

The Implementation of a Silence Area into the Environment and How it Impacts the  
Social-Emotional Behavior of the Students

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### Abstract

Modern children are plagued with struggles that were unheard of decades ago. Due to busy lifestyles and limitless use of technology, the social-emotional and physical well-being of children is at stake. Children today have increased attention problems, anxiety, and a lack of self-regulation and self-awareness. Mindfulness is the practice of sitting still and silent, focusing attention inward. Mindful practices cultivate peace and calm within the child, better equipping him/her to handle the stressors of life. The implementation of a silence area into a Montessori environment facilitates these practices by providing children with a space devoted to being still and silent. This action research study surrounds the implementation of a silence area as a means to benefit the social-emotional behavior of students. The students' use of the area was recorded each day. Behavior data was gathered to observe the impact the silence area had on the students. The findings showed a decrease in the amount of behavior that required redirection. Parent surveys were also conducted to gather data and observations of student behavior at home. Those survey results suggested an increase in self-awareness and self-regulation as observed by the parents. Overall, the results of this study have shown that regular use of the silence area not only provides students with moments of solitude, but also benefits their social-emotional development through gains of self-regulation and self-awareness. Although more research on the topic of "mindfulness and children" is emerging, research concurs with these findings and their promising effects.

*Keywords:* Mindfulness, mindful practices, stillness, silence, self-regulation, self-awareness, Montessori

### **Introduction**

In our fast paced society children are struggling to keep up. A world created for busy adults makes children bystanders to adult needs and demands. In many instances children are given devices and products that keep their attention for hours on end, so as to be better managed or to occupy their time. These hectic lifestyles and hours of device entertainment take a toll on children's physical and emotional well-being by inducing anxiety and causing overstimulation. However, regular practices of silence and stillness can offer children an opportunity to relax and cope within their busy lifestyles. The benefits that simple mindful practices have on physical and social-emotional development of children have proven to researchers and educators that these practices fulfill a need that is being neglected the world over. Mindfulness--a broad practice that encompasses the art of being "ever present" through stillness, silence and breathing--is on the rise in schools. Its practices are being introduced as a means to address attention and behavioral disorders as well as to boost concentration and executive functions.

Inspired by the Silence Game, I developed a study that focused on the child's desire to sit still and experience silence. The Silence Game was developed by Maria Montessori and involves a collective effort among children to maintain silence in the classroom. Children must be conscious of their voices and their movements in an effort to avoid adding any sound to the environment. When silence is achieved, the children's other senses are heightened. Having practiced the Silence Game with my own students, I discovered that children began to request the silence game during work and transition

times throughout the day. This triggered the thought that if I provided an area for the children to visit and experience moments of quiet alone-time to re-center themselves, this could that help them better handle the stresses of their day. Through my research I came across an article called *The Gift of Silence* by Cathleen Haskins, and it further inspired me to take the next steps in my study by implementing a silence area. I conducted a six-week study around the implementation of a silence area into the classroom. I tracked the children's use of the silence area and the impact its use had on their social-emotional behavior. I also collected the data on their behavior through the use of a behavior scale and a parent survey. The goal of this action research was to determine whether or not a silence area was an effective tool in helping children cope with the stresses of their busy lives.

### **Literature Review**

There is a common consensus among educators and researchers that something is missing in the modern development of children. With rising numbers of students suffering from attention problems, behavior problems and anxiety, educators are looking to the age-old practice of mindfulness to meet their students' needs. Practices of mindfulness help individuals relax, meditate and breathe, with hopes of developing self-awareness, attentiveness and self-regulation. For young children who are always "go, go, go," mindful practices provide them with moments of peace and calm that can benefit their self-awareness of what they need and their self-regulation of how to obtain what they need. With that being said, there are a variety of simple ways to implement mindful practices into classrooms, centers and at home.

### **The Modern Child's Need for Silence**

Children today grow up in a fast-paced world of non-stop, insistent noise and instant gratification. Gone for many are the simple moments of silence to be lost in thought or even in boredom; simple moments that help them develop imagination and self-awareness. Children's days are planned to the minute with school, daycare, errands and extra-curricular activities. They are frantically being whisked from one thing to the next, not having the opportunity to experience stillness or silence until bedtime. This is problematic, because the expectation to always participate and keep up develops anxiety and stress within children. In his book, *In Praise of Slowness*, Carl Honoré (2004) comments on the health problems children suffer from when leading rushed lives. Children as young as five are suffering from stress induced upset stomachs, headaches, insomnia, depression and eating disorders.

Busy, hectic lifestyles are something adults are more equipped to handle, yet they too are always looking for moments to unwind and relax. These moments of peace often come once the children are off and occupied. In most cases it is television, tablets, smartphones, video games or flashy electronic toys that are keeping children's attention. A study out of Boston confirms that parents most often give their children technology as a calming tool when the child is upset and/or to keep the peace and quiet in the house (Radesky et al., 2016). That is not to say that allowing children to use these things is bad, it is the extent to which children are using these devices that is staggering. Hours upon hours, day after day, children are using devices to fill their time. In his book, *Under Pressure*, Carl Honoré (2008) writes that U.S. children under the age of six spend the same amount of time gazing at screened devices as they do playing outdoors. This

amount of technology use cumulates and can begin to cause significant health and emotional issues in children.

Honoré continues by addressing the noise and imagery that over-stimulates young minds. In her book, *Calm and Compassionate Children*, Susan Dermond (2007) concurs with Honore's concern of over-stimulation in children. She adds that in order to cope with the excess stimuli of their surroundings (toys, technology and radio), children begin to suppress their awareness of the environment and people around them. Dermond explains that with suppression of awareness, children become disconnected with themselves and others. However, all is not lost, because the solution is simple. Allow children daily moments of peace. Yes, some busyness and stress is inevitable, but if given regular opportunity to relax and unwind, children will be able to cope better with the world around them.

### **The Benefits of Mindful Practices: Silence and Stillness**

With the many stressors children have to face, they can benefit immensely from engaging in the simple practices of silence and stillness throughout their day. Mindful practices include slowing down, quieting the mind and body, taking slow, even breaths, and experiencing silence. These practices have been shown to increase creativity, concentration, self-regulation, and executive functions. In speaking of creativity, writer Cathleen Haskins (2011) references famous authors and poets, such as Emily Dickinson and Henry David Thoreau, who attest to the necessity of silence and solitude as being conducive for creativity and gaining awareness of the miracle of life.

In regard to executive functions, a study published in the *Journal of Applied School Psychology* found an increase in executive functions, metacognition and behavioral

regulation in children after participating in regular mindful practices of meditation, stillness and awareness building (Flook, L., Smalley, S.L. et al. 2010). Regular practices of mindfulness have also been shown to boost children's physical and social-emotional health as well. A study in the *Journal of Child and Family Studies* reported that mindful practices are effective in reducing attention-related problems and shows promise in managing anxiety symptoms and behavioral problems in children with clinically evaluated levels of anxiety (Semple, R. J. et al., 2010).

Similarly, a study out of California shares the benefits a program called *Mindful Schools* had on classroom management in diminishing disruptive behavior. Conducted among 409 inner city students, the 12-week program implemented mindful practices of stillness, breathing, attentiveness, emotion sharing, etc. After several weeks of intervention, teachers reported students' improvements in paying attention, self-control, participation in activities, and caring/respect for others (Black, 2014).

Additionally, in her book, Dermond speaks to the use of silence and stillness as essential to self-knowledge. She talks of two children with different temperaments (social/out-going versus quiet/reserved) and the benefits they both experienced with silence. Though the duration of silence was different for each child (as long as each needed), the benefits were similar: calm, recharged and at peace. Dermond continues by referencing Howard Gardner and his thoughts on *intrapersonal intelligence*, defining it as an understanding of one's self: who you are, what you can do, what you want to do and how you react to things. She urges that for children, intrapersonal intelligence is as important as academic intelligence and thus should be devoted as much time and attention (2007). In recognizing the problem, and being aware of the benefits mindful

practices can have on children's overall development, the next step is crucial-implementation of these practices into the lifestyles of children.

### **Implementing Regular Practices of Silence and Stillness**

Providing children with opportunities to experience silence and stillness is simple, but its benefits will have a lasting effect on children's well-being. Implementing mindful practices can happen in a number of ways. They can be practiced in whole group settings such as childcare centers and schools; or in individual and small group settings such as at home, or in the car. In her writings, Haskins encourages creating a Silence Area at home or in the classroom. She continues by saying that giving children the freedom to choose when to participate in silence is empowering (2011). She suggests providing children with a cozy space, away from foot travel, with tranquil items such as a pendulum, a sand timer, a Zen garden, a battery operated candle, a mandala peace ring, a fish bowl and a water fountain. She stresses the importance of these tranquil items to keep the children's focus, helping them to still their bodies and quiet their minds (2010). While providing a space devoted to the sole practice of silence and stillness is effective, it is not entirely necessary, as silence can be experienced anywhere.

Dr. Ester Bucholz (1998) suggests one of the best places to experience peace and solitude is outside. In, *The Call of Solitude*, she describes human's great longing for open spaces, away from civilization and interacting with nature, as being the true key to peace and contentment. Providing children access outside to experience silence among nature is also an option when implementing a silence area. Creating a sitting space in a garden among flowers or under a tree near a bird feeder can provide children with a natural quiet area to sit, with many wonders to focus their attention.



Though ideal, experiencing outdoor peace is not always practical during the winter season. In her book *The Mindful Child*, Susan Kaiser Greenland (2010) shares simple mindful practices that can be executed anywhere to achieve a deep level of peace, relaxation and reflection. To begin, Greenland suggests, encourage children to find a comfortable meditative position and teach them to focus on their breathing: in and out. In directing their focus in this way, their bodies become quiet and still and their thoughts project inwards. Regardless of the method adults and educators choose to implement, it is of greatest importance that adults be committed to allowing children ample time for silence and stillness throughout the day. In her book, Dermond urges parents to cut back on optional activities, unplug the television, turn off the radio and electronics in car rides, model silence and stillness throughout the day and commit to providing time and a space where children can experience uninterrupted silence (2007).

Similarly, Angeline Lillard (2011), author of *Mindfulness Practices in Education: Montessori's Approach*, shares her belief that Montessori education incorporates many practices and values whose structures are consistent with mindfulness. She describes Montessori's emphasis on concentration, integration of mind with body, practical work and exercises like "The Silence Game" and "Walking on the Line" as mirroring mindful practices. Lillard concludes that Montessori education can be viewed as a form of mindfulness education and can be considered a viable option for those interested in the mindful development of children.

Ultimately, continued efforts using mindful practices in the classroom, at home or within the Montessori environment, will provide children with the power to calm

themselves down in stressful situations, deepen their self-awareness of their own feelings and needs, and develop skills to thrive in life.

### **Current Research on the Benefits of Mindfulness**

Though currently deficient, more research is emerging on the use of mindful practices among children. Successful studies have been conducted finding the benefits mindful practices have among adolescence and adults, but positive findings on its use with children are scarce due to the lack of effective research being conducted. In their writings Mark Greenberg and Alexis Harris (2014) explain that this lack of findings is due in part to the little research being conducted on the subject, but also to the ineffective approaches current mindfulness studies on children represent. They elaborate by stating that current research suffers from problems in design, sample size, and measurements, skewing the validity of its findings.

Angeline Lillard expresses a similar concern with current research of mindfulness and children. She explains that what may be practical methods of data collection with adolescences and adults may not have practical applications among children (2011). For example, measuring how long a subject can sit still and silent would not be an effective method for children, because it is not an age-appropriate request, when taking into account a child's need for movement.

Despite these flaws in current research, Greenberg and Harris report a positive trend among the studies that highlight benefits of mindful practices when used with children. They urge a need for more sound research to be conducted on mindful practice implementation among children to establish credible data (2014). This credible data could

then develop a solid foundation for regular use of mindfulness in schools and aim to improve children's overall quality of life.

Modern children are struggling with issues that were not even heard of generations ago. Researchers and educators have identified issues, like hectic lifestyles and over-stimulation, to be causes of physical and emotional stress in children. With that being said, there is a call for sound research to be conducted providing credible data from which to develop mindfulness education within schools. With this, more educators and parents may realize the benefits of mindful practices in helping children cope, develop and flourish in today's society. By implementing these practices in school and at home, through a daily commitment to silence, making still their body and mind, and practicing techniques of thoughtful breathing, children would be given the power to regulate themselves, gain self-knowledge and achieve happiness.

### **Research Questions**

What impact could the implementation of a silence area into the environment have on the social-emotional behavior of students?

Subsidiary Questions:

1. If an area devoted to silence were implemented into an environment, would children actively seek out silence on a regular basis?
2. What are the benefits to children who choose to engage in regular silence practices?
3. Would children begin to practice silence in other aspects of their day and not solely in the silence area?

### **Research Design and Methodology**

My purpose in implementing a silence area into the classroom was to benefit the social-emotional behavior of students. Through practices of silence and stillness, I was hoping the students would develop self-regulation and self-awareness. For my intervention, I created a silence area that could be used during the two-hour, morning work time. In using the silence area, students could sit and practice silence while observing interesting items or looking out the window. The silence area was open to all students and not just to those participating in my study. Visits to the silence area were voluntary; teachers refrained from suggesting its use to the students.

### **Participants and Setting**

The participants in this study were students in my Children's House classroom. Of the 20 participants 8 were boys and 12 were girls. Their ages ranged from two and a half to five years old. When starting the study, two participants were first-time Montessori students, four participants were toddlers who had recently transitioned up to Children's House, and the remaining twelve participants had been present in the classroom for an extended length of time. All students were able to use the silence area regardless of participation in the study or not. However, I only recorded observations for the twenty participating students. The study was conducted during the 2016-2017 school year. The data was collected for eight weeks, between the months of February and April.

The setting was in the Children's House classroom at a private Montessori childcare center in the Midwest. The center serves children from two months old to

six years old. This center includes one Infant classroom, one Toddler classroom and our Children's House classroom. This is an all-day program with part-time care available. In our Children's House classroom, there are two co-Lead teachers, with two Assistant teachers and five Aides that float in and out of the classroom throughout the day. The Children's House Lead teacher, Owner and Director of this Montessori, was out on medical leave during the start of this study. She slowly returned to her classroom duties in mid-March. The co-Lead teacher led the class in the director's absence. The Children's House classroom has two assistant teachers, of whom I am one.

### Materials



(The silence area in the beginning and the end of the study.)

Above are pictures of the silence area that I created in our classroom. The silence area consisted of a child-size rocking chair and a small table orientated next to a window. On the small table were objects that induced calmness and peace. On the wall above the table were simple instructions to, "Be Still. Be Silent." A battery operated flickering candle was used to indicate when the silence area was open. A

sand timer was used as a calming item as well as to indicate the length of a turn in the silence area. If the child desired to sit for longer than the turn of one timer they were certainly invited to do so.



The above pictures are of the items that were displayed in the silence area. (The left picture: weeks 1-4 and the right picture: weeks 4-6.) The calming items placed on the small table were changed roughly halfway through the study to keep the students interested in the silence area. The first set of items included a small table-top fountain, a sand picture, a bubble timer and the book *When I Make Silence* by Jennifer Howard. The items were then changed and included a perpetual motion machine, a Zen garden and a mini magnetic goldfish. The flickering candle and sand timer were still present on the table as well. As seen in the picture above, the students liked to adorn the table with flowers, too. I encouraged and appreciated this, as it helped them make the area their own.

## Procedure

I began my study by sending home permission letters introducing my plan to implement a silence area into our classroom in hopes of benefiting the social-

emotional behavior of the students. (See Appendix A) For the qualitative aspects of my study, I collected data in three parts in hopes of answering my three research questions. My first method of collection was the use of a behavior scale. Upon parent approval, I began collecting baseline data on work time behavior of the twenty participants. For ten days prior to implementing the silence area, I observed the students during morning work time. Five times during each work period (in 30 minute intervals from 9:30 to 11:30) I observed and recorded participants' behavior. I recorded these baseline data on a behavior scale that assigned redirected behavior with a score: No Redirect- 0, Subtle Redirect-1, Redirect- 2, and Explicit Redirect- 3. (See Appendix B for definitions of each score.)

A few days before finishing the baseline behavior collection, I began implementing the silence area into the classroom. I first set up the table and the rocking chair on a rug by the window to pique the students' interest in the developing area. The next day, I posted a sign, "Be Still. Be Silent." on the wall and placed a small candle on the table. During circle time, I read the book, *When I Make Silence* by Jennifer Howard and explained that the candle indicated when the silence area was open and that the aim of the silence area was to practice silence and stillness. On the day of implementation, I placed the glass sand timer, the table fountain, the sand picture and the bubble timer on the table. During circle time, I presented each of these items. I then invited the students to sit around me as I used the silence area, modeling to them how to be still and silent. I then asked for a volunteer to be a student model of how to use the silence area. I explained to everyone that when someone was in the silence area the child wanted to be left

alone, so we must respect this wish and not speak to him/her or stand around watching. I then excused the students to work time as the first student chose to sit in the silence area.

For my second method of data collection, I used a tally sheet to record each time a participant sat in the silence area. (See Appendix C) I recorded the daily visits to the silence area for six weeks. After finishing with the baseline behavior scale, I continued to keep track of the students' visits and noted observations of their experiences with the silence area. I gave individual presentations to students on the use of the silence area as needed. In week two, the 3-minute, glass timer broke and was replaced with a plastic timer. The plastic timer extended the students' turns by two minutes (if they desired to sit that long). In week three, I sent home a parent survey script, informing parents of questions to think about and things to observe as I implemented the silence area into the classroom. (See Appendix D) In week four, I introduced the new calming items: the perpetual motion machine, the magnetic fish and the Zen garden, and removed the old items. I again presented these new items during circle times and then modeled how to use them in the silence area. The candle and the sand timer remained on the table for further use. In week five, I began collecting final behavior data using the work time behavior scale once again. For ten more days, I recorded participating students' behavior five times a day.

My third method of data collection was through a parent survey. In the fifth week of the study, I also sent out the parent survey on student use of the silence area. (See Appendix E) The parent survey contained the same questions that the parents were asked to consider initially; however, the parent survey also had room

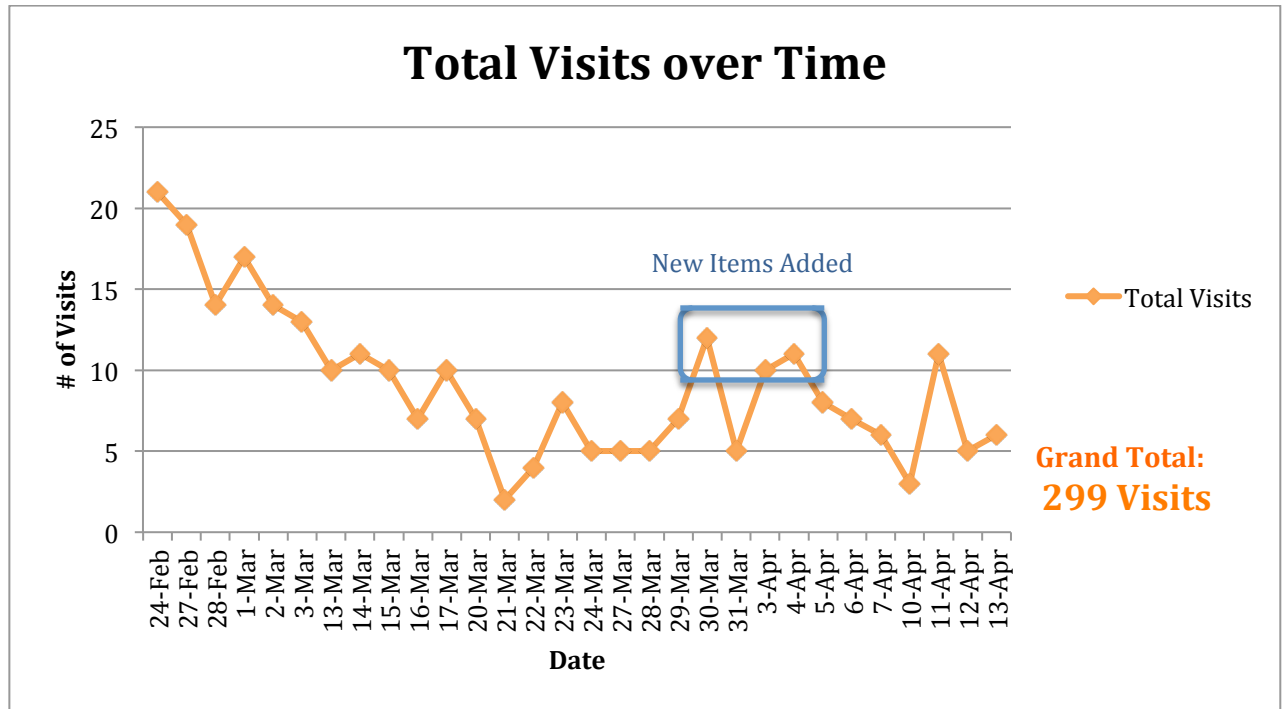


to respond and leave comments. I emailed the survey out to participating parents and followed up with hard copies of the survey for those who were easier to reach in person. By the end of the sixth week, I had recorded the final ten days of work time behavior data, recorded thirty days of participants' visits to the silence area and had received sixteen out of twenty participant responses to the parent survey.

### **Results**

In implementing a silence area into our classroom, my hope was to benefit the social-emotional behavior of the students. My overall goal was to see a decrease in disruptive behavior, which required redirection as the children regularly used the silence area. From analyzing my data, I was able to understand what worked effectively and what could be improved upon for future use of the area.

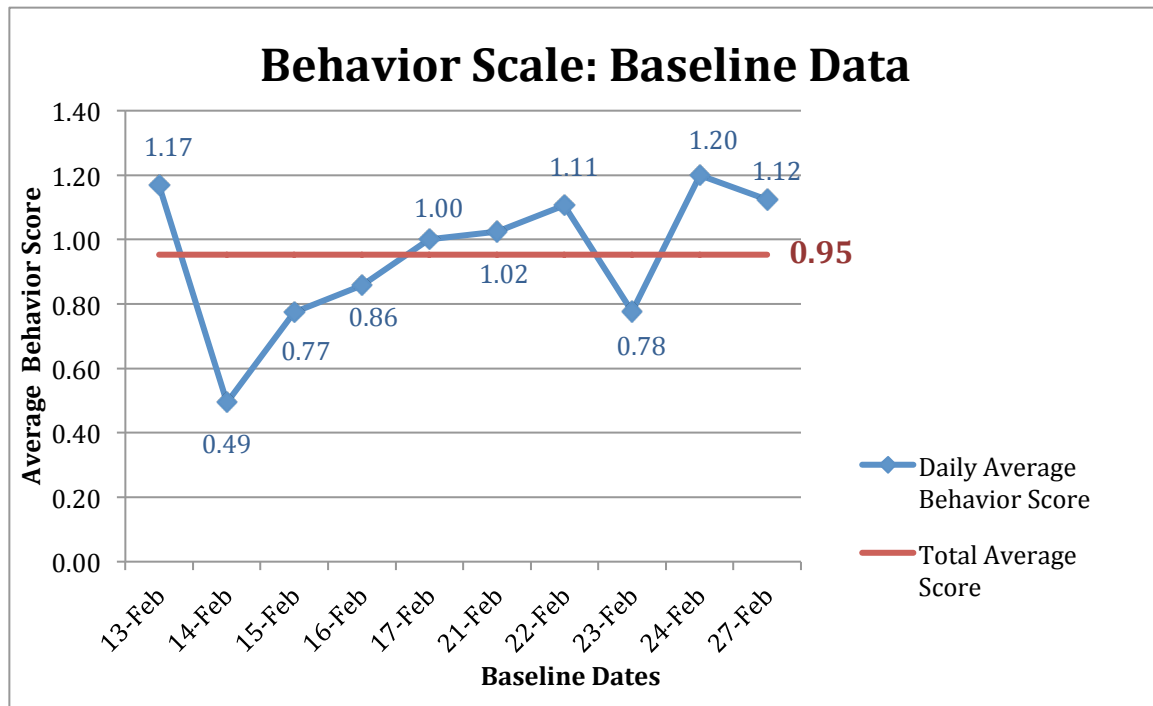
Tally Record Sheet:



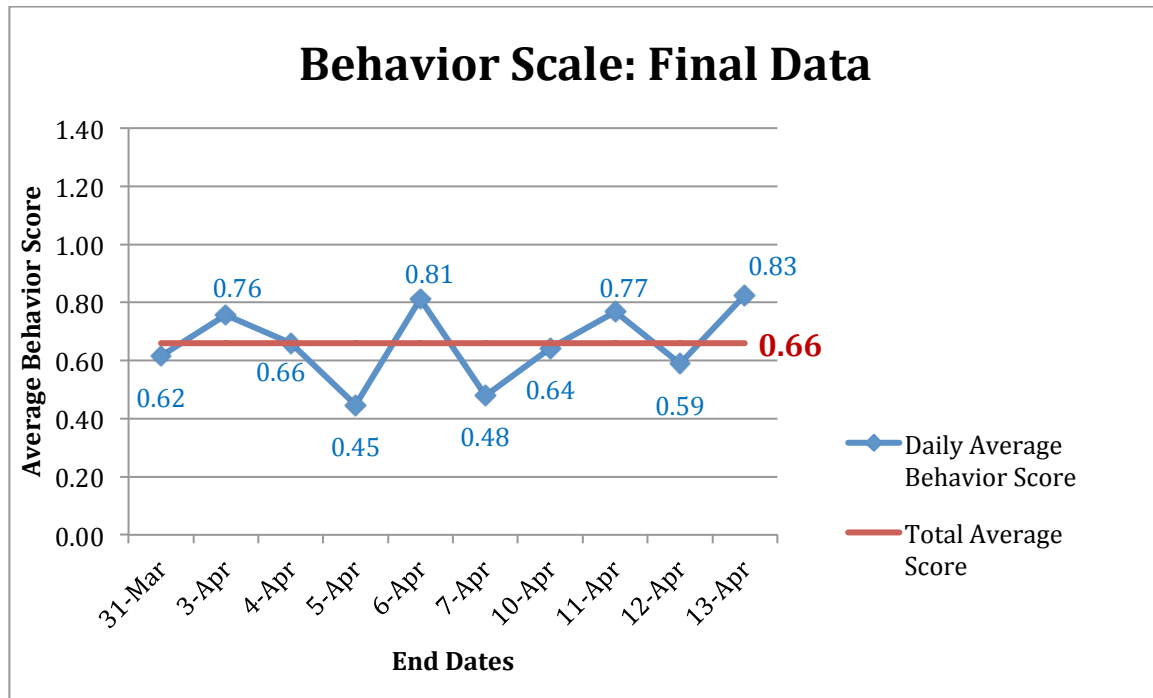
**Figure 1: Total Visits Over Time:** The above plot graph displays the total visits to the silence area per day (denoted in orange). It can be seen that visits to the area decreased over time. The blue rectangle above highlights a peak in visits, which corresponds with adding new items to the silence area. The graph also shows two dips in visits. On March 21<sup>st</sup>, we had an in-school puppet show, which ran for half of the work time. The second was on April 10<sup>th</sup>, but this day was a normal two-hour work period, so it reflects low interest in the area for the day. The graph indicates that the silence area was visited a total of 299 times during the thirty-day data collection period. In analyzing the data, I realize that more frequent changes of the objects could increase visits to the area. Evidence of this can be seen in the peak highlighted above. While some students visited multiple times a day, others only visited a few times the whole study. This just tells me that the silence area did not

interest everyone. Overall, the 299 total visits to the silence area could have contributed to the decrease in the final behavior scores (See Figure 4 below).

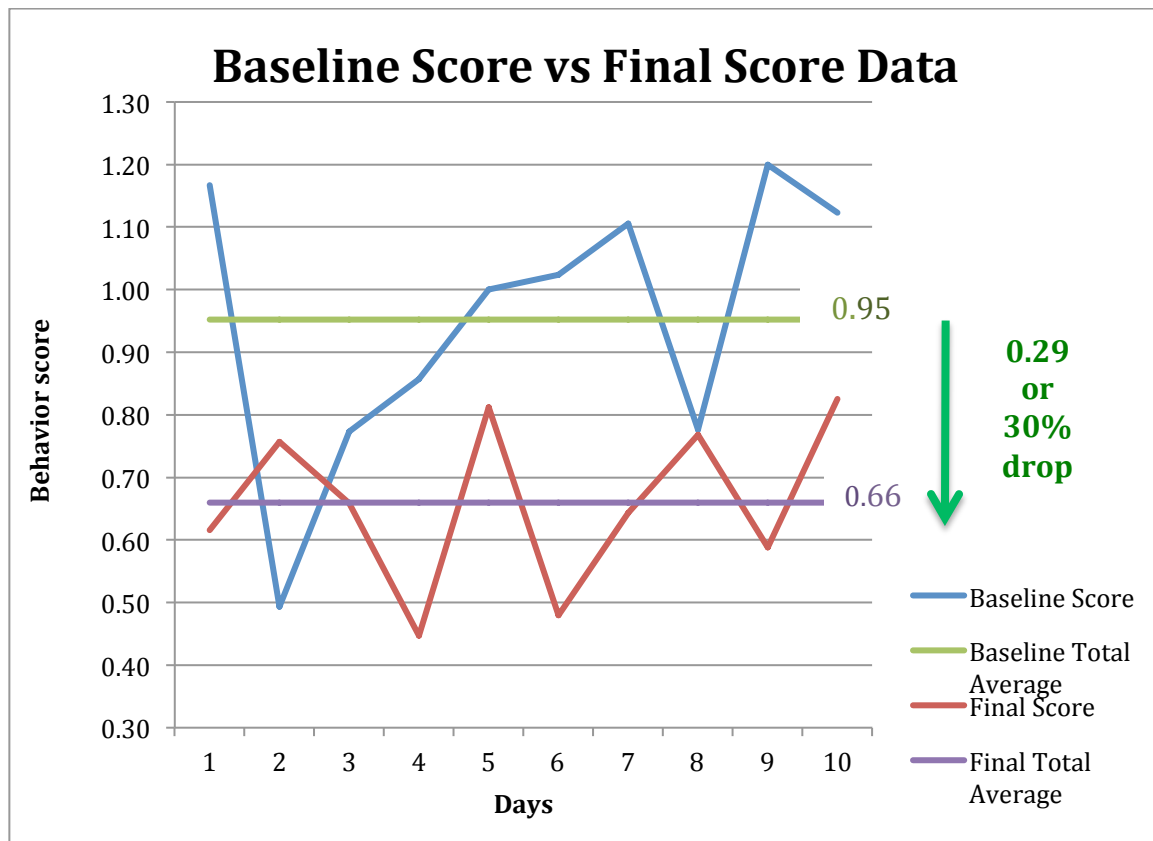
Behavior Scale:



**Figure 2: Behavior Scale- Baseline Data:** The above plot graph represents the average of the behavior scores per day (denoted in blue) collected *before* the implementation of the silence area. The graph includes ten-day total average behavior score for the baseline collection (denoted in red). As seen above, the baseline behavior score (average) was 0.95 out of a 0 to 3.0 scale. This means that during these ten days of work time, the average participant needed daily *Subtle Redirection* (score of 1) while completing their work tasks.

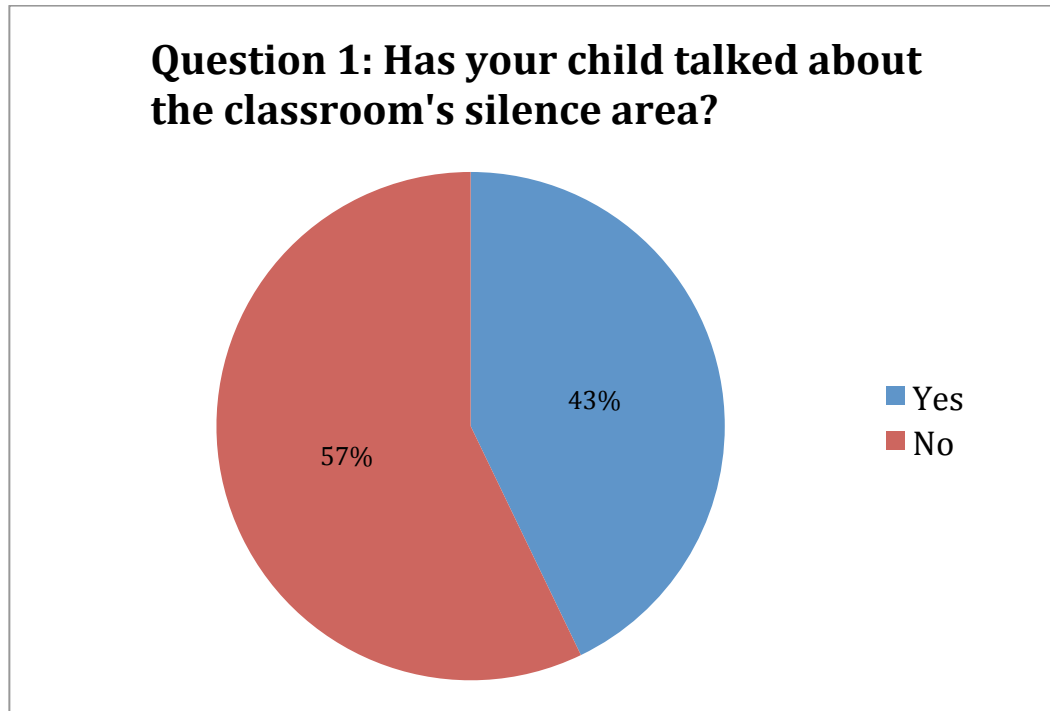


**Figure 3: Behavior Scale- Final Data:** The above plot graph represents the average behavior scores for ten days (denoted in blue), collected *after* several weeks of intervention using the silence area. It includes a ten-day total average behavior score for the final collection (denoted in red). As seen above, the baseline behavior score (average) was 0.66 out of a 0 to 3.0 scale. This score has decreased from baseline data collection (in Figure 2). This means that during these ten days of work time, the average participant either needed daily *Subtle Redirection* (score of 1) or *No Redirection* (score of 0) while completing their work tasks.

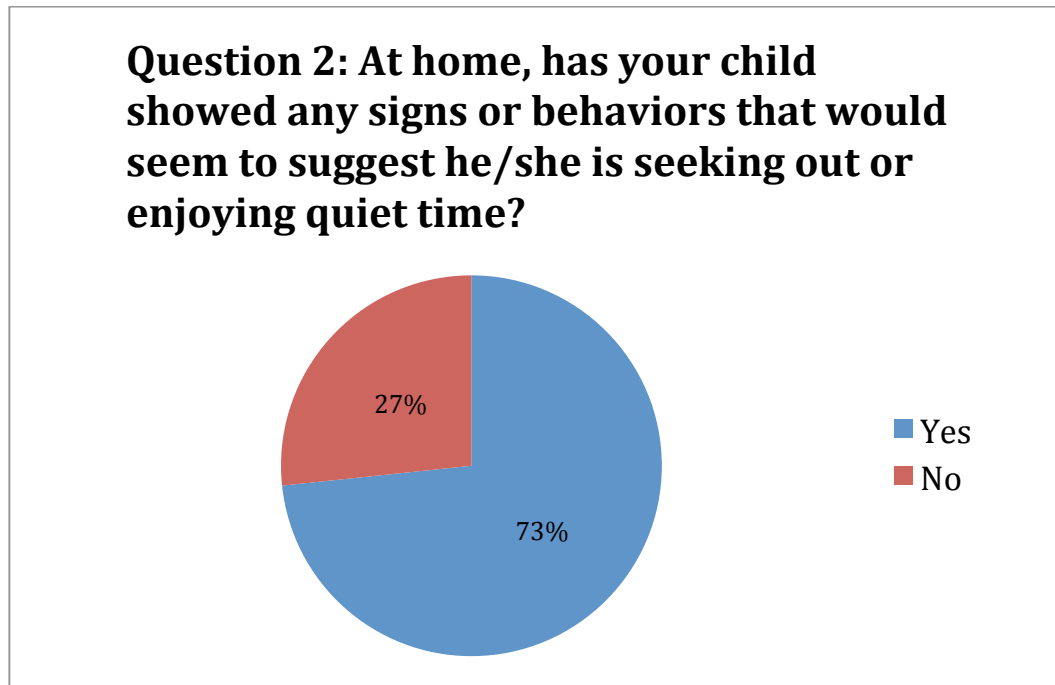


**Figure 4: Baseline Score vs. Final Score Data:** With little observable change when looking at Figure 2 and Figure 3 separately, I decided to superimpose the graphs to see the change together. In the graph above, a decrease can be seen in behavior scores from the Baseline data (denoted in blue) to the Final data (denoted in red). There you can also see the behavior score averages displayed: Baseline Total Average (denoted in green) and Final Total Average (denoted in purple). When comparing the data on a graph together in this way, I am able to analyze the decrease in behavior scores more thoroughly. The behavior decreased .29 points or roughly 30% over the course of the study. I believe these results are promising. They point to a trend, where continuous use of the silence area could lead to a greater decrease in behavior that requires redirection.

Parent Survey:



**Figure 5:** The above pie chart is a representation of the responses from parents to *Question 1: Has your child talked about the classroom's silence area?* As can be seen, the majority of responses were *No*. This is not an alarming result, considering the average age of the participants was three-years-old and the average length of time they were attending school was eight hours a day. Therefore, it can be assumed that some of the younger students may not have been able to recollect the morning activities in which they participated.

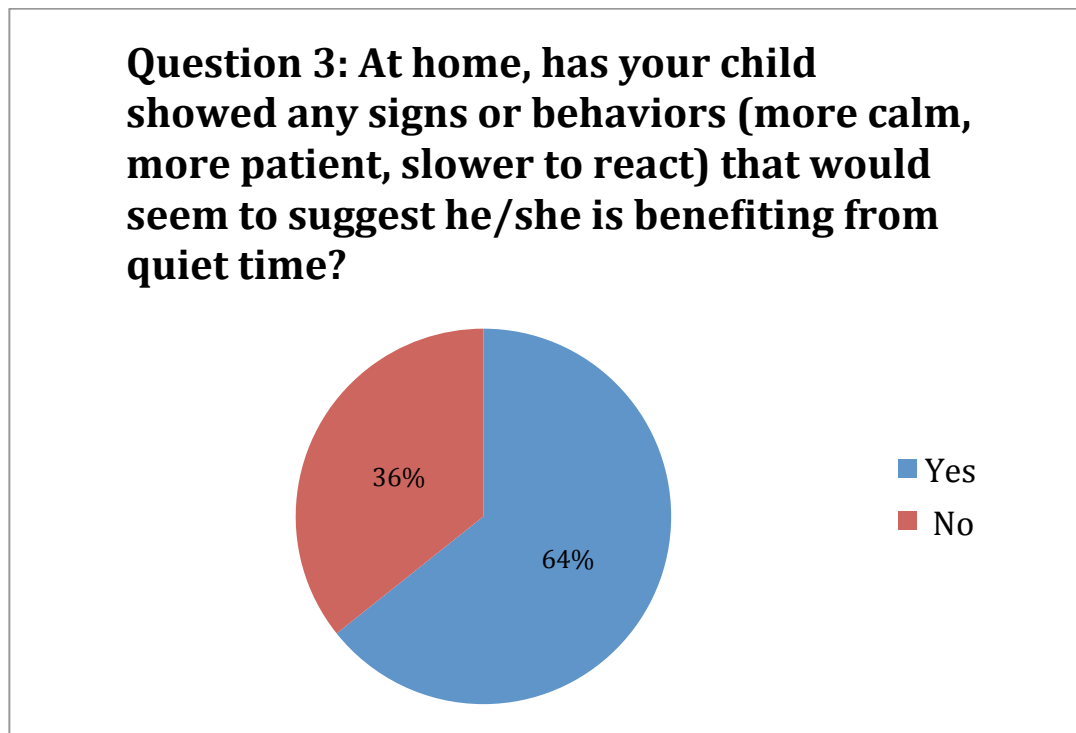


**Figure 6:** The above pie chart is a representation of the responses from parents to *Question 2: At home, has your child showed any signs or behaviors that would seem to suggest he/she is seeking out or enjoying quiet time?* As can be seen, the majority of responses here were *Yes*. This reveals that 73% of parents have observed their child seeking out and/or practicing quiet time at home. These findings are hopeful to see, because they suggest that students are developing self-awareness and realizing when they need moments of silence throughout their day.

Below is a list of responses from parents when asked Question 2:

- "... he often says he needs to rest for a while and then goes off and plays quietly."
- "... not so much seeking it out, rather verbalizing when things are too much."

- "... she tells us from time to time that she wants to be alone and goes into her bedroom to play by herself."
- "She frequently has quiet play time in her room on her own."



**Figure 7:** The above pie chart is a representation of the responses from parents to *Question 3: At home, has your child showed any signs or behaviors (more calm, more patient, slower to react) that would seem to suggest he/she is benefiting from quiet time?* As can be seen, the majority of responses here were *Yes*. This reveals that 64% of parents believe that practicing silence is benefiting their child's behavior. These are promising findings as well, because they suggest that the students are developing self-regulation through their practices of silence.

Below is a list of responses from parents when asked Question 3:

- "... he talks about his brother being too loud at times."



- “He is becoming more patient.”
- “We have seen fewer tantrums and meltdowns at home during the last few weeks.”
- “She made a fort by herself and said that she was going to have quiet time in her fort.”
- “He has definitely been more patient and has enjoyed more quiet play time.”

## **Discussion**

### **Limitations**

This study contains multiple limitations to consider. One of these is that half the study was conducted in the absence of the Director/Lead. I believe her absence could have contributed to the higher behavior scores in the baseline data, and then, in turn, the lower behavior scores upon her return. I believe extending the study in the presence of Ms. Natasha would have been ideal and may have led to more reliable data for the behavior scale. With that being said, I do not think her absence affected the number of visits to the silence area or the parent surveys results.

Another limitation could be the placement of the silence area. It was placed near a window, which gave the students an option to view nature, but it was not far enough from foot traffic. With only two window options, I chose the one with available space. Ideally, a corner of the room may have made for a more peaceful silence nook.

Yet another limitation to consider is my interpretation of the participants' behavior during work time. Though I strove for consistency from day to day and from baseline to final data collections, the behavior scores could have been subject to human error. I tried to follow the behavior descriptions I had set in place when considering the students' behavior during work time. For example, I would have assigned a child a score of one for "Subtle Redirect" if the child was walking around the room with no distraction to others OR the child was mostly focused on work, but was also distracted by peers. In interpreting if a child was causing "no distractions to others," I had to take into consideration whether he/she may be observing work while standing next to a peer, therefore causing no distraction. Similarly, in interpreting "mostly focused on work," I had to consider how far along in his/her work the child was and the extent to which peers were distracting the child. Was the child glancing up from time to time or was the child repeatedly shifting his/her focus to the peers around him/her? With that being said, the observation of one child's behavior could have been interpreted differently than a similar behavior of another child. Often times, I consulted with the other teachers in the classroom to interpret my behavior observations.

Human error could have contributed to another limitation of the study. In collecting the data for the number of visits to the silence area, it is possible that some participants' visits went unrecorded. I had enlisted the help of my fellow teachers in recording visits to the silence area, but in the hustle and bustle of work time, we may not have noticed a child take a seat, especially if the child only chose to sit for a short while.

**Future Action Plan**

I plan to continue the use of the silence area in our classroom. I have observed the positive benefits it has on the students' behavior. I have also observed the calm demeanor the students display when they use the silence area. I believe that those few minutes of peace are crucial for the child, and with continuous use of the silence area we will likely observe more benefits emerging. I will take the knowledge of this study with me to future positions and share it with educators and parents alike. This study and research have changed the way I view behavior of students, and have given me a tool to use in helping children combat the stresses they face.

My next step is to reach out to parents and encourage them to continue these mindful practices at home. I would like to inform them of the benefits that moments of silence and stillness could have on their children and encourage them to establish a silence area in their home. Being able to provide children with multiple avenues to peace, both at school and at home, could be monumental for their overall development.

Mindfulness has shown great promise in benefiting the modern child. When mindful practices are given a place in the classroom curriculum children flourish. It empowers students to have tools they need to cope with life. Regular practice of mindfulness in the classroom helps students develop attentiveness, self-regulation, self-awareness, executive functioning and respect for others.

Implementing a silence area into our environment made a significant impact on the students' behavior. Work time was more peaceful, with more students on task and lower voices being used in respect for those in the silence area. Many parents have observed their children as being more patience and calm since the silence area's implementation. Also, the children were actively seeking out silence throughout their day and they became more comfortable in requesting it from others. During work time and transitions, students would ask for the Silence Game to be played or would comment on the noise level in the room. The students began to set a new standard of quiet among themselves. Many students could be found covering their ears or signaling "shhh" to friends they believed to be too loud. All these actions were indicative of the low level of noise they now desired.

When considering the benefits of Mindfulness that have been seen through this study and discussed in literature, we can attest to the claims that Maria Montessori made over a hundred years ago when she first brought a sleeping baby into the classroom; children have a natural desire to experience silence. When given opportunities to experience silence, we know children develop more fully both physically and emotionally. Therefore, it is the duty of researchers, teachers and parents alike to do what is necessary to provide children with these opportunities, by developing sound research, becoming educated in Mindfulness and implementing these practices into homes and schools. Our aim must always be to develop the whole child: mind, body and spirit.

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## Appendix A- Permission Letter For Research

February 06, 2017

Dear Children's House Families,

As I work to complete requirements for my Montessori Credentials and Master's Degree at the University of Wisconsin - River Falls, I will be conducting an action research project. This project will focus on Montessori's use of silence and stillness in the classroom as means for children to develop self-awareness, self-control, self-regulation and grace and courtesy. I will be setting up a "silence area" in our classroom that the children may use during work time as a type of retreat from the hustle and bustle of the day. With the implementation of this area and the continuous practice of the Silence Game, I am hoping to observe the children begin to actively seek out or request silence throughout the day. Data for the study will be collected through parent surveys, anecdotal observations and photographs of the students during morning work cycle.

I would very much appreciate having your permission to use your child/children in my study. Participation is voluntary and you or your child may choose to opt out at any time. All children's identifying information will be kept confidential. I would like to also ask for permission to use pictures from the study to present my findings to my university supervisor and advisors. It is possible that this research may be shared in the future at events such as parent education nights, staff development, educational meetings and conferences.

Please sign this form and return it to me as soon as possible. I hope to begin my research in mid-February. If you have any questions or concerns about the research procedure, please feel free to contact me directly or you may also contact the UWRF Office of Grants and Research at (715) 425 - 3195.

Thank You Kindly,

Colleen Veilleux  
Children's House Assistant Teacher

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I grant permission for my child to participate in the research study described above.

Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

I grant permission for my child to be photographed for the study as described above.

Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

Parent Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature (please sign) \_\_\_\_\_

Child's/Children's Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B – Work Time Behavior Scale Instructions and Record Sheet

**Student Work Time Behavior Observations**

(It is important this information be kept confidential. Must return to the cabinet when finished.)

1. Record today's date at the top.
2. For each time labeled on the sheet above, observe and record the work behaviors of the students below, using only initials, by placing their initials in the corresponding column representing the behavior they are exhibiting at that point in the work cycle.

Students: *(The initials of participating students were listed here.)*

3. Behaviors to be observe. The columns are labeled *No Redirect*, *Subtle Redirect*, *Redirect* and *Explicit Redirect*. Below is a definition for each behavior:

***No Redirect:*** The child is focused on a work.

***Subtle Redirect:*** The child is walking around the classroom looking for work for a few minutes, with no disruptions to others. OR the child is mostly focused on work, but is often distracted by peers.

***Redirect:*** The child has been walking around the classroom looking for work for several minutes, with little disruption to others. OR the child has a work out and is struggling to focus on completing it.

***Explicit Redirect:*** The child has been walking around the classroom looking for work for several plus minutes, disrupting the work of others.

4. Between each observation (every 30 minutes), place the record sheet out of sight and in the cabinet.
5. When work time is over, place the completed record sheet in the manila envelope found in the cabinet.

*(See Behavior Scale Record Sheet Below)*

Appendix B Continued - Work Time Behavior Scale Instructions and Record Sheet  
**Work Time Behavior Scale**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

	No Redirect	Subtle Redirect	Redirect	Explicit Redirect	Totals
9:30 am					
10:00 am					
10:30 am					
11:00 am					
11:30 am					



Appendix C – Tally Recording Sheet for Visits to the Silence Area

(Student)	Monday —	Tuesday —	Wednesday —	Thursday —	Friday —	Total
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
13						
14						
15						
16						
17						
18						
19						
20						

## Appendix D – Parent Survey Script

March 02, 2017

Dear Children's House Parents,

This week, I implemented a silence area into your child's classroom. The silence area may be used by the children to relax, practice silence (being still and quiet) and to take short breaks from work. By introducing this silence area into the environment I am hoping to observe changes in the children's self-awareness and self-regulation as they go about their school day: working, participating and interacting with their peers and teachers.

In a few weeks, you will receive a short survey. In the survey you will be asked the following question:

*1. Has your child talked about the classroom's silence area? Y/N*

*Comments:*

*2. At home, has your child showed any signs or behaviors that would seem to suggest they are seeking out or enjoying quiet time? Y/N*

*Comments:*

*3. At home, has your child showed any signs or behaviors (more calm, more patient, slower to react) that would seem to suggest they are benefiting from quiet time? Y/N*

*Comments:*

Please consider these questions, so you may share your observations with me on the actual survey in late-March.

Thank you for your participation and support!

Sincerely,

Ms. Colleen

## Appendix E – Parent Survey

**Parent Survey: Children's House Silence Area**

**Dear Children's House Parents,**

**Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions in regards to the Silence Area in our classroom and your child's use of the area. Please feel free to share any other observations of your child that you find particularly interesting, in the comment sections below each question. Thank You!**

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Has your child talked about the classroom's silence area?      Yes/No**

*Comments:*

**2. At home, has your child showed any signs or behaviors that would seem to suggest they are seeking out or enjoying quiet time?      Yes/No**

*Comments:*

**3. At home, has your child showed any signs or behaviors (more calm, more patient, slower to react) that would seem to suggest they are benefiting from quiet time?      Yes/No**

*Comments:*

Thank you for your participation, I truly appreciate it! ~ Ms. Colleen