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## **Focusing on Grace and Courtesy in the Hopes of Achieving a More Peaceful Classroom Community**

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**Focusing on Grace and Courtesy in the Hopes of Achieving a More Peaceful Classroom  
Community**

Submitted on December 4, 2022

in fulfillment of the final requirements for the MAED degree

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## **Acknowledgments**

I want to thank my husband “Mr. Davis” and my family for your patience, encouragement, and love while I took my energy away from you during this period of our lives together. I would also like to thank my professors, Sarah Hassebroek, Sarah Streyle, and Molly Wheeler, who guided and inspired me throughout this project. I would like to add a special thank you to my classmates who share a passion for guiding learners toward the hope of a more peaceful world.

## **Abstract**

Children are at risk of becoming adults who are unable to live, work and thrive together within communities across the United States of America due to lack of respect for themselves, other humans and things in the world which goes along with social courtesies. The researcher was an early childhood education teacher who holds a Montessori certification. For six weeks, the participants in the study were able to focus on Grace and Courtesy lessons in which they participated by observing the teacher modeling care of self, care of others, and care of things with careful attention with, mindful movement, and language. The researcher used pre and post-questionnaires, observations, and questions prepared by the researcher to measure the impact of the Grace and Courtesy lessons. The intervention findings show that focusing on Grace and Courtesy led to a more peaceful learning community. Future research could focus more on the language that promotes a socially respectful environment, a more extended intervention period, and other data collection forms.

*Keywords:* grace and courtesy, peace, community, respect, early education, Montessori

## Introduction

At the height of the COVID-19 epidemic, the United States was literally at a standstill. As the pandemic lingered, social issues and negative social behaviors received more attention, such as the public assassination of Mr. George Floyd by a “trusted” public servant. As citizens were able to tear themselves away from the daily grind, people could take the time to stare into the mirrors of society and examine who they were as human beings. Whenever a mass shooting occurs, social media is stamped with virtual band-aids appearing as praying hand emojis. We live in a society where we step over homeless people while wearing our designer boots to camp outside in the cold to get the new iPhone. Who are we, and how did we turn out like this? I was told not to open my eyes, but I had to bite the apple, which tasted so bitter. I began to digest the sad reality of modern life. As a wife, mother, and early childhood educator, our nation's children constantly came to mind.

Covid affected adults and children in many ways, as people were fearful and suspicious of others while posting up in their homes. Children and adults were forced to be connected to computer screens while attending meetings for work or school. While it was tough on the adults, as they became schoolteachers overnight and living rooms doubled for offices and classrooms, children were affected in other ways. Children spent their days in front of screens with limited human-to-human positive interactions within their communities, lacking the practice of social courtesies. As an early childhood educator, I have witnessed the effects of our seemingly numb modern society and the impact of COVID in the classroom. Some examples of this are a lack of empathy, a lack of community, and the lack of appropriate ways to solve problems.

As a Montessori educator, I am taken aback by my current surroundings and feel the need to act. The prepared environment is the scene of growth and development through the child's activity and early social interactions. Early interventions in a child's social interactions, social-emotional, and attitude toward community are just as necessary as learning how to read and write. "Addressing the social skills deficits in preschoolers is highly important to their overall development" (Lemmon, & Green, 2015, p.9).

Maria Montessori's methods were geared toward academic growth and influential in developing the whole child. Grace and Courtesy is a component of the Practical Life curriculum, and it focuses on the care of self, care of others, and maintenance of the environment. Grace and Courtesy lessons are essential in allowing the child the opportunity to find inner peace through the practice of developing empathy, a sense of community, and appropriate problem-solving skills. This will lead to the child becoming a peaceful and productive member of the larger community. In my study, I will investigate the impact of focusing on Grace and Courtesy lessons in the classroom on the peacefulness of the classroom community.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Dr. Maria Montessori and Dr. Daniel Goleman have developed theories that contribute to the development of the whole child and the child's successful life. Venturing deeper into the earlier stages of a child's development, the focus is not on the child being able to remember a list of arithmetic or scolding the child when the child makes a mistake; the focus lies on the child's development as an individual.

Dr. Maria Montessori's Grace and Courtesy theory which is based on "morals," as well as the social-emotional view called "Emotional Intelligence Theory," based on the teachings and learning model of Daniel Goleman, directly supports the need for social-emotional education in

early childhood classrooms. Both the Grace and Courtesy and Emotional Intelligence theories are of great importance when it comes to children in that they teach social-emotional skills and socially appropriate behaviors, which are necessary for development throughout the child's lifetime. Montessori spent much of her life focusing on the growth and development of children in their early years. She conducted observations of children from a scientific viewpoint and pinpointed areas where the child could benefit from specific guidance from the Montessori teacher. Montessori refused to look at children as helpless solely for the fact that they were young and inexperienced. Instead, Montessori saw the possibilities through a guiding hand in the quest for a better world. While Montessori understood that academics were achievable through practice in the Practical Life area, so were other meaningful skills.

Dr. Maria Montessori's Grace and Courtesy theory can be defined as tools that allow young children to learn and practice socially desirable skill sets through the teacher's guidance and experiences within the prepared environment. "Certain virtues have always been highly valued: courage, perseverance, the sense of duty, good moral relationships with others, and a high place has always been given to moral education" (Montessori, 2019, p.143). Grace and Courtesy lessons allow the children to acquire and verbalize appropriate language to communicate desired outcomes in situations, express feelings, and share thoughts. Grace and Courtesy lessons also help a child apply mindful actions when considering themselves, others, and objects in a socially appropriate manner, which will help the child as a community member. Montessori observed young children's desire to be like the adults in their lives, which is why a large piece of development within children is based on the Practical Life portion of the classroom.

These practices are a necessary preparation for life and are absorbed by the child through lessons, including language and modeling by the Montessori Guide or teacher. Grace and Courtesy include mindful actions toward themselves and others as well as respectful language, which include "usage of good manners" and consideration of things within the environment. The hope is that given these tools at an early age, and children will come to embrace the importance of caring for themselves, others, and the environment. "Montessori teaches us that "the human being is a united whole, but this unity has to be built up and formed by active experiences in the real world, which is led by the laws of nature" (Montessori, 2019, p. 182).

While the thought of "intelligence" was made popular by psychologist Howard Gardner in 1983, the term "Emotional Intelligence" was introduced by psychology professors John Mayor and Peter Salovey in 1990. Daniel Goleman followed suit in 1995 with his social-emotional theory of "Emotional Intelligence." Daniel Goleman is a psychologist and author who has had a successful career as a best-selling author of books, including the book *Emotional Intelligence* (1995). Based on Goleman's adjusted model, the Emotional Intelligence theory can be divided into four main areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.

Goleman's Emotional Intelligence is based on being aware of one's feelings and being able to manage them best and understand how our feelings can affect others. Social-Emotional Learning is being implemented and discussed in schools nationwide. Goleman's model has four main areas. These areas include sub-areas for the room for development, including emotional self-awareness, self-control, empathy, and teamwork. Goleman believed that developing one's emotional intelligence will lead to intelligence in other areas of the brain being exercised and developed. "He made the connection between our feelings and our thinking more explicit by



pointing out how the brain's emotional and executive areas are interconnected physiologically, especially as these areas relate to teaching and learning" (Lantieri (2012, p.28).

The nurturing and strengthening of a child's social-emotional learning combined with Maria Montessori's Grace and Courtesy is essential to all children's development. "Soon after six years of age, when the child starts another phase of development (marking the change from a society in embryo to a society just born), another form of existence sets in spontaneously in which the group is organized entirely on the conscious plane" (Montessori, 2019, p.234). Children can absorb information from the time they are born; they only need the keys to unlock knowledge awaiting them beyond locked doors, which may lead to the peaceful individual becoming socially respectful and responsible, thus being part of and contributing to a peaceful community.

### **Literature Review**

This literature review is based on the importance of supporting each child in the prepared Montessori environment to be responsible and socially positive community members. This Literature Review will be organized under the following headings: The Importance of Social Emotional Learning, Executive Function, Self-Regulation, Social Emotional and Grace and Courtesy, Creating the Classroom Community, and Hope for Peace.

#### **The Importance of Social-Emotional Learning**

Children are not born with the tools necessary to navigate the world positively and responsibly; adults must help them navigate during their learning journey. The Montessori teacher will help to prepare the environment, including themselves, as they are part of that environment. It is up to the teacher to guide the child by modeling behaviors, giving the child the

language to name feelings, and protecting the child's learning experiences in the prepared environment in the hopes that they may carry these tools into the greater community.

The work includes making social-emotional learning a priority in schools, as children's well-being is just as important as their academics. "Of course, those who are already manifesting problems require attention, but our argument to focus on universal school-based programs is in the spirit of this special issue, that is, the improvement of the overall level of health in our society" (Domitrovich et al., 2017, p.2). Social-emotional learning is not only a very important piece of a child's development but also a large piece in that it affects the child's success in relationships and academics. Not only is there a lack of how to appropriately deliver a social-emotional curriculum within traditional settings, but teachers are also having trouble retaining their own "social-emotional" health. "The national focus is on teacher quality, and the teacher's social-emotional competency is often overlooked" (Jones et al., 2013, p.62). While the need for social-emotional education is apparent, there is a lot of tightening up needed as far as curriculum design, teacher training, and support, as well as allowing teachers and students in the traditional sense time in the schedule to implement such a curriculum.

### **The Importance of Executive Function**

Our daily lives include a list of tasks and routines we carry out without much thought, or so we may think. The frontal lobes of our brains allow us to concentrate, make plans, organize, and even manage our behavior. Executive Functions are a skillset including working memory, flexibility in thought, and remembering daily life tasks. The adults in a child's life can observe and ensure that the child can do daily activities and practice performing tasks to better themselves and use their advanced intelligence to perhaps contribute to their community in some way.).

Prevention and intervention for young children with self-regulation difficulty includes helping the child identify the problem, providing solutions, and setting goals to promote emotional regulation. (Blasco et al., 2013, p.6).

In the early childhood home or classroom, children would benefit from receiving "lessons" or observing how to properly go about their daily lives by practicing daily life skills. The young child may learn "how to pour juice," "use the bathroom," or "pick out their clothes." The child given such freedoms can practice, plan, and grow, enabling the child to venture out onto the path of independence. Guidance and experience, therefore, will help the child to build themselves.

"As regards psychological maturation, this can only occur by environmental experience, and the latter changes its form at each level of development because the hormone changes its type, appearing in the individual as an intense interest for repeating certain actions at length for no obvious reason, until-because of this repetition-a fresh function suddenly appears with explosive force" (Montessori, 2007, p.85). It is up to the teacher to ensure that the prepared environment supports the child's need to practice and perfect, for it is the experience of the mind, hand, and eye working together simultaneously that provides the child's freeing experience.

Unfortunately, there are circumstances in a child's life that can hurt their development of the executive function, which include situations and actions that take place that many times are out of a teacher's control, such as child abuse and/or substance abuse of any kind, poverty, which includes lack of resources, and lack of opportunities. As teachers, we must "lead with our hearts" and not cast judgment. While children who display behavior that can be considered "challenging" need to take the time to respect each child's individual journey.

Promoting executive functions in the early childhood classroom is a way to promote development in young children. "Together, cognitive flexibility, working memory, and self-

regulation are the main components of executive function, and they are just as important as early literacy skills for predicting smooth and successful school experiences”. (Diamant-Cohen, B., & Lisa, M. S. Y. 2021, p. 35). While the research does not specify what classroom activities could strengthen executive function, the findings are consistent in that executive functions should be included in the earliest stages of life in exercising executive function.

### **The Importance of Self-Regulation**

Children are not born with the skill of self-regulation; instead, the adults in the child's life assist the child in a co-regulation relationship to guide the child toward being able to self-regulate independently. “Self-regulation can be thought of as having two parts, both cognitive and social-emotional regulation.” (Leong & Bodrova, 2003, p.16) “Self-regulation is a broader and modern term used to describe Montessori's term "normalization." “Only "normalized" children, aided by their environment, show in their subsequent development those wonderful powers that we describe: spontaneous discipline, continuous and happy work, social sentiments of help and sympathy with others" (Montessori, 2007, p.186). The young child who is absorbing the information from their environment is taking in information at a rapid pace. Walton (2016) stated that children in the early childhood setting have a better chance of academic achievement when self-regulation is developed. Self-regulation includes the ability to manage behavioral and emotional impulses. “Self-regulation is essential for learning as it allows students to attend to important information, remember instructions, stay on task, and process necessary information.”(Savina, 2020, p.494 ). The adverse effects of a child not being able to develop self-regulation will lead to decision-making that hinders the child's future success in adulthood. "However, adolescents who lack appropriate self-regulation skills and positive social attitudes may hurt other individuals, go against social regulations, and deteriorate into serious

problematic behaviors such as violence, delinquency, and crime, suggesting the need for early explanatory effects of child's pro-social behavior, childhood socio-demographic characteristics, intervention, and prevention of problem behavior” (Sohn et al., 2019, p.298). Teachers are instrumental in creating an environment that is beneficial to lead children in developing self-regulation. Teachers can positively support children in the classroom, which includes considering the child's view of the environment.

### **Social Emotional Learning and Grace and Courtesy**

Social – Emotional Learning applies to everyone; it plays a significant role in a child’s development and future success. Social-emotional learning can involve many skills and behaviors that a child will learn to adapt. This is important in being able to exist with oneself and as part of a larger community. According to CASEL or Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning:” social-emotional learning is the process where people 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, 2022).

Before CASEL, Comer implemented a program at several schools based on social-emotional learning to support the whole child. The success of Comer’s program led to others seeing the importance of social-emotional education; thus, CASEL was created in 1994.

While the topic of social-emotional learning continues to be researched and is held in high regard in early learning programs and beyond, Montessori’s method includes this within the curriculum.

The Montessori teacher can provide lessons in which the child can develop self-care and social skills that teach the child to care for their environment.

## **Creating the Classroom Community**

Stepping into a classroom can sometimes feel like one is stepping into a small community. Young children often come into the school as strong individuals within a community. According to (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) Sense of Community includes an individual being attached to a larger group where they share values and beliefs, have common interests, and feel as though they play an essential role within their community.

“The Montessori classroom supports the early learning community within the school as it is an environment that is prepared to do so. This unity born among children, which is produced by a spontaneous need, directed by an unconscious power, and vitalized by a social spirit, is a phenomenon needing a name, and I call it "cohesion in the social unit" (Montessori, 2007, p. 211). The prepared environment, the consistency, freedom of independence, and the guidance of the teacher in the early childhood environment led to the children having a shared understanding of community rules, the orientation of the environment, and the expectations of the individual in the environment. Child-centered and allowing freedom within limits, the Montessori classroom allows the child to make mistakes free from chastisement as the child is guided by all that exists in the environment. The mixed-aged primary or early childhood classroom aids the older child to look down and uplift the younger child as the younger child looks up to be led by the older child.

The Montessori teacher helps the children navigate socially by modeling and giving the children lessons that are beneficial and considerate of the child's greater community. Montessori explains that after a child reaches the second stage of development, which includes the ages 6 – 12, the child is using their knowledge in a way where they are taking the information they received in the first plane and applying it to their daily life (Montessori, 2019). Young children who can practice skills independently learn to contribute to the larger community.

## **Hope for Peace**

Some people may view peace as a day when all of the problems of the world are solved, such as people learning to live amongst one another in harmony without war, everyone having food and shelter, non – judgment based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, income or sexuality, respectful of animals and thankful of our mother earth and what she gives us.

Many people hold some things I mentioned above on their list of things that would make our planet and existence peaceful. What if I told you that this is possible, at least in the sense of a beginning? Martin Luther King Jr. dared to dream this; he delivered his famous speech "I Have A Dream" on August 28, 1963, in our nation's capital, where he spoke of everyone deserving the same rights with fair and equal treatment.

Maria Montessori saw past the boundaries of her time and broke tradition by becoming Italy's first female doctor. Montessori went on to do so much in terms of dreaming of peace. Montessori understood that peace began within the child. "Times have changed, and science has made great progress, and so has our work; but our principles have only been confirmed, and along with them our conviction that mankind can hope for a solution to its problems, among which the most urgent are those of peace and unity, only by turning its attention and energies to the discovery of the child and the development of the great potentialities of the human personality in the course of its formation" (Montessori, 2007, p.1 ).

Montessori felt that once one understood the pieces it took to develop the child, one could then take those pieces and respectfully create an environment where the child could learn and thrive before "discovering the world" as an adult. The goal is to prepare the whole child and allow the child to make discoveries through experiences of the senses, hands, and language in the

prepared environment. It is up to the teacher and the adults to best provide an environment that supports the child's executive functioning, self-regulation, and social-emotional development while implementing Grace and Courtesy to create a peaceful classroom community.

### **Methodology**

The six-week study that was conducted was aimed to determine if placing a focus on Grace and Courtesy in the learning environment could lead to a peaceful classroom community. I have been actively working with children and families in the Montessori environment since 2008. I received the necessary training to qualify as a lead early childhood Montessori teacher. The other adults in the classroom, besides myself, were the two assistant teachers. This action research study occurred during the beginning of the school year in the fall of 2022 on the east coast of the United States of America. The small private school in which the research was conducted registered children aged 2 - 6 years old and was located in an affluent neighborhood. The participants in the study consisted of two 3-year-olds, two 4-year-olds and two 5-year-olds, all attending school every week during the school year. The four and five-year-olds in this study are second or third-year students, while the 3-year-olds are beginning their second year at the school.



## **Intervention**

Before beginning the intervention, participants were given pre-research interview questions using developmentally appropriate language in close-ended questions, for me, the researcher, to understand the participant's prior understanding of socially appropriate behaviors (Figure A). Participants were asked to answer the same questions towards the end of the intervention to see if there had been a change in their understanding of what would be considered socially appropriate behaviors (Figure E).

The participants received Grace and Courtesy lessons weekly during the morning meeting led by the classroom assistants and me. I used a Grace and Courtesy Guide that I designed for the duration of the study, in which I paid specific attention to my language and physical actions. After each lesson, I would cross out the lesson that had been presented with a yellow highlighter to ensure that I kept up with which lessons were introduced and which were yet to be delivered.

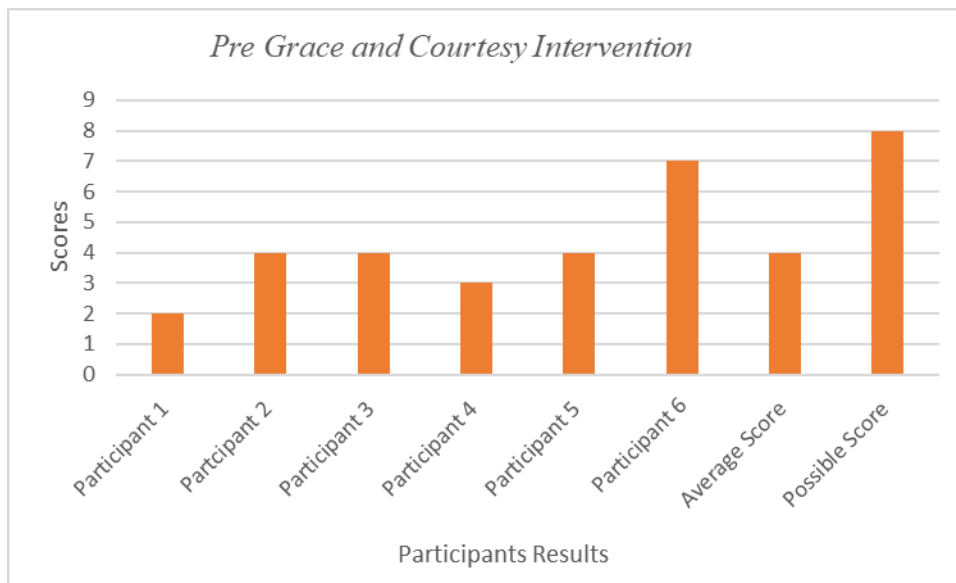
Next, I was also able to observe the participants twice a week in the morning using a weekly scoring system (Figure C) to see how the participants were engaging with the work and other students within the prepared learning environment. Afterward, I took general notes (Figure E) to jot down general observations. The direct benefit of this research is that students will have solid social-emotional tools and an awareness of the necessity of their role within their community. I hope this research will address the importance of social-emotional, community, and peace education at the beginning of a child's life to promote prosocial, pro-community, and empathetic humans.

## **Analysis of Data**

The action research began with the pre-assessment that was made up of 8 questions (Figure A) which included social courtesies, personal care, respectful language, and respect for others' personal space. The eight questions that were included in the pre-assessment were comprised of positive and negative responses. I gave each child a point for each positive response, and I did not grant any points for the undesired responses. Because there were eight positive answers to give, there were eight potential points to be granted. The closer to 8 points a participant received reflected their knowledge of Grace and Courtesy before the intervention. Later, I would take the scores from the pre-assessment and compare them to the post-assessment that was given at the end of the intervention.

The results of the participant's Pre – Intervention Questionnaire can be found in Figure 1. While none of the participants received the highest possible score, none scored a zero. Participants had an average score of 4 points which means that participants had at least a limited understanding of Grace and Courtesy.

A focus was placed on Grace and Courtesy in the early childhood Montessori classroom to see if it would contribute to a more peaceful classroom community. Through modeling and delivery of lessons, I could do visual observations and record them to better inform my study. My data tools were able to aid me in recording my observations as well as my general notes that I was able to record on a weekly basis. After the intervention, I created graphs that were reflective of the data that I collected over the six-week period.

**Figure 1***Participants Pre Grace and Courtesy Scores*

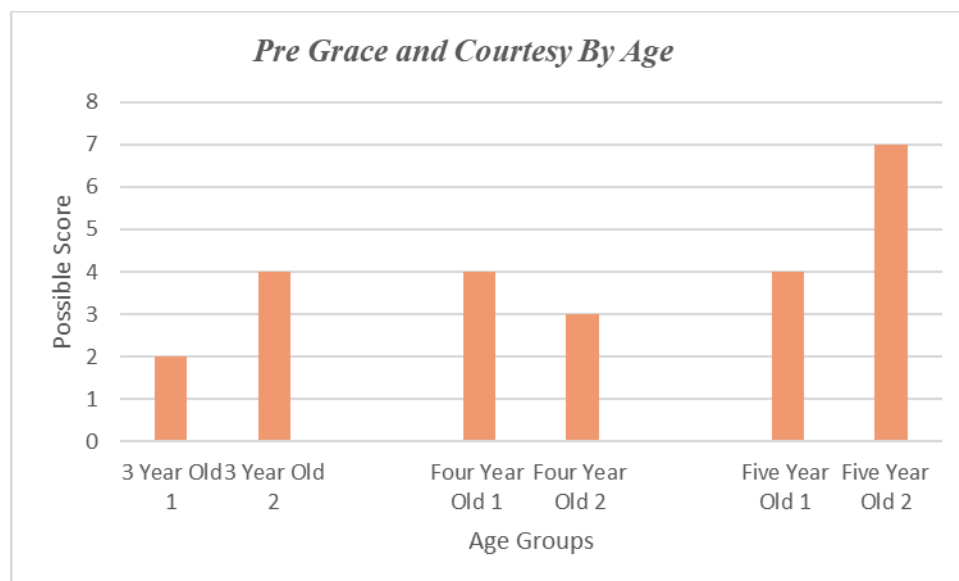
*Note:* This graph shows the participant's scores on the Pre-Intervention Questionnaire

Each participant was able to respond to the eight questions presented to them verbally. The questions were based on social mannerisms and actions. I was able to interview the participants in the morning, on the first day of their second week of school, by calling the participants over to me one by one. I sat at the peace table in my classroom when I asked the questions for the pre-intervention questionnaire and recorded the participants' answers. Participant number 6 was a 5-year-old and could answer in complete answers as he told me that he does not like to wash his hands because he washes them at home. I was surprised that participants number 3,4, and 5 scored as low as they did because these children had prior

experience in this environment where they have had opportunities to practice and observe Grace and Courtesy in action.

## Figure 2

*Participants Pre Grace and Courtesy Scores Sorted by Age*

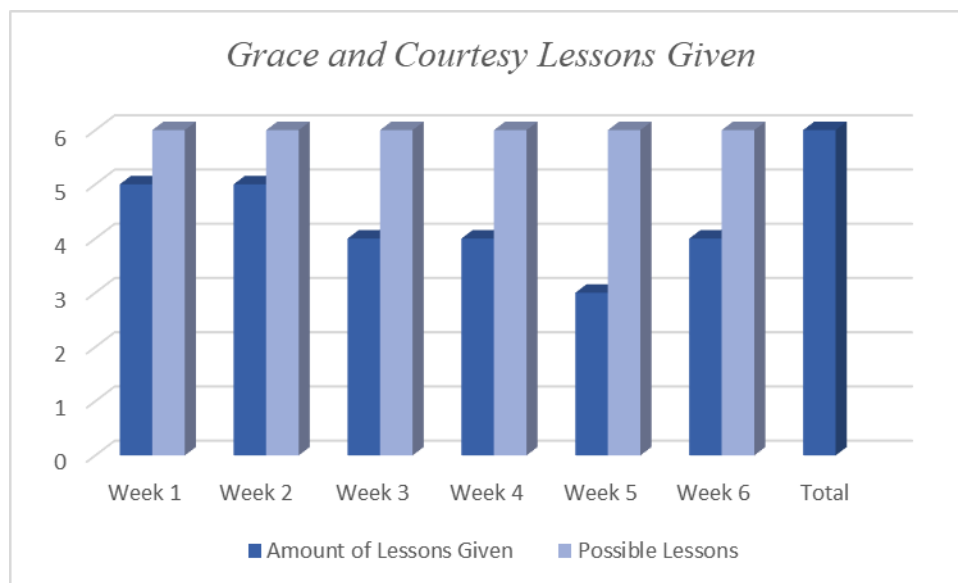


*Note:* Figure 2 shows the participant's scores sorted by age

The results of the participant's pre-intervention scores, when grouped by age, show that the 5-year-olds had a better pre-understanding of Grace and Courtesy, whereas children in other age groups did not have as much of an understanding. This may be because they have had more social practice as they have been in the Montessori setting and have had exposure to lessons that focus on social courtesies, care for self, and being respectful of things. The pre-intervention questionnaire informed me of the importance of grace and courtesy focus. The youngest of the participants would benefit from the introduction of the focus, while the older children needed these skills re-introduced for them to put actions, language, and adapting these socially appropriate behaviors into their everyday way of life.

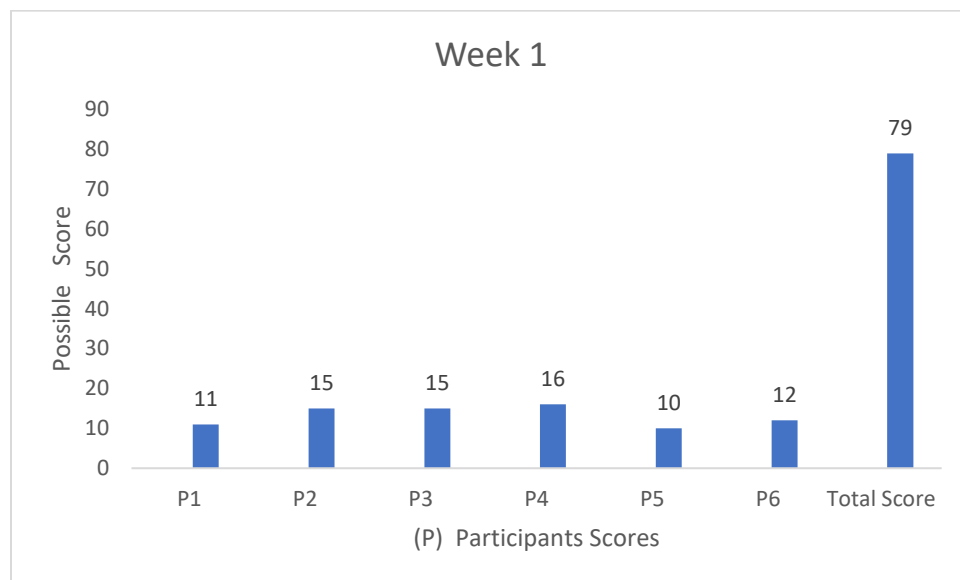
**Figure 3**

*Grace and Courtesy Lessons Delivered Over a Six Week Period*



*Note:* Grace and Courtesy Lessons given over the course of 6 weeks

The data tool (See Figure B) shows what lessons I intended to deliver in no specific order but with the intent of providing as many as I could per week. These lessons are based on Grace and Courtesy and will hopefully assist the child in finding personal and social success in the learning environment and beyond. Figure 3 displays the number of possible weekly lessons and the lessons that were modeled and delivered. 25 Grace and Courtesy lessons out of a possible 36 lesson suggestions were given, usually in the morning time during what we refer to as our “morning chat.” The demonstrations of the lessons were carried out by me, the assistants, and the children in the class.

**Figure 4a***Week 1 Signs of Peace*

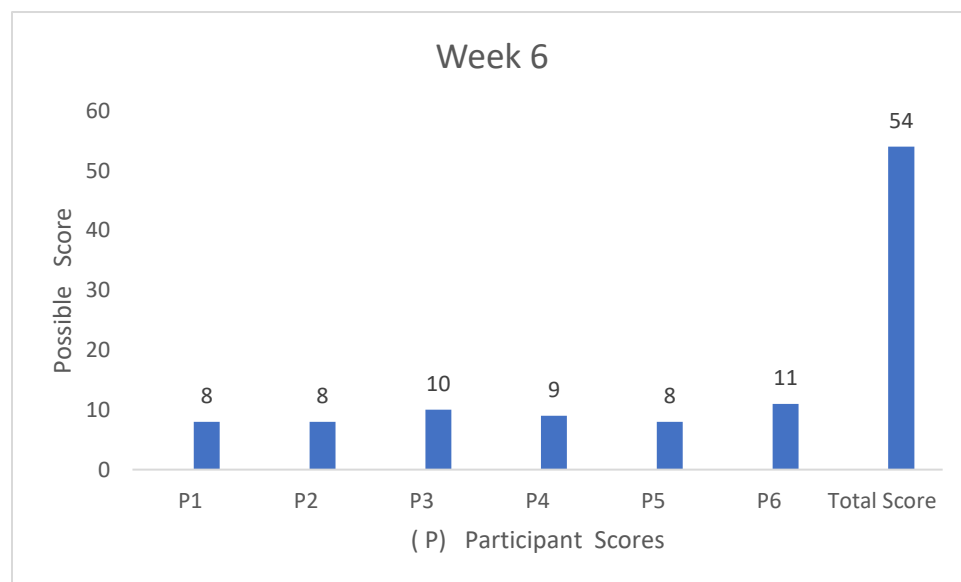
*Note:* Figure 1 shows each participant’s score in the 1<sup>st</sup> week of the intervention.

I observed and recorded my observations during the intervention through a data tool (Figure C), where I marked 1 or 2 for each participant. The participants who received 1 point displayed signs of peace, while those who received a score of 2 on a question would not have shown signs of peace in the classroom. Because 1 point was a “positive” point and 2 was entered as a non-positive point, a lower score would signify a classroom community that had more peaceful interactions within the environment. The lower score for each participant would mean that they had more signs of peace. I observed the participants twice a week each week for six weeks during the middle of the morning for signs of peace. During the 1<sup>st</sup> week of the intervention, I was able to observe the majority of the participants running back and forth, using the activities inappropriately and not putting the activities back on the shelf appropriately. One example of this was when I noticed participant 5 dipping the sponge in the wet pouring activity and tossing it at her classmate at the circle table. Participant 5 was one of the 5-year old’s, and I

was surprised to see this from her. I continued to observe her and how she returned the work to the shelf. I believe she was doing this because she saw that it made her friend laugh, and it was possible that making her friend laugh brought her joy. While I did not see any ill intent in this, it is important to guide the children to respect the activities and things in their environment. I was able to re-present this wet pouring activity to her later without embarrassing her. Often when I see this from the older students, I will re-present and ask them to give the same lesson to a younger classmate. I also considered the fact that this was the second week of school, and the children were very excited to see one another, which could cause them not to be as mindful of silly behavior. In the first week, the participants scored 79 points, which was not desirable.

### Figure 4b

#### Week 6 Signs of Peace



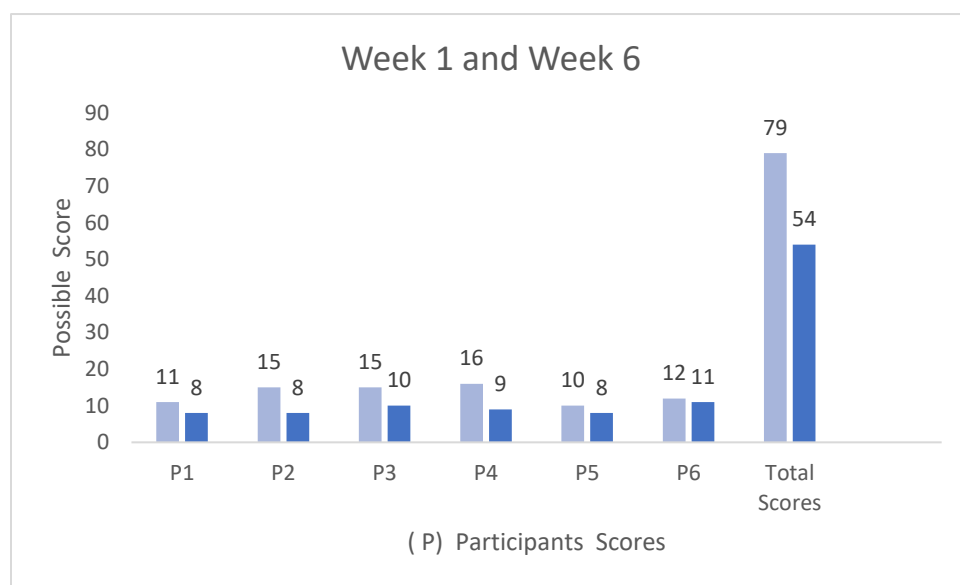
*Note:* Figure 4b displays the results from the last week of the intervention.

During the last week, the participants scored a total of 54 points which was an improvement when compared to the first week of the intervention, where I observed for signs of peace. I believe the Grace and Courtesy focus was instrumental in the score being lower and

improving in the sixth week of the study. By having the Grace and Courtesy lessons on a daily basis, the children were holding one another accountable more often as well as using mindful language and actions more often.

### Figure 4c

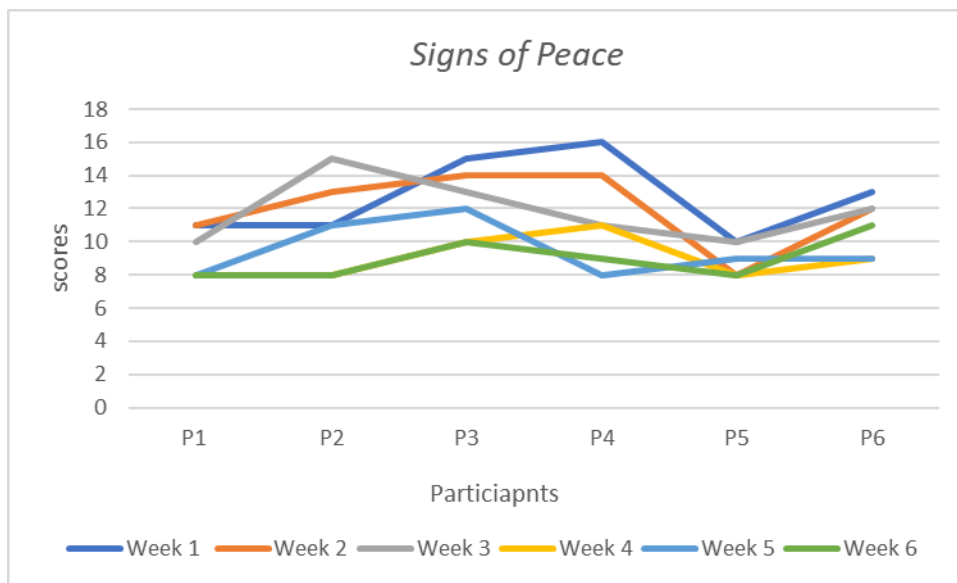
Week 1 and Week 6 Signs of Peace



*Note:* This graph shows the difference between Week 1 and Week 6

The graph above shows the scores of the participants from week 1 and week 6. There was a difference of 25 points when comparing the first week to the sixth week. I observed that the younger students were received reminders to put their activities away before selecting another activity during the study. Participant 1 showed greater improvement when comparing week 1 and week 6. This observation meant that while something may work for one child, it may not work for another child. It is important to keep trying to find what works for each child as an individual.



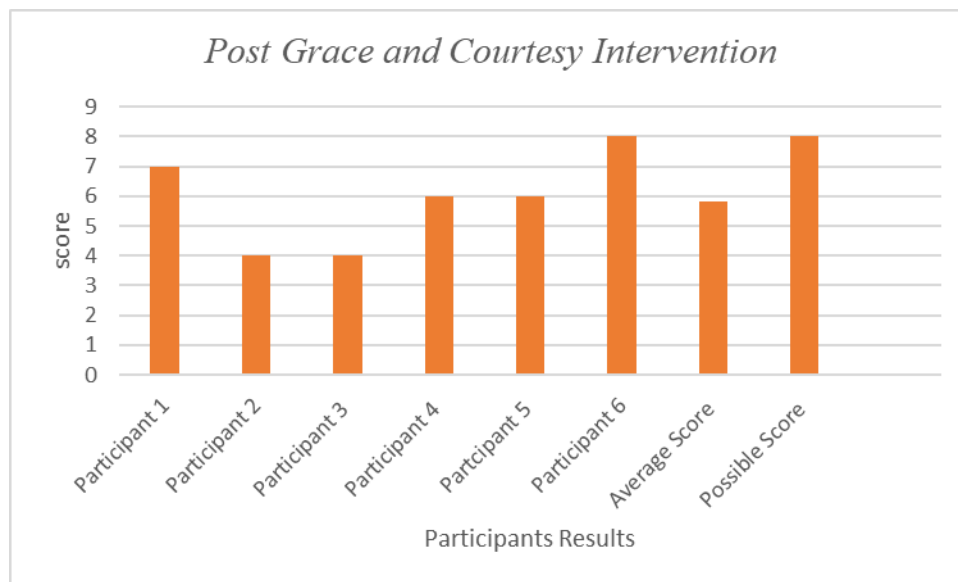
**Figure 5***Signs Of Peace Over a Week Intervention Period*

Note: The graph shows the participants' scores when looking for signs of peace.

When looking for signs of peace over the six-week intervention, there was an overall improvement as the score went from 79 points down to 54 points which meant a difference of 25 points. When looking at Figure 5 pictured above, you will notice that there was a decrease in non-peaceful actions and language in the classroom environment from the first three weeks of the intervention, with week 1 having the highest amount of non-peaceful instances and week 6 having an increase of peaceful interactions. My observations included lessons given by the older children, children being responsible for tidying areas of the classrooms, and by this time, feeling more comfortable in their environment as they had been in school now for over a month. There was a decrease in reminders to put activities away properly, misuse activities, use respectful language, and respect other's personal space.

**Figure 6a**

*Participants Scores After the Grace and Courtesy Intervention*

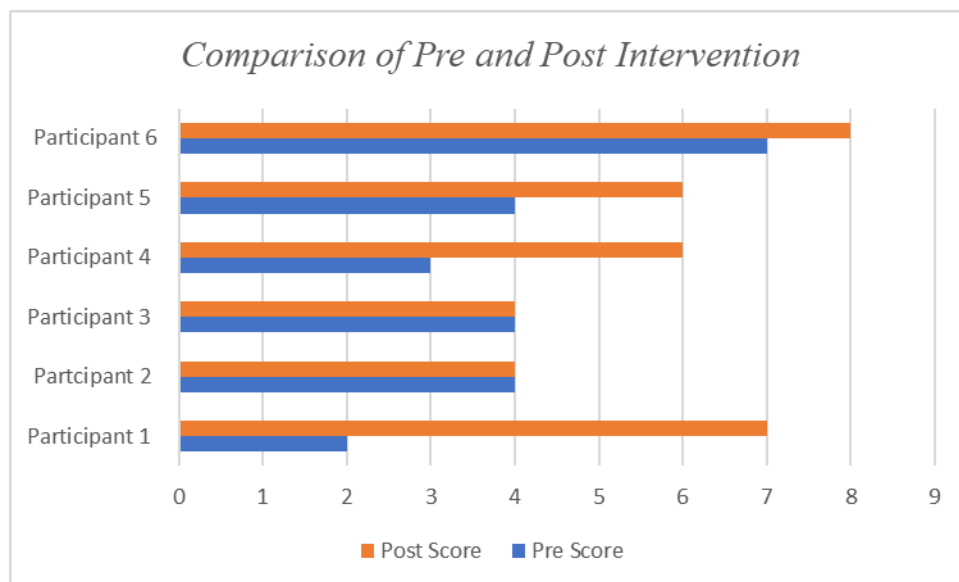


Note: Figure 6a shows participants' Grace and Courtesy Intervention

The intervention made a positive impact on the classroom as the participants had higher scores when they were questioned post-intervention. Initially, the younger students answered “no” to the pre-interview questions, but when conducting the post-intervention interview, the younger students answered in full sentences. An example is participant 3 answering question number 5 on the post-interview, “Can I have my chair back, please”?

**Figure 6b**

*Pre- and Post-Score Intervention with Participants Scores*



Note: Figure 6b displays the participant's scores pre- and post-intervention

Figure 6b compares the pre-and post-intervention that showed an 11-point increase in understanding. The children were hopefully exposed to a wealth of socially appropriate language and behavior to succeed in their communities. The focus on Grace and Courtesy positively affected the classroom as the participants came to adopt independence through the language that Grace and Courtesy provide to work through social situations, express feelings, and respectfully regard people and things.

### **Action Plan**

While the focus on Grace and Courtesy was beneficial in the classroom, more work needs to be done. An emphasis on Grace and Courtesy is necessary for classrooms across the United States of America because it encompasses social-emotional learning in promoting the development of the whole child. While a small number of participants participated in this study, there should be further research with a more significant portion of participants over a longer period and additional data collection forms. I could see how the youngest learners could absorb

the language and actions they observed during the morning meetings and throughout the day when necessary. The stifling of natural communication due to the COVID pandemic, the decline of social courtesies, and respect for one another as humans are signs that we need immediate action in our schools to ensure that our children and future leaders have a future to be a part of. I was inspired to conduct this intervention as I saw the need after observing instances where there was a lack of empathy, community, and appropriate problem-solving skills. I am determined to continue my work as an advocate of peace in the classroom.

Figure A

*Interview Questions of Each Child  
Pre-Grace and Courtesy Concentration Week 1*

Question	Option 1	Option 2	Other
<b>Do you say Good Morning/ Hello/ Goodbye when you come to school/leave?</b>	Goodbye to mom and or dad! I say hello to my teachers and friends!	I walk inside. I don't say hello or goodbye.	
<b>When do you wash your hands?</b>	Arrive at school, use the bathroom before I eat, and come in from outside (At least 2 of these)	I don't, I don't like to, or I don't have to wash my hands . . .	
<b>How do you get a teacher's or another child's attention when they can't hear you?</b>	I go up to the friend to speak. I put my hand on the teacher softly.	I talk louder or yell to make them hear me.	
<b>How do I tell someone to stop touching my work?</b>	I ask them to please stop, and I will tell the teacher	I yell with a big voice, "leave me alone. " and I am NOT your friend	
<b>What do you do when someone is in your way or your seat?</b>	I ask, "Can I have my seat back, please?"	I tell them, "Get out of my seat" or "Get out of my way."	
<b>What happens if someone pushes or hits you?</b>	I ask them to stop with a strong voice or say, "I don't like that"! I tell the teacher.	I will hit them because they hit me.	
<b>What do you do when you see that a child is sad or crying?</b>	I ask them if they are ok?	Nothing	
<b>What do you do when you are finished with an activity/ work?</b>	I put my activity/ work back on the shelf when I finish.	I give my work to a friend or leave it out because I don't know where it goes.	

Figure B

*Suggested Grace and Courtesy Lessons Over the Research Period to be Presented and Modeled Weekly*

<b>How to say Hello and Goodbye</b>	<b>What To Do if Someone Pushes or Hits You</b>	<b>How To Knock on the Bathroom Door</b>	<b>How To Introduce Myself</b>	<b>What To Do When Someone is in Your Way</b>	<b>Please and Thank You</b>
<b>How to wash your hands</b>	<b>Saying Excuse Me</b>	<b>How To Ask for Help</b>	<b>How To Say No in a Polite Way</b>	<b>How To Tell Someone How You Feel</b>	<b>How To Stand in Line</b>
<b>How to Get Your Teacher's or a Friend's Attention When They Can't Hear You</b>	<b>How To Ask a Friend to Play</b>	<b>Walking Around the Work Mats</b>	<b>Using Table Manners</b>	<b>Using Kind Words vs. Unkind Words</b>	<b>How To Ask A Friend to Share</b>
<b>How to tell someone to stop touching your work</b>	<b>Making Eye Contact</b>	<b>Asking Someone if They Need Help</b>	<b>Asking if someone is ok</b>	<b>How to sit in a group</b>	<b>Taking Turns in a Group</b>
<b>How to help someone who is sad or crying</b>	<b>Using Gentle Hands</b>	<b>Asking Someone if They Want a Hug</b>	<b>How to Say I'm Sorry and How to Accept an Apology</b>	<b>How To Take a Break</b>	<b>Taking Turns Listening when Working out A Problem</b>
<b>How to put your work or activity away</b>	<b>How to Give a Younger Friend a Lesson</b>	<b>How to Read/ Show a Book to the Class</b>	<b>How To Ask Your Friends to Speak Quietly in a Nice Way</b>	<b>How To Help Friends Find Activities to Work on</b>	<b>How To Lead a Circle</b>

Note: This is a data tool to give Grace and Courtesy lessons.

**Figure C**

*Signs Of Peace Weekly Tally*

<b>Signs of Peace in the Classroom</b>	<b>Tuesday 10:45 am</b>	<b>Friday 10:45 am</b>
Are children working on their chosen activities respectfully, either independently or together?		
Are children putting their work away or receiving help from others to put their work away?		
Are children using respectful language with one another and with the teachers?		
Are children using respecting the classroom rules (walking, using appropriate voice volumes, respecting others' personal space)		
<i>Notes:</i>	<i>Notes:</i>	<i>Notes:</i>

**(Per student) 1 = yes    2 = no**

Note: This data tool was used to determine whether the participants distributed signs of peace.

Figure D

*Interview Questions of Each Child*  
*Post Grace and Courtesy Concentration Week 6*

Question	Option 1	Option 2	Other
<b>Do you say Good Morning/ Hello/ Goodbye when you come to school/leave?</b>	Goodbye to mom and or dad! I say hello to my teachers and friends!	I just walk inside. I don't say hello or goodbye.	
<b>When do you wash your hands?</b>	Arrive at school, use the bathroom before I eat, and come in from outside (At least 2 of these)	I don't, I don't like to, or I don't have to wash my hands . . .	
<b>How do you get a teacher or another child's attention when they can't hear you?</b>	I go up to the friend to speak. I put my hand on the teacher softly.	I talk louder or yell to make them hear me.	
<b>How do I tell someone to stop touching my work?</b>	I ask them to please stop and /or I will tell the teacher	I yell with a big voice "leave me alone " and/or I am NOT your friend	
<b>What do you do when someone is in your way or in your seat?</b>	I ask, "Can I have my seat back please?"	I tell them "Get out of my seat" or "Get out of my way"	
<b>What happens if someone pushes or hits you?</b>	I ask them to stop with a strong voice or say, "I don't like that"! I tell the teacher.	I will hit them because they hit me.	
<b>What do you do when you see that a child is sad or crying?</b>	I ask them if they are, ok?	Nothing	



**Figure E**

## Daily Observation Notes

Days of the Week	Notes
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	

Note: This Data Tool was used to take general notes

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