, with whom, and how they interact with others within the parameters of clear and concrete guidelines. The guidelines help the child begin to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate language, movement, use of materials, and behavior. Guidelines are established through the lessons of Grace and Courtesy.

The lessons of Grace and Courtesy have been used among Montessori teachers and researchers to support the many dimensions of children's social behavior, such as conflict resolution, self-regulation, problem-solving, normalization, and peer independence. The lessons of grace and courtesy are fun brief dramas or role play that demonstrate language or gestures used in particular social scenarios. Examples of lessons include greeting others by name, opening a door for another, observing another's work, solving a disagreement, and introducing two peers. These lessons provide opportunities for the children to practice and experiment with their own language in a safe environment. They are a resource for children when they are emotionally charged and want to express their needs and adapt to their community and interact socially. Dr. Montessori explained, "It is interesting to see how, little by little, these [children] become aware of forming a community, which behaves as such...once they have reached this level, the children no longer act thoughtlessly, but the group first and try to succeed for its benefit" (1995, p. 212). These the lessons of Grace and Courtesy do the essential work of education to lead learners beyond themselves, for in them, learners see the other and learn how to interact with them.

In a Montessori primary environment with thirteen children ages three to six years, the researcher observed children treating other children with a lack of reverence. This lack of reverence manifested in disturbance of other peers' work, interruption of presentations, disrespectful language, and disregard for peers' personal space. Upon reflection, the researcher

hypothesized that the lessons of Grace and Courtesy that model desired behaviors, such as respectful language, extension of help to peers, respectful observation of peers' work, and respect for peers' personal space, had not been utilized. The purpose of this action research project is to determine the effect of the lessons of Grace and Courtesy on children's peer reverence in a Montessori primary environment.

Theoretical Framework

In 1907, when the news of the children from the San Lorenzo quarter in Italy reached around the world, people spoke of the discovery of the human soul, miracles, and child conversions (Montessori, 2009). In this first Children's House, under the direction of Dr. Maria Montessori, they saw a community of children gracious, courteous, and serving one another, unlike any other community. People observed what Dr. Montessori eventually came to call normalization, the process of the child returning to their original state or for what they are to be, at peace. When a child becomes absorbed in purposeful and engaging work, the deviations seen by many as "normal" for children vanish, and the child's true nature is revealed.

The theory of normalization was first introduced into early childhood scholarship by Dr. Maria Montessori. Dr. Montessori classified normality from the Latin "norma," meaning "precept or rule," as the condition of being in harmony with the laws of human development and functioning optimally within the laws of human nature. In the context of her environment, Dr. Maria Montessori observed that normalization is the process of healthy development through *concentration* and *interest*; the psychologically healthy child who is capable of such deep concentration and has an interest in their work is what she termed "normalized." The child passes through four stages of normalization; Dr. Montessori characterized the four stages are as follows:

Stage one. The child who is new to the environment is orienting themselves and becoming familiar with the environment; he often moves around the room quickly and is attracted to and curious about everything. As he moves about, he struggles to choose work and quickly moves to the next activity without much concentration and may need assistance in completing an entire work cycle.

Stage two. The child has gradually developed the ability to move around the environment in a controlled manner and make independent work choices. The child generally follows a three-period work cycle. First, the child engages in preliminary work that is familiar and often simple. This period of preliminary work precedes a long period of earnest work with a material that requires a high level of thinking. The last period is a time of rest or repose when the child might walk around the room or appear to have "false fatigue."

Stage three. The child has a deep desire to work. He can concentrate for long periods and make conscious choices, including those of challenging work. The work cycle is similar to stage two, but the periods of concentration are generally longer. The most important part of the cycle for this child is contemplation and internal work at the end of the cycle; during this time, the mind consolidates and internalizes the information.

Stage four. The child has the characteristics of a normalized child; love of order, love of work, deep concentration, love of silence, sublimation of the possessive instinct, power to act from real choice, obedience, independence, self-discipline, and joy (Standing, 1998). Along with consistent work curve patterns, he can work concentrated for long periods, and the guide will rarely see him as he is very independent and self-motivated. He is a leader in the environment and socially aware, kind, and thoughtful. Dr. Montessori saw this stage as a general elevation of character, perseverance, and inner discipline.

The adult and the environment support normalization; therefore, some conditions must be present for this process to occur. The environment must be rich in engaging and purposeful activity. The Exercises of Practical Life is the activity in the Montessori environment that serves as the foundation for normalization. A.M. Joosten (1968) defined these Exercises as "simple, daily performed activities which man-the-adult carries out in his environment in order to maintain restore proper conditions" (p. 5). There are five areas of the Exercises: Preliminary Exercises, Care of the Environment, Care of the Person, Grace and Courtesy, and Control of Movement. Once engaged in an activity, the child needs uninterrupted work cycles, repetition, and rest to attain a high concentration level. The adult must observe, be knowledgeable, and give appropriate help to the child at each stage of development. In preparing for the environment, the adult should ensure their practice and study of the presentation is thorough in providing the child with effective, precise, beautiful, and complete presentations that aim at discovery rather than teaching.

Prior to this study, when observing in the environment, the researcher observed children treating other children with minimal reverence. The minimal reverence manifested in undesired behaviors such as disturbance of other peers' work, interruption of presentations, disrespectful language, and disregard for peers' personal space. Undesired behaviors could have resulted from the children's lack of knowledge and understanding of language and behavior for positive peer interactions. A contributing factor could also have been that this was a new environment for all the children and the researchers' first year of being a Montessori Guide. Seven out of the 13 children were entirely new to a Montessori environment, thus not normalized. Considering these contributing factors, following normalization theory, the researcher planned lessons of Grace and Courtesy that aimed to elevate peer interactions. The lessons of Grace and Courtesy aid the child

in establishing ways of being in the environment and interacting with others in the environment, thus aiding normalization. These lessons provided opportunities for the children to practice and experiment with their own language in a safe environment to help them to have positive peer interactions and, ultimately, normalize. The literature in the following section will review past research on peer relationships, supporting positive peer interactions, and the lessons of Grace and Courtesy.

Review of Literature

Peer Relationships

As the human person is not an isolated individual but rather a relational and social being, each person's relationships with family, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances shape their life. Beginning in early childhood, the human person develops personal and interpersonal skills in the context of these relationships. While each type of relationship provides significant contributions to children's development, recent socio-cultural changes, such as the rise in mothers working outside the home, increase in the duration of schooling, and the onset of digital connection via social media, have increased children's contact with peers (Pepler & Bierman, 2018). Peer relationships, now more than ever, are one the fundamental relationships that are the basis for human community, thus in need of increasing attention and study.

Development theorists Jean Piaget and Leo Vygotsky assigned peers a prominent role in development (Lillard, 2007). Mooney (2013) explains how Piaget argued that, during the preoperational stage from ages two to seven, peers introduce new ideas and challenge the child's worldview, creating a state of "disequilibrium" that the child must work to resolve. Development happens when the child adapts their understanding and returns to a state of equilibrium; he defined this as the process of "accommodation." Mooney (2013) explain how Vygotsky argued

that learning occurs in the "zone of proximal development," which he described as the distance between the most challenging task a child can do alone and the most challenging task child can do with assistance from a more advanced peer or adult. "Scaffolding," assistance from peers and adults, is used to help the reach the new concept or skill. Both theorists make room for peer-learning opportunities from childhood to adolescence.

Peer relationships are a unique context for children's development. Compared to adult-child relationships, as relative equals, peers' engagement in prosocial communication, cooperative play, and recurrent conflict are opportunities to acquire, practice, and hone relationship skills and behaviors. Skills and behaviors developed in peer relationships include problem-solving strategies, empathy, and cooperation (Pepler & Bierman, 2018). Confidence, building relationships, concentrating on challenging tasks, attending to instructions, solving problems, and communicating emotions are also skills and abilities fostered in peer relationships linked to children's academic and social success (Ostrosky & Meadan, 2010). During their early years, children are susceptible and absorbent to experiences that contribute to their social and emotional development, making it an ideal time to foster positive peer relationships (Kemple & Hartle, 1997). Peer relationships in early childhood are the foundation for later peer relationships and social and emotional development.

Children's acquisition, or lack thereof, of relationship skills and behaviors in early years, have both short- and long-term effects. In one study, toddlers with the skills to engage in increasingly complex play with peers had more positive peer relationships with children in their preschool and middle childhood years (Hay, 2005). In a long-term study, children without friends in kindergarten were still facing challenges in peer relationships at the age of 10 (Hay, 2005). In another long-term study, the rating given by kindergarten teachers on children's social

competence predicted the child's educational attainment, employment stability, and mental health at age 25 (Pepler & Bierman, 2018). The absence or poor quality of peer relationships is linked to children's later academic and mental health difficulties (National Research Council, 2000). These findings highlight the role of peer relationships in forming the social character of children.

While the family is the first school of social virtues (Paul VI, 1965), schools are increasingly entrusted with the work of supporting positive peer relationships. Both traditional systems of education and Montessori education support peer relationships; however, in different ways. Conventional education systems support peer relationships by increasingly implementing school-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programs. SEL is defined by the Collaborative for the Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) as "the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions" (CASEL, 2020, p.1). SEL programs are add-ons that provide schools with lessons, activities, and assessments to develop the competencies that support positive peer relationships. In contrast, learning from and with peers is embedded in the structure of Montessori education. While observation and imitation, peer-tutoring, and collaborative learning are three forms of natural learning from and with peers in Montessori education, the lessons of Grace and Courtesy are the explicit instruction of social and emotional skills and behavior in the Montessori curriculum (Lillard, 2007).

The Lessons of Grace and Courtesy

The lessons of Grace and Courtesy are fun brief dramas or role play that demonstrate language or gestures used in social scenarios. Examples of lessons include how to introduce

yourself or two friends, how to observe, how to draw attention, and how to walk around another child's work. For the Primary Montessori (ages 3-6) classrooms, lessons are presented daily to children of every age from the beginning to the end of the year and are presented to a combination of individual, small group, and occasionally collective groups of children. Lessons are presented in a neutral moment, rather than a heat of a conflict, and ideally in anticipation of a social situation in which the child would need the language or gesture presented. While these lessons do not have a concrete material (i.e., a sewing basket for sewing or number rods for counting), children are encouraged to practice frequently and repeat lessons. Occasionally, a set of cards is present for children's independent follow-up work.

The following is a sample "How to Draw Attention" lesson:

1. Prepare two children or one child and your assistant out of sight of the other children.
2. Give them instructions on what is going to happen and what to do.
3. Invite a child or a small group of children.
4. Give a small explanation about what you are going to present, saying, for example, "Have you ever needed someone's attention, but they were doing something else? I am going to show you how to draw their attention."
5. Create a scenario by having a conversation with one of the prepared children.
6. After a short time, the second primary child can come and stand near your side, in your periphery, standing quietly, without saying anything or touching you.
7. After some time, say to the first prepared child, "Excuse me for a minute." Turn and acknowledge the waiting child.
8. The child can tell you what he needs.

9. Listen and then say, "I am going to finish this conversation and come come help you after. You can also ask your friends for help."
10. Turn back to the first child and continue your conversation.
11. After, invite each child by name to do it as well.

The nature of the lessons of Grace and Courtesy is evident in the words selected for their name, "grace" and "courtesy." Grace is defined as "ease and suppleness of movement or bearing" (Merriam-Webster, n.d., "grace" definition 3c). When presenting the lesson and modeling the behavior or skill, the adult uses analysis of movement and precise language for the children's observation and imitation. The practice of the lessons allows children to eliminate superfluous movement and acquire the same grace (Soholt, 2014). Courtesy is defined as "behavior marked by polished manners or respect for others" (Merriam-Webster, n.d., "courtesy" definition 1a). The lessons present the social skills necessary for extending courtesy in the context of the Children's House. On a day-to-day basis, the guide observes children and notes the social difficulties and skills needed for the group of children, and then plans lessons to give in the near future. It is important to note that these lessons are not in the moment corrections but rather an introduction to a new skill (Soholt, 2014).

The lessons of Grace and Courtesy serve as the basis for a community of "normalized" children and support for peer relationships. Lessons are opportunities for children to practice and experiment with their own language in the proper context and a resource for children when they are emotionally charged and desire to express their needs. In the Matrix for the Building of Character or Social Development in Montessori Education, Bettmann (2003) suggests the lessons directly foster the characteristics of compassion, respect, sensitivity, and empathy. Beyond the primary reason for supporting the child's social and emotional development, the lessons help the

Children's House move smoothly by fostering civility in the community of children and adults. In recent action research, lessons of Grace and Courtesy have been used among Montessori teachers and researchers to support the many dimensions of children's social and emotional development, such as conflict resolution (Gregoire, 2017; Hanusz-Rajkowski, 2016), self-regulation (Greene, 2020), problem-solving (Hamilton, 2016), normalization (Mahan, 2018), and peer independence (Kuhn, 2017); these dimensions are the knowledge, skills, and attitudes need by children develop positive peer relationships.

Observation and Imitation

The lessons of Grace and Courtesy make use of two critical forms of learning, observation and imitation (Lillard, 2007). During a Grace and Courtesy lesson, the adult invites the children to *observe* the adult and peers demonstrating the lessons and then *imitate* the language and gestures observed. In the awareness that even the most subliminal modeling is effective (Chartand & Bargh, 1999), beyond the lessons, the adult is conscious to consistently model the language and gestures of Grace and Courtesy in normal daily activities. In the repetition of observation and imitation of the language and gestures, the child begins to incorporate these skills and behaviors into their social character.

Observation and imitation have been recognized as forms of learning since the ancient Greeks, who used the word *mimesis* to describe observational learning and imitation of others' behaviors and aesthetic work (Rosenthal & Zimmerman, 1978); however, the relevance of observation and imitation to modern psychology and education is relatively new. In the early 1960s, psychologist Albert Bandura and provided the classic evidence in the "Bobo" doll experiment that observation and imitation are forms of learning (Bandura et al., 1963). Bandura later developed this thought in *Social Learning Theory* (1971), posing that people learn most

behaviors they display through modeling. Dr. Maria Montessori saw children's tendency to imitate each other as beneficial to their learning, notably when she observed four-year-old children observing others' learning to write and trying to do it themselves (Lillard, 2007).

Observation and imitation have been used in early childhood education settings to demonstrate desired social behaviors, such as sharing or saying thank you, with children with and without disabilities (Ledford & Wolery, 2013; Vaughn et al., 2003). Adults have a role in modeling; however, some research has found that children are more apt to learn from peer models (Zmyj & Seehagen, 2013). Observation and imitation are forms of learning that have a place in modern psychology and education.

The purpose of this action research project is to identify methods that elevate peer relationships with the specific aim to increase desired behaviors and decrease undesired behaviors. The information gathered from the literature about the importance of peer relationships in early childhood; ways of supporting peer relationships; the lessons of Grace and Courtesy; and observation and imitation as forms of learning; lead to the following methodology.

Methodology

Intervention

The four-week study took place in the Spring of 2021, to answer the following question: How will the implementation of the lessons of Grace and Courtesy on peer reverence affect behavior between peers? This study was conducted in a Primary Montessori environment (Children's House) in a private Montessori school. Participants in the study consisted of one adult assistant and 13 students. The student age groups consisted of three three-year-olds, six four-year-olds, three five-year-olds, and one six-year-old. In the first week of the study, the researcher collected data to establish a baseline of behavior that provide information on if the

intervention improved children's behavior. In weeks two through four of the study, the researcher began the lessons of Grace and Courtesy and continued to collect data.

The lessons of Grace and Courtesy the guide chose to employ for this study were: "How to Invite a Peer," "How to Accept or Decline an Invitation," "How to Work Together," "How to Take Turns," "How to Respect Personal Space," "How to Ask a Peer to Respect Your Personal Space," "How to Ask a Peer for Help," "How to Offer or Refuse Help," "How to Draw Attention," "How to Observe," "How to Apologize," and "How to Solve a Disagreement." Each lesson was presented following the basic pattern of grace courtesy lessons in the Montessori method of education. The guide invited four to five children to the lesson. The guide gave a short explanation of what she was going to present, saying, for example, "I'm going to show you how to ask if you can observe." With the help of a child she had prepared before the lesson, the guide created a scenario in which she would act out the grace and courtesy, always using precise and carefully chosen language. Lastly, the guide invited each child to repeat the lesson by acting out the scenario. Immediately following each lesson, the guide would take one to two minutes to briefly record and reflect on the lesson given.

Attending lessons is a normal part of classroom practice and the lessons of Grace and Courtesy are typical in Montessori education. Participants were expected to participate in normal classroom behavior, attending nine estimated seven-minute lessons of Grace and Courtesy during the three-week intervention period. Lessons were given throughout the morning work cycle between the hours of 8:00-11:00 A.M. The children invited to each grace and courtesy lesson were selected based upon their availability at that moment; the guide ensured that each child received a minimum of three lessons each week.

The guide used direct observation to determine the intervention's effect on the individual children's behavior and the collective attitude. She hypothesized that children's undesired behaviors will decrease and that desired behaviors will increase due to a greater opportunity to practice these behaviors in the lessons of Grace and Courtesy. Undesired behaviors include disturbance of other children's work, interruption of presentations, disrespectful language, and disregard for other children's personal space. Desired behaviors include respectful language, an extension of help to peers, respectful observation peers' work.

Data Collection

In the first week of the study, baseline data was collected using tools 2 and 3 (See Appendix B and C). Each day during the morning work-cycle (occurring from 8:00-11:00 A.M. in the researchers' classroom), the researcher observed for fifteen minutes to tally how often individual children engaged in desired and undesired behaviors concerning peer reverence using Data Tool 2: Tally of Desired and Undesired Behaviors (See Appendix B). Desired behaviors being observed for were: respectful language, an extension of help to peers, respectful observation peers' work; and undesired behaviors were: disturbance of other children's work, interruption of presentations, disrespectful language, and disregard for other children's personal space. This fifteen-minute period rotated throughout the morning work cycle throughout the week to observe at different times of the morning. Tallies were organized by undesired behaviors and desired behaviors. At the end of the morning work cycle, around 11:00 A.M., using Data Tool 3: Collective Attitude Scale (See Appendix C), the researcher reflected by responding strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, or not applicable to a series of phrases describing the collective attitude. The phrases were: the children respected peer's work; the children worked with peers cooperatively; the children used respectful language with peers; the

children respected peers' personal space; the children helped peers; and the children participated and engaged in the lessons of Grace and Courtesy. The pre-intervention data established a baseline of behavior that provided information on if the intervention improved children's behavior.

In weeks two through four, the intervention began, and data was collected using tools 1-4 (See Appendix A, B, C, D). In weeks two through four, the researcher gave two lessons of Grace and Courtesy to small groups of four to five children each day. The lessons of Grace and Courtesy presented were tallied using Data Tool 1: Log of Presented The lessons of Grace and Courtesy (See Appendix A). Each child received a minimum of three lessons each week. Each day, at the end of the afternoon work-cycle (3:30 P.M.), the researcher reflected on children's participation in the lessons of Grace and Courtesy, her presentation of the lessons of Grace and Courtesy, her modeling of grace and courtesy outside the lessons, and potential improvements to the presentation of the lessons of Grace and Courtesy using Data Tool 4: Reflective Journal (See Appendix D).

Within Data Tools 1-4, the researcher recorded the date, time, weather, number of children present, and environmental conditions that may impact the study. In the section "environmental conditions," potential conditions included, but were not limited to, changes in the physical classroom, out of uniform days, alternative classroom schedule, substitute teachers (or assistants), and visitors. The consistent recording of this information supported the researcher's data analysis and observation of patterns in behavior and attitude.

Analysis of Data

Baseline data was collected in the week before the three-week intervention. Daily observations were made to record baseline data on undesired and desired behaviors for each

child through a tally (see Appendix B) and related collective attitude Likert scale (see Appendix C). A section of each data tool allowed the researcher to record the time of the observation, weather, the number of children present, environmental conditions, and notes on the context and nature behaviors tallied. The observations took place between 8:00-10:30 A.M. for 15 minutes on each day school was in session.

To analyze the tallied observational data, each type of behavior was totaled, and behaviors from each category (undesired and desired) were then totaled daily and weekly. Weekly data was then analyzed to find which behaviors were more prevalent each week. Undesired behaviors included disturbance of other children's work, interruption of presentations, disrespectful language, and disregard for other children's personal space. Desired behaviors included respectful language, an extension of help to peers, respectful observation of peers' work. To analyze the collective Likert scale data, the researcher recorded the response to each phrase every day and created a trend line for each phrase. The phrases included were: the children respected peer's work; the children worked with peers cooperatively; the children used respectful language with peers; the children respected peers' personal space; the children helped peers; and the children participated and engaged in the lessons of Grace and Courtesy. The researcher response options included strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, or not applicable.

In the three-week intervention, the data from the baseline data collection continued to be recorded. New data was collected to log presented lessons of grace and courtesy (see Appendix A) and the researcher's reflections on the presentations (see Appendix D). The data from the log of presented lessons of grace and courtesy (see Appendix A) was analyzed by logging what days each lesson was given each day and whether it was presented to a small group of four to five children or the collective group of children. The narrative portion of the researcher's reflection

was coded for any keywords or phrases that demonstrated positive negative responses to the lessons, positive or negative changes in the presentation of the lessons, positive or negative modeling, and consistent areas for improvement of the presentation of the lessons.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of lessons of Grace and Courtesy on children's peer reverence in a Montessori primary (ages 3-6) environment. The research design was quantitative and qualitative and utilized four data collection tools to record lessons given, tally individual children's behaviors, rate the collective attitude, and reflect on children's peer reverence.

This study's subjects were three to six-year-old students in a Primary Montessori environment (Children's House) in a private Montessori school. Thirteen students comprised the study, three three-year-olds, six four-year-olds, three five-year-olds, and one six-year-old.

Table 1

The lessons of Grace and Courtesy presented during weeks two through four, as recorded

Data Tool 1: Log of Presented The lessons of Grace and Courtesy (See Appendix A)

Lesson of Grace and Courtesy	Week 2					Week 3					Week 4				
	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F
How to Invite a Peer						G					C				
How to Accept or Decline an Invitation						G					C				
How to Work Together								G			G				
How to Take Turns								G			G				
How to Respect Personal Space					G								G		
How to Ask a Peer to Respect Personal Space					G								G		
How to Ask a Peer for Help				C										G	
How to Offer or Refuse Help				C										G	
How to Draw Attention			G							C					
How to Observe			G							C					
How to Apologize															
How to Solve a Disagreement															

Note: G indicates lessons of Grace and Courtesy presented to small groups of four to five and children. C indicates lessons of Grace and Courtesy presented to the collective group of children present that day.

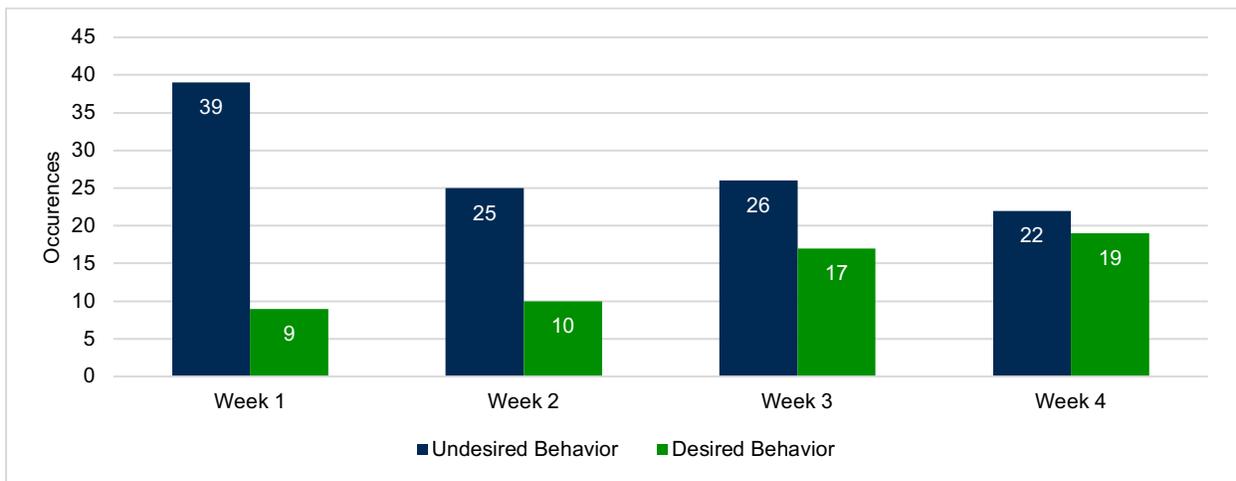
Note: School was not in session the first Monday and Tuesday of the three-week intervention period.

Tool 1, *Log of Presented The lessons of Grace and Courtesy* (See Appendix A), was used for logging the lessons of Grace and Courtesy the researcher presented each day. Two lessons of Grace and Courtesy were presented to small groups of four to five children (indicated by "G" in Table 1) or to the collective group of children (indicated by "C" in Table 1) each day school was in session during the three-week intervention. Of the 20 lessons of Grace and Courtesy given

throughout the intervention, only six lessons were given to the collective group. Due to professional development, there were two days school was not session during the three weeks. The researcher chose the lessons for each day the day prior based on what she observed necessary. Each lesson was given at least two times throughout the three-week intervention; Table 1 indicates how many times and when lessons were given. Prior to the study, the researcher planned to use the lessons "How to Apologize" and "How to Solve a Disagreement;" however, (as seen in Table 1) did not use them as they pertained to a conflict resolution, a topic in need of more in-depth research. In the absence of these lessons, the researcher failed to give lessons of Grace and Courtesy on two days of the study.

Figure 1

Occurrences of undesired behaviors and desired behaviors related to peer reverence



Note: There were four days of school in week 1, three days of school in week two, and five days in weeks 3 and 4.

Tool 2, *Tally of Desired and Undesired Behaviors* (See Appendix B), was used during the researcher's daily observation to tally how often individual children engaged in desired and undesired behaviors concerning peer reverence throughout the whole of the four-week study. Desired behaviors being observed for were kind language, an extension of help to peers,

respectful observation of peers' work; and undesired behaviors were disturbance of other children's work, refusal to help another child, unkind language, and unwelcomed touch. Figure 1 displays the occurrences of undesired behaviors and desired behaviors related to peer reverence observed by the researcher, as recorded on Tally of Desired and Undesired Behaviors (Appendix B) In the baseline data collection, week 1, there was a daily average of 9.75 occurrences of undesired behaviors related to peer reverence; in week four of the study, there was an average 4.4 occurrences of undesired behaviors related to peer reverence. The data collected showed the use of the lessons of Grace and Courtesy correlated to decreased occurrences of undesired behaviors and increased occurrences of desired behaviors related to peer reverence (see Figure 1).

Figure 2

Undesired behaviors observed during the four-week study

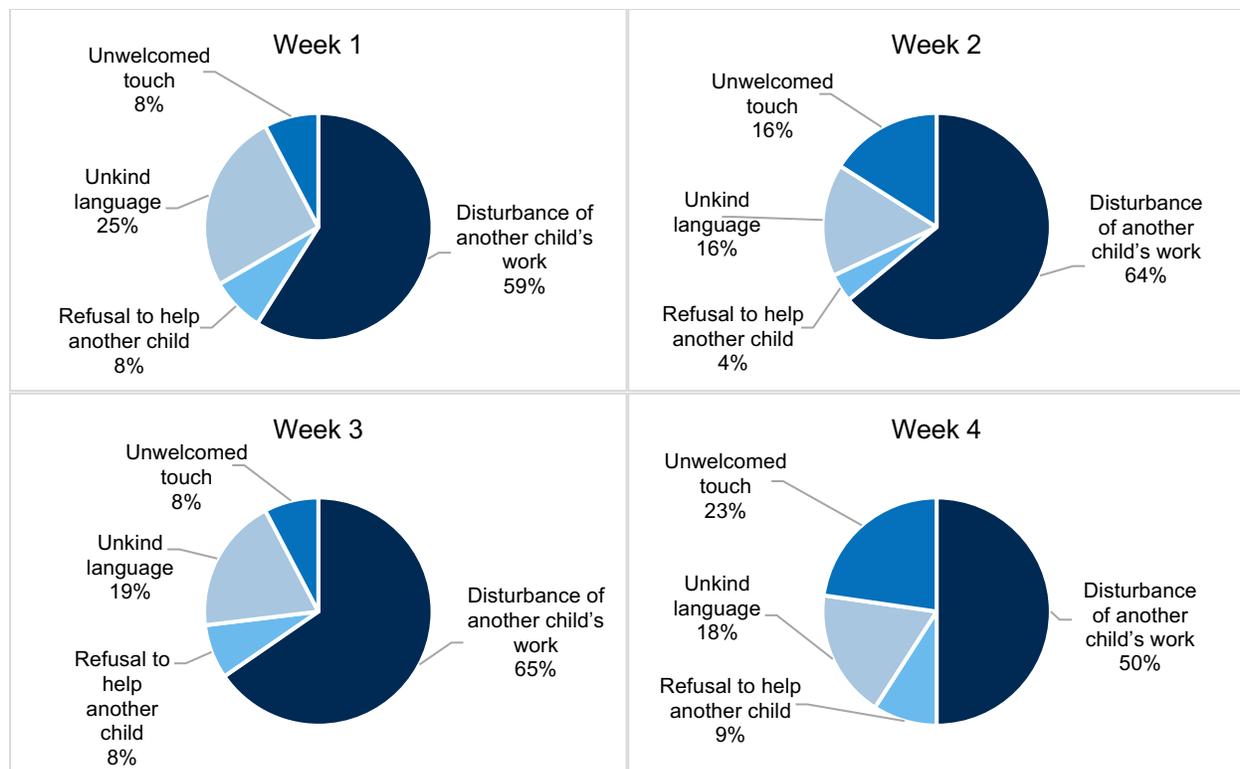


Figure 2 compares the undesired behaviors observed during the four-week study, as recorded on Tally of Desired and Undesired Behaviors (Appendix B). During the baseline data collection, week one, the researcher observed that disturbance of another child's work accounted for 59% of undesired behavior related to peer reverence. Disturbance of another child's work included touching or taking another child's work and talking to another child working without waiting for them to pause. Unkind language accounted for 25%; unwelcomed touch and refusal to help another child each accounted for 8% of the behavior. Disturbance of another child's work accounted for the highest percentage of undesired behavior throughout the four-week study (see Figure 2). In contrast, refusal to help another child, unkind language, and unwelcomed touch fluctuated. In one instance, the researcher found a direct relationship between the fluctuation of behaviors and when the related lesson of Grace and Courtesy was presented. In week 2, the researcher observed four instances of unwelcomed touch during the observation periods, other instances of unwelcomed outside the observation periods, and responded "disagree" to the phrase "The children respected peers' personal space" each day. After these observations in week two, the researcher presented the "How to Respect Personal Space" and "How to Ask a Peer to Respect Personal Space" lessons on Friday of week two. In the following week, week 3, the researcher observed only two instances of unwelcomed touch during the observation periods and responded "agree" or "strongly agree" to the phrase "The children respected peers' personal space" each day.

Figure 3

Desired behaviors observed during the four-week study

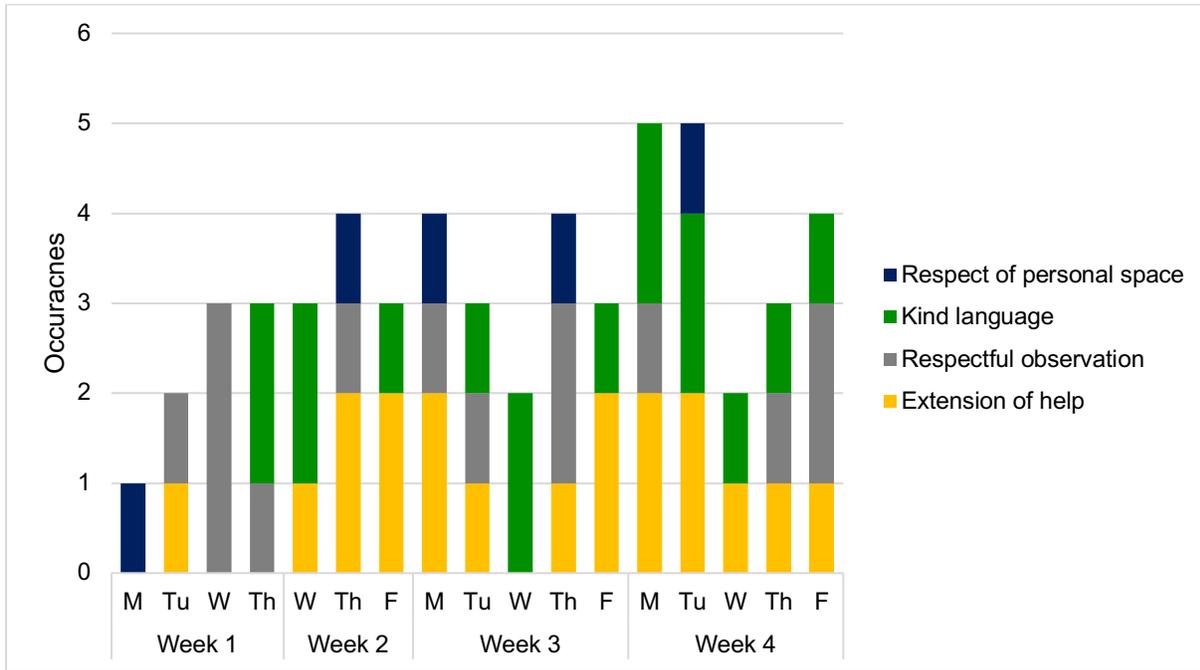
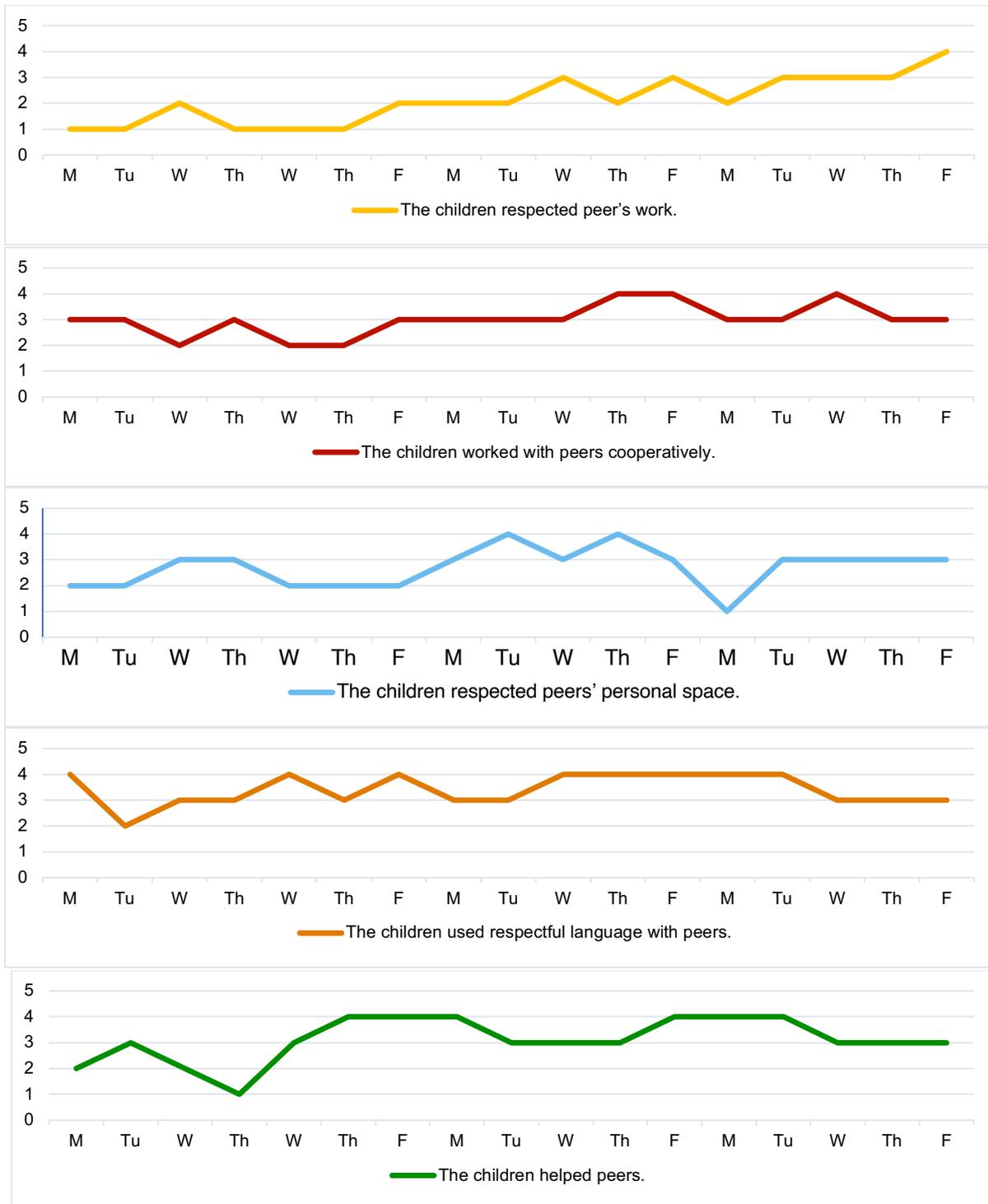


Figure 3 displays the desired behaviors observed during the four-week study, as recorded on the Tally of Desired and Undesired Behaviors (Appendix B). In the baseline data collection, week 1, there was an average of 2.25 occurrences of desired behaviors related to peer reverence per day; in week four of the study, there was an average of 3.8 occurrences of desired behaviors related to peer reverence per day. Throughout the four-week study, the researcher observed 19 occurrences of children extending help to another child, 14 occurrences of children respectfully observing another child's work, 16 occurrences of kind language, and five occurrences of children respecting another child's personal space (see Figure 3). Throughout the four-week study, the researcher found that "respect for personal space," chosen at the beginning of the study, was less concrete, thus less observable during the planned observation period. The occurrences of "respect for personal space" tallied were instances when a child asked another child to please give them space, and the child complied.

Figure 4

Collective attitude likert scale responses



Note: 1 =Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; 4 = Strongly agree

Tool 3, *Collective Attitude Scale* (Appendix C), utilized a Likert scale of strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), and strongly agree (4), for the researcher to reflect on the children's collective attitude. The researcher rated the children's respect for peers' work, cooperation, language, respect of personal space, helpfulness, and engagement in the lessons of Grace and Courtesy at the end of each day. Figure 4 displays the researchers' response, as recorded on Collective Attitude Scale (Appendix D), to each phrase over the four-week study. The data collected showed that the most significant improvement was in response to the phrase "The children respected peer's work." In contrast, the other responses received more steady responses through the four weeks.

Recommendations

A few changes the researcher would make to the study would be to decrease the variety of the lessons of Grace and Courtesy, add a data collection tool, and focus the observation on different desired behaviors.

The researcher initially chose 12 lessons of Grace and Courtesy to present throughout the four-week study. After beginning the intervention, the researcher determined two of the lessons, "How to Apologize" and "How to Solve a Disagreement," while related to peer relationships, were topics in need of more in-depth research and analysis. The researcher chose only to give two lessons each day; thus, each lesson was repeated twice throughout the study. The researcher observed a decline in unwelcomed touch in the week following the first presentations of "How to Respect Personal Space" and "How to Ask a Peer to Respect Personal Space;" however, in the next week unwelcomed touch increased until the lessons were repeated in the last week of the study. In future research, if the variety of lessons of Grace and Courtesy is decreased or the number of lessons given per day increased, each child would have greater exposure to the lessons

at hand and therefore have more opportunities to practice the language and gestures and absorb them. This change would serve the child but also provide deeper insight into fewer behaviors.

The researcher utilized four data collection tools, a tally of individual behaviors, a collective attitude Likert scale, a presented lesson log, and a reflective journal. After analyzing the data, the researcher determined that it would have been beneficial to have student-led behavioral assessments either in a survey or individual conference and a way to hear students' responses to the intervention.

As seen in the data analysis, throughout the four-week study, the researcher found that "respect for personal space," chosen at the beginning of the study, was less concrete, thus less observable. The researcher would adjust the desired behaviors to be more concrete; for example, instead of "kind language," use "complimenting another child"; instead of "respect for personal space," use "walks around other child's mat."

Action Plan

The purpose of this study was to determine how the implementation of the lessons of Grace and Courtesy on peer reverence would affect behavior between peers. The underlying goal of this research study was that children would develop a greater reverence toward their peers and gain progress toward normalization; this goal would be evidenced by fewer undesired behaviors and increased desired behaviors. Ultimately for the children to reach a state of normalization, the intervention of daily lessons of Grace and Courtesy will need to continue and in future years, be used at from the beginning of the year. The researcher used quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, including four data collection tools to record lessons given, tally individual children's behaviors, rate the collective attitude, and reflect on the presentation of lessons.

Observational data collected throughout the four-week study indicates the use of the

lessons of Grace and Courtesy correlated to decreased occurrences of undesired behaviors and increased occurrences of desired behaviors related to peer reverence. Attitudes of the collective toward peers improved throughout the four- week study.

The researcher's reflective journal indicated that certain presentations of the lessons of Grace and Courtesy were more effective than others. Lessons presented to small groups of four to five children supported children's engagement in the lessons and received a more positive response from children. "How to Ask a Peer for Help" was consistently a lesson that elicited positive responses from children, and thus peer-to-peer help saw the most significant over the four-week intervention. The journal also indicates positive changes in the researchers' perception of the quality of the presentation and feeling of preparedness; thus, resulting in an increasing comfort and confidence in presenting the lessons of Grace and Courtesy.

Before the study, the researcher hypothesized that the lessons of Grace and Courtesy that model desired behaviors, such as respectful language, an extension of help to peers, respectful observation of peers' work, and respect for peers' personal space, were not being utilized.

Based on the results of this study, the researcher's next course of action is to continue to model, present, and review these lessons of Grace and Courtesy from the intervention, and new lessons. The planned lessons "How to Apologize" and "How to Solve a Disagreement" were not used, however, the researcher plans to do more research on conflict resolution by way of the lessons of Grace and Courtesy. The researcher plans to support the further development of children's normalization by beginning daily lessons of Grace and Courtesy of the beginning of the next academic year. As the researcher gained experience and comfort with presenting the lessons of Grace and Courtesy, they are better equipped to support students in Grace and Courtesy from the beginning. During the research study, the researcher spent an increased

amount of time observing the children and will continue this practice to identify the needs of the environment.

Suggested research to follow this study could include the effect of lessons of Grace and Courtesy on conflict resolution; the effect of the lessons of Grace and Courtesy on social skills; the effect of daily repetition of the same lesson of Grace and Courtesy; the use of cards to follow-up on the lessons of Grace and Courtesy; and the use of the lessons of Grace and Courtesy outside a Montessori environment.

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Appendix A

Log of Presented Grace and Courtesy Lessons

Date:	Time:	Weather:	Children Present: / 13
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Environment conditions:

Lesson:	Time:												
Participants:	LA	EA	PB	LB	OB	EC	EF	AK	DM	SM	FS	TS	WW

Notes:

Lesson:	Time:												
Participants:	LA	EA	PB	LB	OB	EC	EF	AK	DM	SM	FS	TS	WW

Notes:

Lesson:	Time:												
Participants:	LA	EA	PB	LB	OB	EC	EF	AK	DM	SM	FS	TS	WW

Notes:

Additional Notes:

Appendix B

Tally of Desired and Undesired Behaviors

Date:	Time:	Weather:	Children Present: / 13
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Environment conditions:

Behavior	Participants												
	LA	EA	PB	LB	OB	EC	EF	AK	DM	SM	FS	TS	WW
Disturbance of another child's work													
Interruption of presentation													
Unkind language													
Unwelcomed touch													
Extension of help to another child													
Respectful observation of other children's work or a presentation													
Kind language													
Respect of other children's personal space													

Additional Notes:

Appendix C

Collective Attitude Scale

Date:	Time:	Weather:	Children Present: / 13
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Environment conditions:

The children respected peer's work.

strongly agree **agree** **disagree** **strongly disagree** **not applicable**

The children worked with peers cooperatively.

strongly agree **agree** **disagree** **strongly disagree** **not applicable**

The children used respectful language with peers.

strongly agree **agree** **disagree** **strongly disagree** **not applicable**

The children respected peers' personal space.

strongly agree **agree** **disagree** **strongly disagree** **not applicable**

The children helped peers.

strongly agree **agree** **disagree** **strongly disagree** **not applicable**

The children participated and engaged in grace and courtesy lessons.

strongly agree **agree** **disagree** **strongly disagree** **not applicable**

Additional Notes:

Appendix D

Reflective Journal

Date:	Time:	Weather:	Children Present: / 13
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Environment conditions:

Describe children's participation in grace and courtesy lessons.

Describe your presentation of grace and courtesy lessons.

Describe your modeling of grace and courtesy outside of the lesson.

Describe any potential improvements to the presentation of grace and courtesy lessons.

Additional Notes:
