

# **Developing a Peaceful In-Class Mealtime for an Early Childhood Classroom**

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### Abstract

Within the Early Childhood setting, mealtimes are often fraught with high-energy, time constraints, and reminders to “talk less and eat more.” However, traditionally, a meal is a calm, social event in which the participants share food in a relaxed atmosphere. In this study, in order to create a more collaborative and peaceful mealtime experience, the location for lunch consumption for eight Montessori students, ages four and five, was switched from the cafeteria to the classroom, thereby eliminating time constraints and diminishing distractions. Adaptations to the furnishings and the atmosphere were also put into effect: a size appropriate table designed for the students’ shorter stature, the pouring and passing of a glass water pitcher, and the use of plates instead of lunchboxes. The teacher also ate with the students so as to serve as a role model and participant, rather than just as a facilitator or supervisor. Observations were made before and after the location change to detect a potential increase in collaboration, conversation, and manners. These changes were charted through observation journals, checklists, and student interviews and then analyzed for results. The results showed that both the teacher and the students preferred lunch in the classroom and that there was an increase in mealtime manners, as well as concentration and collaboration. This suggests that interventions in the meal setting can positively affect the teacher’s and students’ attitude and behavior during and after a meal and that a peaceful, calm mealtime experience can be achieved with young children.

Key Words: Early Childhood, mealtime, lunch, manners, Montessori, peaceful

### **Literature Review**

Within the school setting, mealtimes are fraught with various challenges and learning opportunities. Done well, a meal can provide a rich environment in which students consume their food in a peaceful, yet social atmosphere. Done poorly, the students are forced to focus all their energies on eating the food in front of them, and the mood is tense and uptight. Upon first glance at the lunchroom scene, the biggest consideration appears to be the students' behavior. Do they use manners? Do they consume the food put in front of them? Do they enjoy conversation amongst themselves? But these factors do not occur in a vacuum. Rather, the students' behavior is affected by a number of variables, the first being the teachers or the adults in charge as they are the ones who determine the rules and set the tone. The second variable is the nature of the meal. Family-Style Dining (FSD) is a widely endorsed meal practice because it allows the students to participate in and become invested in the entire meal process (Dev, Speirs, McBride, Donovan, & Chapman-Novakofski, 2014). The setting of meal also plays a significant role as the location can either increase distractions or encourage tranquility. Finally, only after all of these factors have been addressed, can the focus shift to the students' behavior because their actions are the end results. In order to provide the best mealtime environment for preschool age children, then, the teacher's role, the meal style, the setting, and the student's behavior each need to be considered.

#### **The Teacher's Role**

The teacher has two clear functions within the meal setting—facilitator and role-model. Within her role as facilitator, she establishes and enforces the ground rules. As role-model, she acts a guide to students for exploring new foods and behaving with grace and

courtesy. Her role must encompass both of these characteristics in order to offer the best mealtime environment.

**Teacher as Facilitator.** “According to teachers, the children and adults involved in mealtimes can both positively and negatively influence the creation of a PME [positive mealtime environment] through setting the emotional tone” (Mita, Gray, & Goodell, 2015, p. 40). According to Ahn and Nelson, childcare providers typically fall into one of three teaching styles during a mealtime: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. The authoritarian teacher requires students to eat all the food on their plate and offers negative commentary. Authoritative teachers encourage the students to follow the rules through positive reinforcement and foster healthy attitudes toward new foods by urging the students to try at least one bite. The permissive teacher allows the students to eat whatever strikes their fancy regardless of nutritional value. The authoritative style is considered the best practice as the authoritarian style often promotes dissent from the students and the permissive style forfeits health in favor of short-sighted lenience. The authoritative style, meanwhile, falls in the middle, neither neglecting nutrition nor promoting aversion through forced consumption, but rather encouraging food exploration, while following the cues from the child regarding his own satiation (Ahn & Nelson, 2015).

Indeed, promoting self-awareness in matters of satiation is a very important role for the teacher as facilitator. This matter is often overlooked.

Verbally cuing children to attend to hunger and satiation can be supportive of their self-regulation of energy intake, however there is evidence demonstrating that adults’ verbal communication at mealtimes is predominantly detrimental to children’s attention to internal cues of hunger and fullness. Adults often override young children’s internal cues

of hunger and satiation by controlling food intake, rewarding and bribing with food, and restricting food. (Ramsay, et al., 2010, p. 265)

Teachers then need to be mindful of the language they employ during mealtimes. Rather than giving commands about consuming the food on the plate, the teacher better supports the child's self-awareness through comments and questions about the child's internal feelings (Ramsay, et al., 2010).

Avoid setting limits on how much the children will or will not eat. Sometimes children in groups are served using the principal of equality. This translated to the rule that each child gets an equal amount. Such equality is not fair. Fairness in feeding children should be based on letting the children's natural body cues tell them when they are full or hungry. (Fletcher & Branen, 1994, p. 5)

Finally, the teacher's role as facilitator encompasses more than just her attitude and language, but also includes the practical details of running the meal. Providing a variety of healthy eating choices is listed time and time again as essential to promoting healthy eating. Whereas making decisions based upon ease and convenience can often result in worsening the overall the mealtime ambiance. "Many providers spoke of making decisions about what to feed the children on how to run the mealtime based on how it helped the childcare environment run smoothly. For example, one provider justified her decision to switch from serving the children juice to water because spilled water resulted in a simpler clean-up" (Lynch & Batal, 2011, p. 191). This desire to be pragmatic can also influence the length of time allotted to a mealtime, but it is best to allow a flexible amount of time for the children to eat, since some children take longer to eat and some foods require more chewing or preparation (Fletcher &

Branen, 1994). In her role as facilitator, the teacher needs to guard against the temptation to allow practicality to override the best interests of the children.

If adults provide for an environment that is enjoyable, children will associate eating with pleasant feelings. On the other hand, if mealtime is a time for conflict over eating or excessive discipline, eating may be associated with negative feelings and become a source of discomfort and uneasiness. (Mogharreban & Nahikian-Nelms, 1996, p. 31).

**Teacher as Role-Model.** A very relatable example of the teacher opting for practicality over the interests of the children is the teacher's own food consumption during the meal. Although it may not be the preference of the teacher, it is preferable for the students if the teacher eats with the children (Swindle, Sigman-Grant, & Branen, 2018), and it is preferable if the teacher eats the same food as the children (Mita, Gray, & Goodell, 2015). "If the caregiver sits with the children and eats the same foods as the child, he or she is providing crucial support for the development of food preferences and eating behaviors. Role-modeling is a key avenue for positively influencing the eating habits of young children" (Mogharreban & Nahikian-Nelms, 1996, p. 31). This role modeling includes food consumption, behavior, and conversation. Children who have had the opportunity to observe adults eating a new food or a disliked food are more likely to try the food being modeled despite an initial reluctance (Birch, 1996). "...[T]he early childhood educator has the opportunity to model selection and enjoyment of a variety of foods. Food in the program should be associated with opportunities and fun experiences rather than rules and restrictions. Tasting activities help children learn about foods, manners, and even about cultures" (Eliassen, 2011, p. 88).

Conversation is another means by which the teacher can role-model within the meal setting. Children naturally talk amongst themselves during a meal setting, but that does not

necessarily mean that they engage in conversation. “Talking is not just speaking. Talking involves communications—speaking *with* and *to* someone, getting feedback, and composing language in response to that feedback” (Selman, 2001, p. 15). The teacher as a role-model has the opportunity to demonstrate conversation, initiating a topic, asking questions, waiting for a reply. In one school, the teachers created a formal venue to practice conversation called “talk time” which was paired with snack. “For a while the teacher found it necessary to do most of the talking. But each month—if not each week—there were additional participants, and by the spring talk time was beginning to sound like cultured conversation” (Selman, 2001, p. 16). Because meals are social occasions, they provide a natural opportunity for the teacher to role model the give and take required in conversation.

The teacher significantly impacts the mealtime environment. She sets the tone, determines the rules, and often influences the food choices offered to the children. In her role as the facilitator of the meal, the teacher must strive to neither enforce her will at all costs (authoritarian) nor permit the students to behave and eat in whatever manner they prefer (permissive). In order to promote self-regulation, her language regarding food consumption ought to begin with the child’s feelings rather than an adult mandate to clean the plate. In planning the meal, as in all things, the wellbeing of the child should be her starting position rather than pragmatism (although practicality must certainly be a consideration). But the teacher is more than just the facilitator, she is also a role-model to the children. By eating with the students, she has the opportunity to showcase Grace and Courtesy and conversation as well as healthy food consumption. In order to begin to create a positive mealtime environment, the teacher needs to begin by adjusting her behavior and language. \

### **Family-Style Dining**

With the teacher acting as a role-model and eating with the children, the next logical step is for the meal to be served family-style. “Teachers and caregivers become role models by engaging with children at mealtime and sitting down and eating with them. This practice is often called family-style dining” (Eliassen, 2011, p. 86). In addition to the teacher’s participation, family-style dining requires student contribution as well. The students serve themselves and pass dishes and cups and sometimes assist in the set-up and clean-up of the meal. These interactions promote social skills, self-regulation, and fine motor muscle development (Mita, Gray, & Goodell, 2015).

#### **Social skills.**

Family style dining (FSD) is a specific method of serving food that can be used to facilitate social interactions during mealtimes... FSD uses a set of environmental arrangements to support social engagement among children...Teachers prompt children to interact as they pass food to one another and to engage in contextually appropriate conversation. For example, when a child is reaching for a serving dish, the teacher might prompt the child to ask a peer for the dish. Interaction centers around serving and eating, and teacher prompts for interaction might become a natural part of the meal routine. (Locchetta, Barton, & Kaiser, 2017, p. 55)

Indeed, one study showed that, with the introduction of family-style dining, three students who were previously struggling to participate socially measurably increased their social initiations during the mealtime (Locchetta, Barton, & Kaiser, 2017). In addition, family-style dining requires students to learn the skills of sharing and patience, as they often have to wait

until a dish is passed to them before serving themselves (Dev, Speirs, McBride, Donovan, & Chapman-Novakofski, 2014).

**Self-regulation.** Self-regulation was discussed previously in relation to the teacher's language in directing the child to consider his satiety rather than to clean his plate. Family-style dining is another means by which the child learns self-regulation. "They [children] learn self-regulation when they are supposed to respond to their own cues or satiety. 'I am finished because I am full' becomes the child's internal guidepost. This contrasts sharply with the adult-dependent response of 'I am finished because an adult says so'" (Mogharreban & Nahikian-Nelms, 1996, p. 30). In a study which interviewed early childhood educators who practice family-style dining, several participants remarked on the children's ability to serve themselves just as much as they wanted (Dev, Speirs, McBride, Donovan, & Chapman-Novakofski, 2014). One common concern regarding allowing the children to serve themselves stems from the worry that there will be an increase in waste. However, the studies confirm that there is no discernable increase in waste in family-style dining versus pre-plated dining (Branen, Fletcher, & Myers, 1997). Moreover, this has been confirmed by observations from early childcare providers. "These providers also explained that allowing children to self-regulate their food intake decreased the amount of food that was wasted because the children ate most of what they put on their plates" (Dev, Speirs, McBride, Donovan, & Chapman-Novakofski, 2014, p. 653).

**Fine motor development and other learning opportunities.**

Given the opportunity to serve themselves, children practice skills of fine muscle coordination. Using utensils provides opportunities to strengthen muscles, to practice coordination of fingers, hands, arms, and to develop eye-hand perception. Refinement of

large muscle control is also facilitated. Self-serving and eating with peers helps children to refine body space perception. (Branen, Fletcher, & Myers, 1997, p. 89)

Participating in family-style dining requires the students to master scooping as well as holding and passing heavy dishes. But the opportunity for improving skills is not limited to motor skills. The children can also practice counting and learn about proportions in the filling of their plates and sharing of the food (Dev, Speirs, McBride, Donovan, & Chapman-Novakofski, 2014).

Family-style dining, then, offers students many learning opportunities. Through passing dishes and waiting for food, the students improve their social skills. Serving themselves encourages the students to think about their hunger levels and begin to learn self-regulation regarding food consumption. And through using utensils and handling heavy serving trays, the students develop fine muscle coordination. Because the students are contributors as well as participants, family-style dining elevates and mealtime experience, bringing dignity to both the meal and the students.

### **Setting**

The setting for the meal includes both the location and the ambiance, and the latter is often affected by the former. A positive mealtime experience occurs when the students are enjoying themselves (relaxed and happy), (Mita, Gray, & Goodell, 2015) but often the location of the meal detracts from allowing the students to relax (Nyberg & Grindland, 2008). Usually in an early childhood care facility, a meal would take place in either a cafeteria or in the classroom itself. There are pros and cons to both settings. In a study of early childcare providers, the general consensus was a preference for meals in the classroom (Swindle & Phelps, 2018). However, another study found that eating in the same environment in which the students

learn can serve as a distraction to the children. “In using the room for different activities during eating times as well as during the rest of the day, a distracted focus on the food and the meal itself occurs” (Nyberg & Grindland, 2008, p. 39). The teacher then needs to choose the setting which best suits her students and make alterations as best she can to transform the room into a calm environment. “Striving for a calm meal where everybody can sit down, talk together, yet not too loud, reflects the idea vision of a meal in these settings” (Nyberg & Grindland, 2008). Location influences ambiance, but it need not dictate it.

### **Student Behavior**

If the teacher is facilitating the meal and acting as role-model, and the students are participating in family-style dining, and the setting has been selected to promote calmness, the students' behavior should be eager, happy, and relaxed (Mita, Gray, & Goodell, 2015). But there is still the element of Grace and Courtesy and the teaching of manners or polite behavior. A meal is more than an opportunity to consume food. It is a social interaction between students and teachers alike which revolves around eating. The customs that surround this event, be it the preparation, conversation, or actual consumption, are conventions that children need to have the opportunity to learn. In the Montessori setting, this is learned not only through role-modeling from the teacher, but also through small group presentations and child interactions (Bone, 2005).

One hot afternoon the children were in a circle and a tray with a jug of water and glasses was prepared. Two children are helped to bring this into the middle of the circle. They then went around and asked each child ‘would you like a glass of water?’ Children responded to the question with ‘yes please’ (or ‘no thank you’) and a glass of water was poured for them and they then thanked the person who gave it to them. In Montessorian

terms these lessons are linked to the concept of ‘grace’. Children were learning ‘manners,’ and also patience as they waited to be offered water, generosity as they learned to give and receive, and a structured lesson in courtesy. This process was carried out quietly and without a sense of rush so that children experienced taking time to enjoy something that was on one level very simple, and on another complex. They were learning about the cultural tools involved in serving each and becoming familiar with the language of hospitality. (Bone, 2005, pp. 311-312)

Grace and Courtesy then comes from allowing the children opportunities both within and outside the meal to practice manners. And to return full-circle, the children must look to the teacher to facilitate and role-model such opportunities.

### **Conclusion**

Lost amidst the chaos and confusion of a typical preschool classroom at lunch time are important moments of observable growth and development. Because lunch is both an independent task and a social event, it offers a unique chance to study children in action, if we can only make the time to watch. (Piedra, 2012, p. 92).

If a child is misbehaving during mealtime, the root of the problem likely does not lie with the child or his behavior. Rather, the teachers, the style of meal, and the setting all contribute to creating a pleasant mealtime atmosphere in which children are given the opportunity to eat, socialize, and practice manners. The teacher needs to be both the facilitator of the meal as well as a participant. Her language needs to be positive as she is a role-model to the students. Family-style dining is one of the most preferable meal styles for young students. It promotes social graces, self-regulation, and aids in fine-motor skills. The setting encompasses the location and the atmosphere. The location should be selected to minimize distractions and

offer the children a peaceful environment. Finally, the students need to be allowed opportunities outside of the mealtime to practice manners, so that Grace and Courtesy becomes a part of their routine, not just a meal-time affectation.

### **Action Research Study**

From my experience, school lunch is a time fraught with anxiety. I have noticed that my stress level greatly increases during the lunch period because there is not enough time for the students to eat their meal. From my perspective as the teacher, I spend most of the lunch period reminding students to “talk less and eat more” and helping the students with tasks that they could do themselves (opening lids, throwing away garbage, etc.) in an attempt to speed them up. In addition, as the lunch period includes students from grades pre-school through third, the cafeteria is noisy and distracting, and the lunch tables are not properly sized for four and five-year-olds. The purpose of my action research project was to create a peaceful and calm atmosphere for lunch during which students could converse with each other and assist in preparation and clean-up. While I would have liked to institute Family-Style Dining as my research found that to be a best practice, the situation at my school would not allow such a radical departure from our status quo of hot lunch for those who order it and lunch brought from home for everyone else. Nevertheless, I was determined to find a way to improve lunch.

### **Research Question**

Would moving lunch from the cafeteria into the classroom and encouraging students to work collaboratively during the lunch preparation and clean-up allow for a more peaceful lunch period?

### **Subsidiary Research Questions**

How does a peaceful lunch environment impact the rest of the afternoon?

If the students are taught table manners, are they able to apply it to the lunch time?

### **Research Design and Methodology.**

Over the course of seven weeks, lunchtime was moved from the cafeteria into the classroom on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and the order of lunch and recess was reversed. Prior to the changes, the all-day students went down to the cafeteria for lunch from 11:15-11:45 wearing their outdoor gear and then went straight outside for recess from 11:45 until 12:05. The half-day students would remain in the classroom until their 11:30 pick-up. During the study, all the students went outside for recess from 11:00 to 11:30; then, the all-day students would return to the classroom, take off their outdoor gear, and begin to prepare lunch while the half-day students departed. The study was limited to Tuesdays and Thursdays because the classroom could not accommodate the twenty-three students who stay for lunch on Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons.

**Participants and setting.** The participants in this student were eight, five-day, all-day Montessori students. Five students were four years old; three students were five years old. There was one female and seven male students. Five students were returning students from last year, and three students were new this year. Six students were Caucasian, one student was of Mexican descent, and one student was adopted from Ethiopia. The study took place at a private, Catholic school in the Midwest in the 2018 - 2019 school year during the months of January, February, and March (although the program is still ongoing as my assistant and I have elected to continue the intervention going forward) on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. The school is a classical school with non-Montessori students in grades K – 8. Only the one preschool classroom follows the Montessori philosophy. There are about 190 students enrolled in the school. The classroom is on the second floor with four other classrooms.

From the eight participants, I selected two students whom I observed as case studies. I chose these two students because of their differing backgrounds, learning styles, and previously observed meal behavior. The first case study student is a student who had difficulty working with materials in the classroom for any length of time and seemed to prefer social interaction to working. In addition, he was a fussy eater who often picked at his lunch without consuming much. This student is a four-year-old, first time Montessori student. The second case study student struggled with following directions and keeping his attention focused. He usually ate everything in his lunch but was frequently distracted in the cafeteria by the antics of the older students. He is in his second year in the Montessori classroom.

**Materials and preparation.** Prior to the commencement of the study, I contacted a carpenter, a family-friend, who agreed to build a lunch table for the classroom. He and I met a few times so he could understand the project, and he ended up building a beautiful child-sized table free of charge!



*Figure 1.* Picture of lunch table.

In addition to the table, I obtained from thrift stores and donations: a set of ceramic plates, ten glass cups, a small glass pitcher, several table runners, eight placemats, and a set of utensils. I also created a Set-Up Chart, a Clean-Up Chart, and a Chore Chart which I affixed to the white board behind the lunch table. I changed the assigned chores every two weeks which allowed each

student to complete a given chore four times before switching to a new task. I also created a paper template of a set placemat as a sort of control chart for the students which I laminated for extra durability.



*Figure 2.* Paper Control Chart.

I also obtained several books from the library which highlighted manners and polite behavior. Finally, I sent home permission letters to the parents for approval of their child to partake in the action research study. (See Appendix A.)



*Figure 3.* Picture of a set table.

**Data collection and procedure.** Beginning the first day of the study, I walked the students through the procedures for setting-up the table for lunch and pointed out the chore chart which I had illustrated with pictures to remind them of their job. There were eight sets of chores:

1. Table Runner / Placemats / Garbage
2. Chairs
3. Napkins
4. Fork and Spoon
5. Pouring Water
6. Setting out Water Glasses
7. Checker
8. Prayer / Sweeper



*Figure 4. Chore Chart.*

After I had demonstrated all the elements of the Set-Up and the Chore Chart, I invited the students to wash their hands and then complete their assigned chore. Upon completion of the chore, I demonstrated to the students how to take their lunchboxes to a nearby table and remove the contents from the lunchbox onto a plate. (I had determined that I wanted to use plates because it creates more of a meal atmosphere and, from a practical standpoint, lunchboxes on the table create clutter and opportunities for spills.) After seeing the half-day students off, my assistant retrieved the hot lunches that were needed that day from downstairs and carried them back to the classroom.

On the first day, in order to not overwhelm the students, I waited until the first student completed his lunch before walking the students through the Clean-Up expectations. These included:

1. Ask to be excused
2. Rinse plate, spoon, and fork
3. Place glass back into basket

4. Shake off placemat
5. Put away placemat
6. Put away chair
7. Use table crumber to sweep up crumbs from table

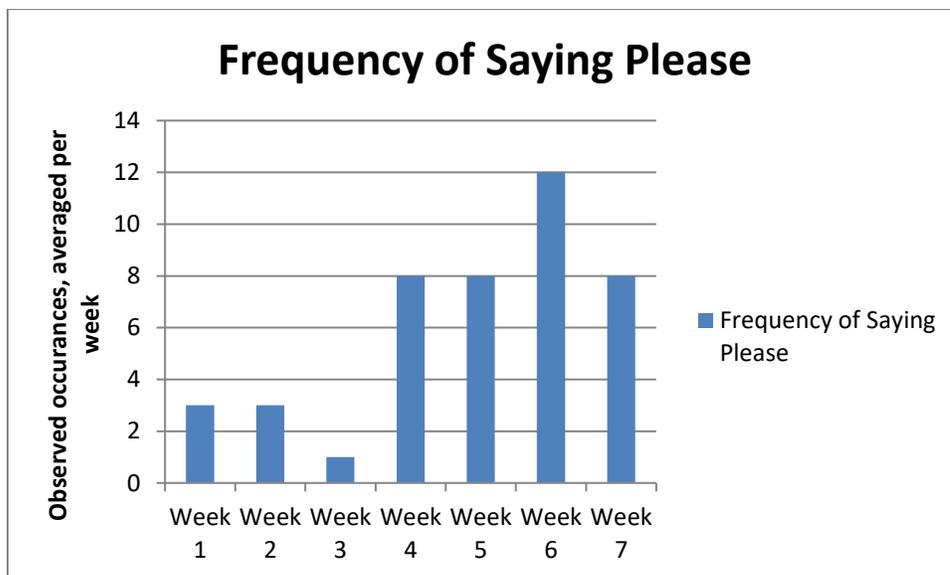
Upon completion of these steps, the students were then expected to pick out a quiet table work or read a book until everyone had completed lunch.

In order to create a more family-style meal experience, I provided a bowl of a fruit or vegetables for each meal which the students passed and served themselves. (A chart showing the shared food provided each week is attached as Appendix B.) I ate my meal with the students as well, and my assistant sat with us and completed a checklist of observed behaviors during the meal. (See Appendix C.) In addition, each day I read a word and definition from the book *Cookies: Bite-Size Life Lessons* by Amy Krouse Rosenthal. This book follows the story of a little girl who makes cookies and shares them with her friends. Over the course of the study, I also read one story a week that highlighted manners to the entire class. (A complete list of books used is listed in Appendix D.)

Data was collected through several different methods. My assistant kept a checklist of observed behaviors during the meal. Every afternoon, I observed the class for fifteen minutes to notice signs of increased concentration, cooperation, or polite behavior. I also kept a journal of my impressions and thoughts from both the meal and afternoon. I conducted both pre-study and post-study interviews with each of the eight students, and I asked parents to participate in a post-study interview regarding their child's behavior.

## Data Analysis and Results

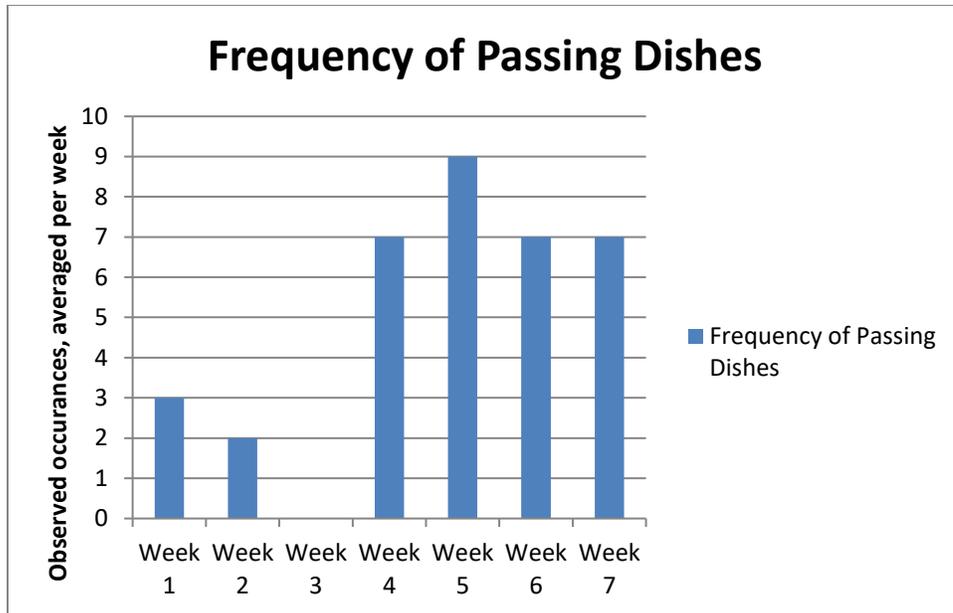
**Quantitative.** The second of my subsidiary research questions was whether students would be able to apply the table manners which I had showcased throughout the day through discussions, stories, and teaching of the behavior expectations during the mealtime. My hope was that, through repetition and reminders, the students would begin to internalize their understanding of polite mealtime behavior and begin to adjust their actions. The behaviors that I monitored throughout the study were manners that I determined as necessary for a child to participate in a formal family meal and which I thought four and five year olds could master. During each meal, my assistant kept a checklist of observed behaviors. The following graphs illustrate the data captured from these checklists. I have grouped data by weeks rather than specific dates to simplify and refine the results. These checklists were compiled from the group as a whole and do not reference individual students.



*Figure 5.* Frequency of saying please.

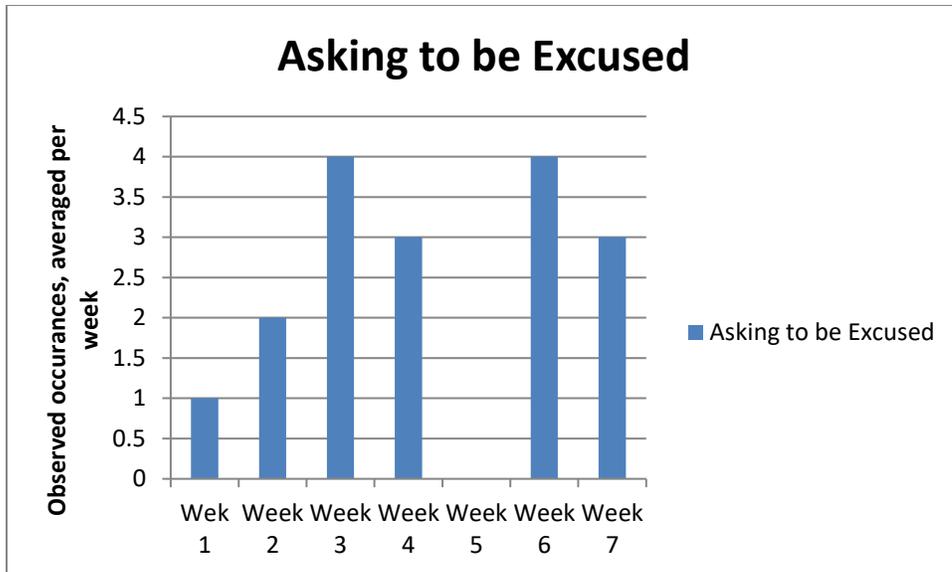
As shown in Figure 5, there was an increase in the frequency of saying please. In the first four meals, the students only averaged saying “Please” three times. In week 3, only once. But,

by the end of the study, the students achieved an average of eight occurrences per meal of saying “please.” Just as with all the data collected, there were variables which changed each week. The students most often used “please” when they were asking a teacher or fellow student to help open an item of food (usually applesauce or yogurt), and the spike in week 6 also corresponds to spike in students helping each other as shown in Figure 8.



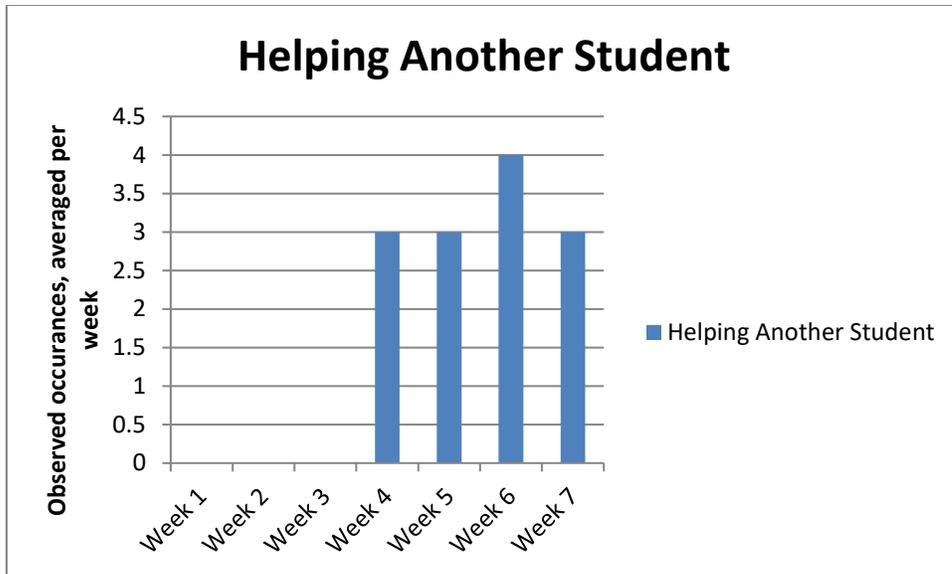
*Figure 6.* Passing dishes.

Figure 6 shows that there was an increase in passing dishes during the mealtime. Once again, it is worth noting that as there was only one bowl of shared food on the table so the passing of the dish was tied to the popularity of the food item. In weeks 2 and 3, I brought in blood oranges which the students were obviously not enthusiastic about. Another detail of note is that I began the study by bringing in a bowl of strawberries (week 1) and also ended the study with strawberries (week 7).



*Figure 7.* Asking to be excused.

Figure 7 shows that while, overall, there was an increase in students asking to be excused, throughout the entire study, the students never really got into the habit of asking to be excused as the weeks showing the highest frequency only indicate four instances. Typically, the first student asked to be excused and the last one or two students asked to be excused, but the remaining students simply began clean-up at the completion of their meal.



*Figure 8.* Helping another student

When the students began the study, they continued to fall back on their usual behavior of asking the teacher for help when needed. As shown in Figure 8, as the weeks went on, the students began to rely less on the teacher and more on each other.

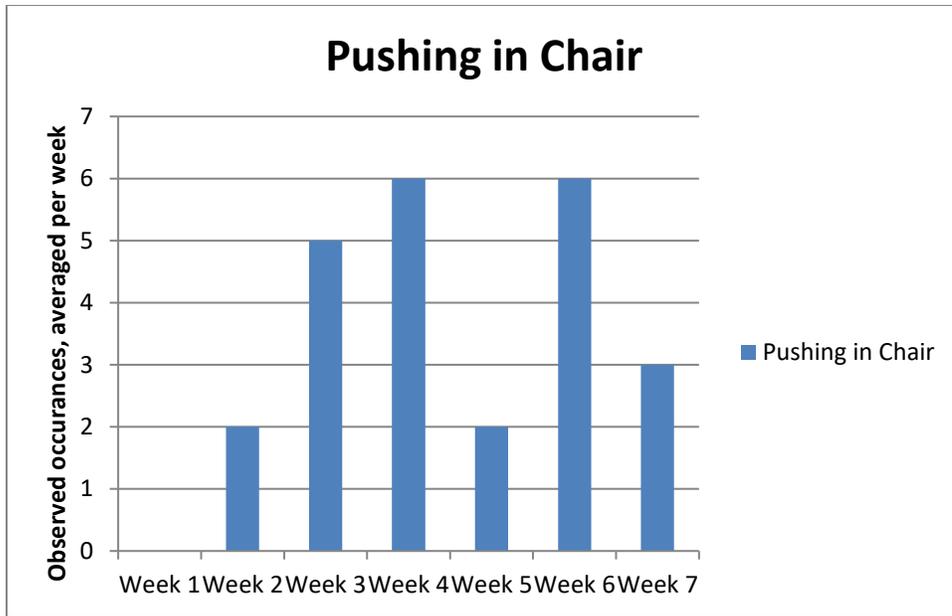


Figure 9. Pushing in chair.

Figure 9 shows an inconsistent improvement in the students’ behavior in remembering to push in their chairs.

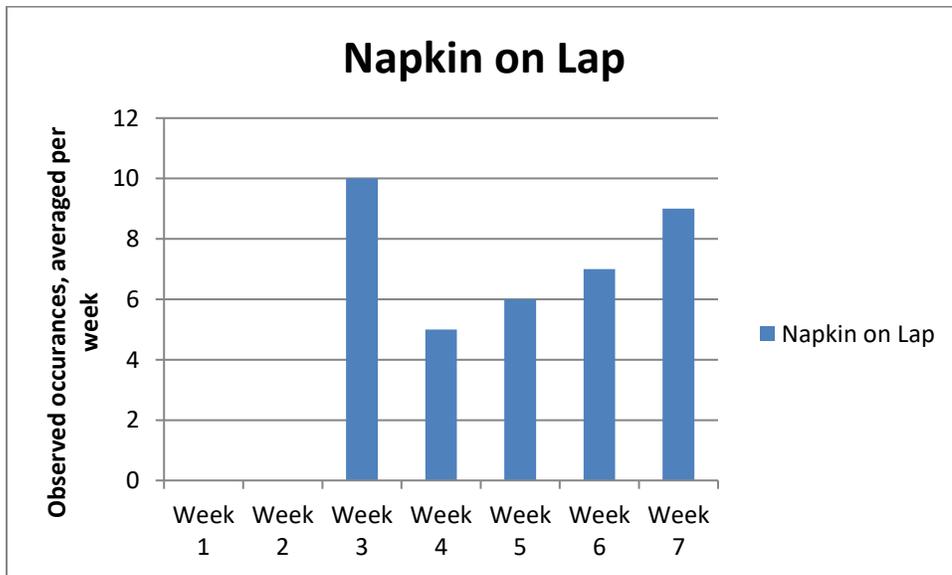
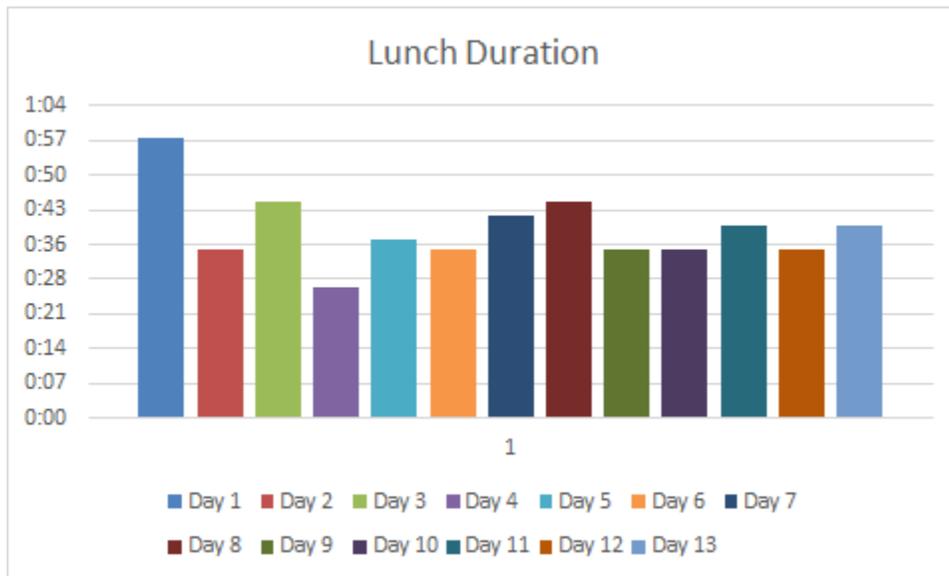


Figure 10. Napkin on lap

Figure 10 shows an increase in the students remembering to put their napkins on their laps (without reminders) as the study went on. Placing the napkin on the lap was a continuous

source of conversation as I was often trying to stress the idea of catching crumbs on the plate, tablemat, and napkin. Initially, the students were reluctant to put their napkins on their laps but after one student caught a dropped piece of Oreo on his napkin, the students seemed to switch their mindset! This confirmed for me that experimental learning was impacting the students' behavior and that my methods for implementing change in behavior were effective.

### Duration.



*Figure 11.* Duration of lunch

Figure 11 shows the duration of each of the lunches in the classroom. The longest lunch was the very first lunch which took 58 minutes. The shortest lunch only lasted 27 minutes. The average length of lunch in the classroom was 39 minutes. Lunch usually began around 11:40 (allowing the students ten minutes to complete the lunch set-up chore) and ended around 12:20 (after the last student excused himself from the table). It is worth noting that, with exception of the one 27 minute lunch, each lunch lasted longer than the prescribed 30 minute lunch period in the cafeteria.

**Parent survey.**

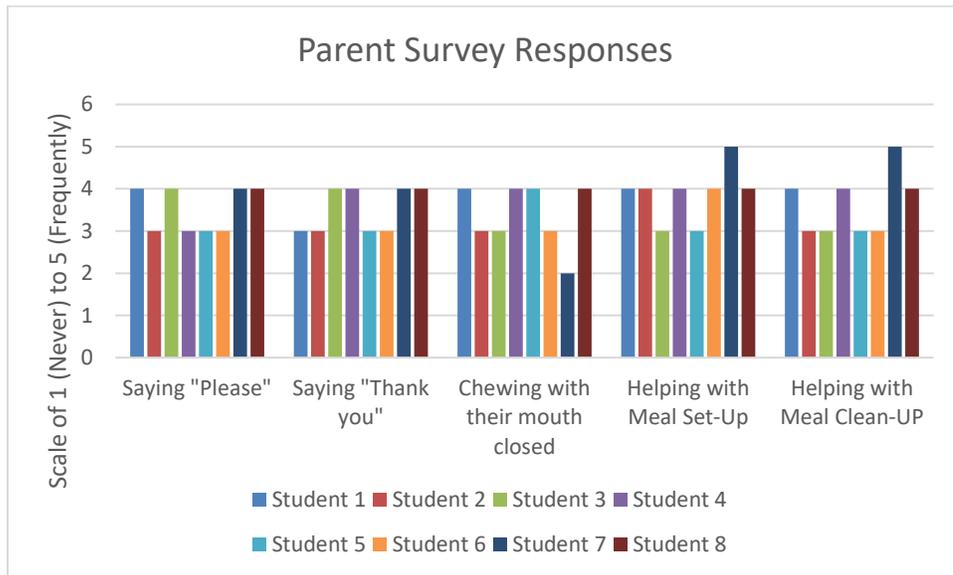


Figure 12. Parent survey responses.

At the conclusion of the seven weeks, I contacted all the parents and asked to rank their child on a scale from one (Never) to five (Frequently) for certain mealtime behaviors: saying please, saying thank you, chewing with their mouth closed, helping with set-up, and helping with clean-up. As Figure 12 shows, most of the replies were threes and fours, the exceptions being the two in the category of chewing with their mouth closed, and a five in both meal set-up and clean-up. In addition, I asked the parents if they had any additional comments or feedback. The replies were sparse, but one parent mentioned that she has noticed an increase in requests from her child to assist in preparing the dinner. And another parent replied that, “I have noticed that [] will say please with every ‘help’ question and really feels proud about helping to set the table and ‘bus’ the table.”

**Qualitative Data**

Qualitative data was collected through journals, observations, and student interviews. After reviewing all my qualitative data, I determined that the data could be broken out into five

categories: mealtime behavior, afternoon behavior, case study student observations, teacher attitude, and students' reactions. Because the conclusions drawn from qualitative data rely so heavily upon my journals, I have attached large sections of my coded journals as Appendix E.

**Mealtime behavior.** On two occasions prior to the commencement of the study, I observed and took notes on the students' behavior eating their lunch downstairs in the cafeteria (as opposed to my usual role as a participant as a teacher). During these observations, I noticed a decided lack of manners as well as helpless behavior—demands without the courtesy of a “please.” The student would inform the teacher that “I need a fork” or “I spilled my water” without any accompanying action. This seemed at odds to me considering in the classroom I remind the students that they can clean-up messes themselves and get out materials themselves. In addition, prior to the study, every meal seemed to be accompanied by at least one spill. I also noticed that the students' food was often packed in plastic bags or cello wrap. This resulted in the students unwrapping their food and then placing it directly onto the tabletop. Finally, because the cafeteria was used by over eighty students at one time, the noise level was very high, and the children were distracted. When they were not turned around to watch the older children, the students participated in conversation that usually consisted of shouting and repeating a joke or comparing food in their lunchboxes.

The mealtime behavior observed during the study was a definite improvement on the behavior observed in the cafeteria. In order to get away from the students' reliance upon the teacher, the students were expected to help with the lunch set-up and clean-up. Over the course of the seven weeks, the students showed a sustained interest in the set-up of the meal. At the start of the study, during weeks two and three, there were two instances of a student not wanting to do his given chore. By the end of the study, there was an acceptance that the chore chart was

simply part of lunch preparation. And several of the students got into the habit of checking the chore chart each morning to find out if they had a new job for that afternoon's lunch. In addition, the chore chart created opportunities for teamwork and cooperation. For example, the student in charge of napkins couldn't complete his job until the student who puts out the placemat had completed his. And sometimes students were absent, leaving a hole in the chore chart. In these instances, the other students would step up to help a fellow classmate. I did not propose these solutions; rather the students chose to help each other out themselves. These voluntary and spontaneous collaborations are perhaps one of the most successful outcomes in the change of behaviors that I observed during the classroom mealtime.

During the fourteen meals in the classroom, the students showed an improvement in polite behavior. Without the noise of the cafeteria, the students didn't need to shout. In addition, having both my assistant and me sitting at the table changed the dynamic of the meal. The teacher was no longer pacing around the table to assist anyone who needed help, but an actual participant in the meal. This almost immediately caused the students to change their demeanor from demanding to deferential. The students were reminded to place their napkins on their laps, chew with their mouth closed, and wait to talk until all the food was swallowed. Another change that affected the making of a more peaceful lunch period was the use of plates and the removal of lunch boxes from the table. Over the fourteen meals of the study, there were only two spills. In fact, I was greatly surprised by the lack of mess overall. The students didn't break any water glasses, and they didn't ever drop the bowl of fruit or vegetables. Finally, by including a bowl of shared food, the students were given the opportunity to pass dishes and serve themselves.

The bowl of shared fruit and vegetables also had an impact on the meal in regard to the conversations that the students had. In one instance, a conversation that began about bell

peppers transitioned into a discussion about the fact that different people like different things. Food was often the focus of the conversations. In another example, my dislike of the yogurt I brought that day sparked an exchange about wasting food. This is not to say that the conversation regularly changed into deep discussions. Rather these two instances stand out of their uniqueness. Lunch with four and five-year-olds is going to entail competition, superheroes, and jokes. However, because of the lack of distractions and noise, the conversations involved more give and take with words spoken, rather than shouted.

After the students finished their meal, they were expected to clean up their place at the table. This was less successful than the set-up. Although the students did not begrudge cleaning-up, they had difficulty completing all the steps in the process. I suspect that this was due in part to their desire to join their classmates who had already cleared their place and were working or reading. The greatest challenge to the students in the clean-up process was carrying their placemat over to the garbage can without spilling the crumbs onto the floor. I asked that they fold and carry their placemat like a “taco” or a “boat”, but it wasn’t until the seventh week that all the students were able to complete this step without a reminder. The greatest surprise regarding clean up, however, was how clean the classroom looked after the meal. Prior to starting the study, I had thought that I would need to purchase a vacuum cleaner for the classroom to use after the meals. However, the simple floor sweeper that we already had in the classroom was sufficient.

**Afternoon behavior.** The first of my subsidiary research questions was how does a peaceful lunch environment impact the rest of the afternoon? My hope was that I would be able to discern noticeable improvements in concentration and cooperation. My rationale was that, without the disruption of a noisy lunch followed by recess, the students would have an easier

time settling down to work. In addition, I hypothesized that after working together to set up lunch, the students would be more amenable to work together during the work cycle. My theory was partially validated.

There was definite improvement in concentration in the afternoon. Our schedule is that after lunch, two third-graders come and visit our classroom to read a story aloud. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, we then have rest time during which the students stretch out on their individual mats while I read aloud. Earlier in the year, I had eliminated mandatory rest time on Tuesday and Thursday because of the small group but allowed any student to elect to take a rest or settle down with a book. In about the fifth week of the study, all the students began to develop the habit of stretching out with a book after lunchtime. The transition from lunch to work then was often bridged by quiet reading time. I allowed the students to read or look at books for as long as they wished, and this down time from working seemed to help the students transition from lunch to afternoon work cycle. Rather than being directed by the teacher, the students would simply put their book away when they were done and find a work. I observed during this time that the students, once they picked out work, were often less distracted and able to settle into their works more quickly as well as continue at their task longer. On several occasions, I observed students keep a sustained interest in a work for more than thirty minutes; on three occasions, for over an hour.

I did not, however, notice as significant a change regarding observing moments of cooperation or collaboration during the afternoon, but two instances do stand out. On the Tuesday afternoon during the third week of the study, I began to show to two students how they could create their own paper cutouts of the Geometric Solids. Eventually, all the students wanted to do this work, and we ended up all sitting around the lunch table, cutting and taping

paper Geometric Solids. This activity required some help, especially for the younger students, in folding and taping; and the students had to practice patience. In addition, at the end of this work, the floor and table were both covered in scraps of paper, but the students cooperated to sweep the floor and table.

The second instance occurred in the sixth week of the study when one student (Student A) asked me to read him a story. I was observing at the time, so I asked him to ask one of my two readers instead. Student B agreed to read to Student A, but after a little while closed the book and announced that it was too hard. Student B looked upset and frustrated that he couldn't read the story. Student C (the other reader) then offered to finish reading the book. Student C began to read the story to both Student B and Student A. After a few pages, Student C announced, "I'm tired. You [Student B] can finish reading, but you can ask me if you get stuck on any hard words." Student C handed the book back to Student B who began to read again. Four times during the reading, Student B did ask Student C for help with a word. Throughout this entire exchange there were no tears or teacher intervention. It was just a beautiful and successful moment of three students working together to read a story using cooperation and collaboration. I cannot, however, determine whether our peaceful lunchtime was a contributing factor in this moment, but it seems that the habit of cooperation spilled over to reading after the group meal.

**Case study Student One.** I observed the most change of behavior in my first Case Study Student. I will call him Student One. During the study, Student One's mealtime behavior changed, then his afternoon behavior, and finally his behavior in general. Prior to the study, Student One was not allowed to sit beside certain students during lunch because he would spend the entire lunch period being silly and distracting the other students. He also did not like to eat

the food that was packed in his lunchbox. And during the work cycles, he had a difficult time working with any material for a sustained length of time.

By the third week of the study, I observed that Student One had nearly ceased his silly behavior during lunch and was instead concentrating on eating during the meal. It seemed as if moving the meal from the cafeteria into the classroom changed his mindset. Instead of demonstrating attention getting behaviors or swiveling his body to watch the older grades, he would eat quietly, his attention focused on his own eating and his food. If another student got silly, he would happily join in but was no longer the instigator of such antics. His food consumption also changed. He went from barely eating half of his sandwich to eating the entire contents of his lunchbox. On two occasions, he forgot his lunch and was given the forgotten lunch meal which is an Uncrustable sandwich, a bag of chips, and some fruit or vegetables. Whereas previously, he would pick apart the seam of the Uncrustable sandwich, causing the peanut butter and jelly to leak out and create a mess, on both occasions he ate more than half the sandwich with no mess. The longer length of lunch was also a factor as Student One was often one of the last students to finish lunch. When we ate in the cafeteria, he ran out of time to eat, but in the classroom, when allowed as much time as he needed, he could finish all his food.

During the fourth week of the study, I noticed that Student One's change in mealtime behavior was extending into this afternoon behavior as well. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, he seemed to have an easier time listening to me and responding to directions. In one instance, he opted not to jump over a rug after I reminded another student to please not jump. In another instance, he moved out of the way at the drinking fountain, after waiting his turn, when I asked to make room for some first graders. By the sixth week of the study, I observed him concentrating on work and picking out his own work without being directed by me. Finally, at

the very end of the study, his more focused afternoon behavior began to extend beyond just Tuesday and Thursday. Over the last few weeks, he has shown improved concentration in the classroom, greater respect toward the materials and teachers, and has begun to remind other students of classroom behavior expectations.

**Case study Student Two.** I selected Case Study Student Two because of his difficulty focusing. During lunch in the cafeteria, he would spend most of his time watching the older students. During the afternoon work cycle, he would pick out work, but then walk away to investigate something else, very often forgetting to put the first work away. By the end of the day, he would often have three different works left out on rugs and tables, none of which he had completed. Throughout the study, Student Two showed an improvement regarding his attention and a sustained ability to focus. Without the distraction of the older students at lunch, he no longer swiveled around to watch the room while he was eating, and he went from being one of the last students to finish lunch to being one of the first. More significant than his change in mealtime behavior, however, was how his improved concentration affected his work. While he had previously jumped from material to material, he began to concentrate on his work, sometimes for ten or fifteen minutes at a time. On one occasion, he spent over thirty minutes building words with the movable alphabet. On another occasion, he spent the afternoon doing addition problems with the tabletop number rods and persevered despite attempts by another student to distract him. For some students, concentrating for thirty minutes may not be impressive. For this student, it was a milestone.

**Teacher attitude.** Over the course of the study, I made a note of my attitude at the end of the lunch period as well as at the end of the day. I can say confidently that my attitude improved during the study. When the students were eating lunch in the cafeteria, I usually felt

frantic and tense. I would be worried if we did not arrive downstairs at the appointed time as we had to be out of the cafeteria by 11:50 when the second lunch period would commence.

Consequently, I would continuously watch the clock. At the conclusion of the lunch in the cafeteria, I would be tired and drenched in sweat (it is very hot downstairs in the cafeteria), and I would then race upstairs and to quickly eat my lunch before the students returned from recess.

During the study, I was completely relieved of the time pressure. Lunch could last as long as needed. Moreover, as I was eating with the students, I could slow down my eating and enjoy my food. In addition, the temperature is better controlled in the classroom and I was not overheated from helping students get into their snow gear. I noted my attitude eleven times in my journal, and only one time did I report to feeling harried, and twice to feeling ambivalent. In the remaining eight occurrences, I describe my attitude as “pleasant” and “calm.”

**Students’ reactions.** I conducted both pre and post study interviews with the students to gauge their feelings toward moving the lunch from the cafeteria into the hallway. Before starting the study, I asked the students three questions:

1. Do you like lunch time?
2. What is your favorite part of lunch time?
3. If you could change something about lunch, what would you change?

At the conclusion of the study, I asked the students four questions:

1. Do you like lunch time?
2. Which did you prefer: Lunch in the cafeteria downstairs or lunch in the classroom?
3. Why? Do you have a comment about lunch?
4. What is your favorite part of lunch?

While I had hoped to rely upon their answers to gauge the students' reaction to lunch in the classroom, these questions were difficult for the students to answer, and most of their replies focused on food. The students' replies are included as Appendices F and G. However, of the eight students who participated in the study, six of the students preferred lunch in the classroom, and three students mentioned that their favorite part about lunch involved the set-up or clean-up—sweeping, pouring waters, and carrying trays downstairs.

### **Future Action Plans**

Going forward, I would like to maintain lunch in the classroom, but make a few adjustments. I would prefer to be able to have lunch in the classroom every day for consistency. In addition, I would like to try and make the meal more aligned with Family-Style Dining, perhaps a meal once a month for which the school provided the food. This would increase the students' participation, as well as expose them to new foods. I was also not satisfied with my method of gauging the students' reactions to the mealtime experience. The interview questions were too mature for the students to understand and to answer in a helpful way. Going forward, I need to devise a more useful tool for understanding the students' response to the changed mealtime experience. Finally, in order to create a greater cohesion between the mealtime and the rest of the day, I would like to integrate elements of the meal preparation into Practical Life works that the students can select from the shelf: sewing edges of cloth napkins, rolling beeswax candles, creating holiday decorations that could be incorporated into the table setting.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

Through both the quantitative and the qualitative data, the action research study showed that moving the lunch from the cafeteria into the classroom contributed to a more peaceful and mannerly lunchtime. By practicing manners throughout the day, the students were able to apply

those lessons to the mealtime experience. By assisting in the set-up and clean-up, the students showed that they were capable of working together and of contributing to the meal process. In addition, through observations and journals, the research shows that the peaceful mealtime positively impacted the students' afternoon work cycle. The students were able to settle into their work more quickly and to concentrate for longer lengths of time. Finally, moving the lunch from the cafeteria into the classroom helped to improve my disposition in the afternoon. I enjoyed my lunch more and was able to appreciate the students' conversation.

As I conducted this action research, I began to recognize that this study was just like one large Montessori work. The teacher modeled the process of set-up and clean-up, and then the students did the work themselves. Grace and Courtesy were included in all parts of the work from the set-up, to the conversation, to the clean-up. Through repetition, the students were able to internalize the information and begin to understand how to participate in a meal without adult intervention. Instead of meal scheduled around the timetable of the school, lunch became centered on the students and their natural needs.

When I began this study, I did not have a clear sense of what I hoped to accomplish except to ease my tension caused by the lunch in the cafeteria. But as the study progressed and I was able to witness the students' increased courtesy and independence, I was reminded of the beauty that is the Montessori Method. As a new Montessori teacher, I often get caught up in the materials, but the Montessori philosophy extends to so much more. Making the small change of moving lunch from the cafeteria into the classroom prompted me to reevaluate my behavior, actions, and attitude. I slowed down. I talked more quietly. I could enjoy the children. And, as I offered the students greater respect and opportunities for independence, they responded in kind. This action research reminded me that, given the opportunity, children are capable of more than

adults expect. For example, at the start of the study, I was worried about potential messes and spills, and I was convinced that, at some point, there would be broken glass on the floor. But the students were respectful in their handling of the dishes and thorough in their clean-up so, at the conclusion of the study, I was pleasantly surprised at how easy lunchtime had become. Instead of being a time fraught with anxiety, lunch became a calm, social and collaborative interaction amongst the student and myself.

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## Appendix A

## Parent Permission Letter

Dear Families,

I am working toward a Master's Degree in Montessori Education through the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. As part of that course, I will be doing an action research project for the classroom. This project is in the early stages, but it entails moving lunch from the cafeteria into the classroom in order to develop a peaceful lunch environment where students work collaboratively during the lunch preparation and clean-up and begin to master conversation and courtesy. The purpose of my action research project is to create a peaceful and calm atmosphere for lunch during which time students are allowed to converse and assist in preparation and clean-up. The lunch period will be extended to allow sufficient time for the students to eat their food and allow for conversation. The lunch setting will also be changed from the cafeteria to the classroom. Finally, the lunch time will be pushed from 11:15 back to 11:30 to lessen the transition period for the half-day students who leave at 11:30. Your children will be involved as I observe their behavior and energy level during and after lunch in order to gauge any positive outcomes from the changed lunch arrangement.

All identifying information will be kept confidential. I will use pseudonyms for the students. I would very much appreciate your permission for your child to participate in this action research student study. Please sign the permission form at the bottom of the page and return it to me as soon as possible.

During the course of this study, please be assured that students won't be asked to do anything they wouldn't normally do as part of the regular classroom activities, and that risks of participation are not greater than what might be expected during a typical school day.

Participation is voluntary and you may also withdraw your child at any time during the study.

All students will be participating in the activities as part of their regular classroom day, but data will not be used in this study unless I have parent consent.

Research findings regarding your child will be shared with parents/guardians upon request.

Agreeing to participate simply means that you allow the confidential use of your child's data.

If you have any questions about the research procedure, please contact Diane Bennett, Ph.D.

Director of Grants and Research

University of Wisconsin – River Falls

[diane.bennett@uwrf.edu](mailto:diane.bennett@uwrf.edu)

715-425-3195

And/or Professors Kateri Carver at [kateri.carver@uwrf.edu](mailto:kateri.carver@uwrf.edu) 715-425-3256 and Melina Papadimitriou, [melina.papa@uwrf.edu](mailto:melina.papa@uwrf.edu) 715-220-2466

If you have any questions or concerns for this specific study, please feel free to call or email me. (Phone: 952-220-9175 or email [jean.bullard@hfamn.org](mailto:jean.bullard@hfamn.org))

Sincerely,

Jean Bullard  
Pre-School Teacher

I give permission

I do not give permission

for my child \_\_\_\_\_ to participant in the action research project stated above during the Spring 2019 semester.

I give permission for my child \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the Action Research Project in Spring 2019.

I decline to give permission for my child \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the Action Research Project in Spring 2019.

Parent's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix B

Shared Food consumed during the study

Week 1 – Strawberries

Week 2 – Blood Oranges

Week 3 – Blood Oranges

Week 4 – Grapes

Week 5 – Regular Oranges

Week 6 – Sliced Cucumbers

Week 7 – Mini Bell Peppers

Week 8 – Strawberries

Appendix C

Observed Behavior Chart

**Behavior/Manners Checklist**

Please

Passing Dishes

Asking to be excused

Helping another student

Pushing in Chair

Other

Date

Time Started:

Time Ended:

## Appendix D

Books read aloud to class regarding manners:

**Every Lunch Period:** Rosenthal, A. (2006). *Cookies : Bite-size life lessons* (First ed.). New York: HarperCollins.

**Available in the Classroom:** Aiki. (1990). *Manners* (First ed.). New York: Greenwillow Books.

**Week 1:** Yolen, J., & Teague, Mark. (2005). *How do dinosaurs eat their food?* New York: Blue Sky Press.

**Week 2:** Berenstain, S., & Berenstain, Jan. (1985). *The Berenstain Bears forget their manners* (Berenstain, Stan, 1923-2005. First time books). New York: Random House.

**Week 3:** Hale, B., & Francis, Guy. (2013). *Clark the Shark* (First ed.). New York: Harper, HarperCollins.

**Week 4:** John, J., & Oswald, Pete. (2017). *The bad seed*. New York, NY: Harper, an imprint of HarperCollins.

**Week 5:** Edwards, N., & Parker Thomas, Feronia. (2018). *Mind your manners* (First American ed.). Tulsa, Oklahoma]: Kane Miller, a division of EDC Publishing.

**Week 6:** Bridwell, N. (1987). *Clifford's manners* (Bridwell, Norman. Clifford, the big red dog). New York: Scholastic.

**Week 7:** Ludwig, T., & Barton, Patrice. (2018). *Quiet please, Owen McPhee!* (First ed.). New York: Alfred A. Knopf, an imprint of Random House Children's Books.

## Appendix E

## Observation Journals (coded by subject)

\*\*All names have been changed and identifying details removed

**Meal Time Observations****Set-Up****1.31**

At 11:30, we had a discussion regarding “excuse me” and when we need to use it. Andrew offered when we leave the table. Tom offered when we burp, and Andrew when we sneeze. Then, I read them what co-operation means from the cookie book. I explained that co-operating means working together. We also read Jane Yolen’s “How do dinosaurs eat.” Then I reviewed the way to set the meal and the chore chart. I called the students one at a time to wash hands and complete their chore. I had been worried that some would complain about their chore, but they each seemed pleased.

**2.7**

I didn’t change the job chart yet, but both Andrew and Xavier had to check it out first thing in the morning when they arrived at school. Andrew was very disappointed that he was still doing the same work and that Xavier was still doing prayer and sweeping. For some reason, he is under the impression that when I switch the jobs, he will be taking over Xavier’s job. I don’t know why.

**2.12**

Tom – chairs. Tom wasn’t here, so Xavier got the chairs. Natalie – napkins. She set all of the napkins on the first side correctly, and all of the napkins on the second side opposite. Patrick – forks and spoons. He began by placing both the fork and spoon on the napkin, but after I reminded him about the how to place them, he places them all correctly. Jack – pouring water. (Not here, so Andrew covered his job.) Andrew – placing the water glasses. He placed them all correctly. Warren is still our checker to make sure that each place is set correctly, but as he was not here, Pip began to cover his job and then Natalie took over. Pip – grace and table sweeper. Pip seemed a bit bewildered to be leading prayer, but also proud and he did a wonderful job.

**2.19**

The students do a wonderful job with the set-up and understand their different jobs. They also have been doing a wonderful putting their napkins on their laps and eating over their plate.

**2.26**

I changed the chore chart, but ended up reprimanding Tom, Patrick and Jack for their behavior in the bathroom washing their hands. It wasn't anything too bad, just dawdling, but I ended up doing their Tom's job (napkins), and Andrew and Xavier covered Patrick and Jack's jobs (water pouring and glasses).

Warren has seemed incredibly proud to be the prayer leader. I don't know whether or not his family prays at home, but he seems surprised, bashful, and proud all at the same time. Natalie who has been on the spoon and fork duty, has really mastered which goes on each side.

**3.5**

Everyone was able to do their chore for lunch set-up and then ate their meal very pleasantly. Patrick was on pouring water duty again which I was a bit worried about, but he didn't get silly or try to fill up the water glasses too much

Andrew is very much ready to move on from his job as checker although he actually does a very good job and notices what needs to be fixed. He corrected the placement of a water glass today.

**3.7**

A glass of water was slipped at the start of the meal, but it was cleaned up before the meal even began. Other than that, still no spills during the meal.

We also had community snack in the classroom today. I asked the students to help set up the table as they do at lunch and it went well. Pip began to say prayer, and Warren interrupted, "No, it is my job to lead prayer."

**3.12 .**

We switched jobs today. Warren is now on the table runner and placemats. Once again, he seemed a bit confused by his job. The other students have picked up on what the chores involve even if they haven't done that particular task yet. But for Warren, it always seems like a completely new task that he has never witnessed before. However, with that said, he was proud to do his job and did not want assistance from anyone. Xavier was doing the napkins and he placed each one correctly. Tom, as well, with the forks and spoons which was a bit surprising (just because of his age).

**3.14**

Warren made huge strides from the meal on Tuesday which was his first time at the chore of table runner and placemats. This time, he knew just what to do and was eager to do the set-up. Once again, Xavier and Tom set the table with the napkins and utensils in the proper spot, and Natalie was able to pour the water glasses without mishap. Andrew has been the prayer leader, and he really wanted to lead the Sign of the Cross in Latin. He seemed very proud of himself. There were minimal crumbs at the end of the meal. The students washed their dishes.

**Manners used/observed**

**2.7** The students also did a better job of eating over their plates and there were minimal crumbs on the floor.

**2.12**

I had two students with Lunchables (Pip and Xavier), and I was quite glad to have the plates. I can't stand how they will put all their food on the table in front of them when we eat downstairs. It just seems barbaric. The Lunchables also both had crackers which can be quite messy, but both boys, after a few reminders, did an excellent job of eating over the table.

Andrew and Natalie both had hot lunch (meatballs, cheese bread, salad, and oranges). Andrew informed me that he didn't like the oranges, but did like the juice, at which point he placed a slice or orange in his mouth, sucked on it, and then spit it out. I told him that he couldn't take food out of his mouth. He replied with an understanding, "okay" and ate a couple more slices of oranges. Andrew was also incredibly pokey with his meal consumption. I don't know why since no one was talking much.

Speaking of Patrick, I would say that I am seeing the most benefit to him with the new meal time arrangement. He has been more subdued in the afternoons. He is also calm at lunch. When he is downstairs, he spends much of time clowning around for attention, up on his knees, and turned around. In the classroom, he is able to focus just on his meal

**2.14**

There is one student in particular though who I am seeing very polite behavior, Patrick. This is amazing because he is the one student who gets the most out of control at lunch when we eat downstairs. Yesterday, he very nearly missed recess because he was being so disrespectful at lunch. During the lunch in the classroom today, he wasn't very talkative and put his attention into his food. It is a bit worrisome that this behavior isn't translating at all into polite behavior in the classroom.

**3.5**

Everyone was able to do their chore for lunch set-up and then ate their meal very pleasantly. Today during lunch, I held up my napkin to remind the students to put it into their lap and Jack informed me that he had already put his into his lap.

**3.12**

We had strawberries for lunch snack to share. There were lots of requests to “please pass the strawberries.”

**Conversation****1.31**

At first, the students were almost totally quiet and there wasn't any conversation. After a couple of minutes, I began a conversation about favorite fruits. There were many entries for Strawberries. That loosened the students' tongues a lot, but the meal was still quieter than normal.

Quiet eating. Less chatter than downstairs

**2.5**

The conversation was less formalized this time. The students were much more eager to chat with their friends.

**2.12**

The meal was on the quiet side again. I was the only one initiating conversation as everyone seemed focused on their food. I tried to bring up conversation about the materials in the classroom and the food people were eating but nothing sparked much interest.

The things that most struck me today were: how quiet again the meal was and how much more quickly the meals are going.

**2.14**

There was a bit more conversation today.

We had a conversation about wasting food today at lunch, and it arose in a very natural manner. Jack asked me what kind of yogurt I was eating. (On Tuesday, I had mentioned that I didn't love yogurt, but that I was going to try the flavor I packed because we always try give a new food at least one taste.) I told him it was Coconut Vanilla. He asked me if I liked it, to which I replied,

“It’s not my favorite.” Well that phrasing was confusing, so he asked me again, and I said I didn’t particularly like it. Then, he asked me why I was eating it and from there we talked about wasting food.

### **2.19**

During the lunch, there was more talking that there was previously. I suspect that was because Miss Berg was not there. She observes during these lunches, and I think the students see her taking notes and modify their behavior a bit.

### **3.5**

I cut up bell peppers which stirred up some good conversation. Three students really liked it, and one student did not so we got to talk about trying new foods and the fact that it was fine for some students to like some foods and others to like others

As mentioned above, we had bell peppers. I just called them peppers, but Jack asked if they were bell peppers and then told me how he loves bell peppers. Andrew said that he had never tried one so he was going to take one. He did not like it which was fine. Patrick also was not familiar with them, tried one bit and didn’t like it either. Jack, Xavier, and Warren were three fans of the peppers but we used it as a segue to discuss the fact that some people like some foods and other people like other foods. I mentioned that some people don’t even like chocolate, and Jack replied, “I know. Like Ellen. My brother Jacob told me.” (Ellen and Jacob are both in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.)

### **3.7**

During lunch, Jack mentioned that he wished that this was Spy school and that that they got to spy all day, not have lunch, and eat snack all day. I asked Jack if he preferred snack to lunch. He replied yes. Tom and Patrick both chimed in in agreement with Jack. I asked Jack why. Warren replied right away that it was because there are only two people at the snack table. Jack said no, it was because snack was in the practical life room. Then Xavier remarked that he wished that there was only one student at the table for snack.

### **3.14 .**

There was good conversation at lunch today. The students starting talking about colors. A couple of the boys mentioned that they didn’t like pink or purple because they were girl colors. I tried to nip that conversation tin the bud, and told them God made all the colors. It doesn’t matter if you like all the colors or not, but you don’t need to tell me which colors you don’t like. Patrick also said, “I like black. Like Pip because Pip is black. That is why he is my best friend.” Jack chimed in, “Pip is not black. He is brown.” Andrew then remarked, “His hair is black.”

Warren also said at the start of the meal in response to Patrick announcing that he was going to sit next to Pip his best friend. “Well, I am sitting next to Miss Cullen and Natalie. I am surrounded by girls.”

Lunchtime didn't seem like the appropriate time for story telling so I told him that I would make up a story during community snack. Pip asked for a story about Africa, so I told a story about a lion. This kick-started a discussion about large cats. Then we had to take out our book about large cats and look at all the different types. Patrick, who loves to look at books, hadn't ever seen the book before and was extremely excited to discover that Snow Leopards are real. When I showed him the picture, he kept exclaiming, “It's real. It's real. It's a real snow leopard.”

### **Food Consumption**

#### **1.31**

I put out a bowl of strawberries to pass which the students seemed to enjoy.

#### **2.5 .**

We passed blood oranges. There was some disappointment that it was not strawberries.

#### **2.14**

Andrew usually has hot lunch which sometimes has many parts. Today was a cheeseburger, carrots/celery, applesauce, and fries. And Andrew eats almost all of it so I think that it why he is so slow.

#### **2.19**

Then, we discovered that Patrick also needed a hot lunch, so he got the “forgotten” lunch item—Uncrustable PB&J which he didn't like. The other students had meatball sandwiches. I had brought grapes in to share which I placed in the bowl in the middle of the table. The students all had their same chores, which Patrick was not happy about. He was very slow with putting out the spoons and forks, but he did do it.

The students were very happy to have the grapes and passed them back and forth. Patrick did not like his sandwich, so he ate half the sandwich, his peaches, grapes, carrots, and a bag of chips. All in all, I didn't think that was too bad of a lunch. Warren, who normally does not eat very much, ate almost his entire lunch with the exception of his apple sauce. Andrew was NOT the last student done lunch for once. Tom was the last one,

**2.26** We had cucumbers for passing again.

**3.5**

I cut up bell peppers which stirred up some good conversation. Three students really liked it, and one student did not so we got to talk about trying new foods and the fact that it was fine for some students to like some foods and others to like others

**3.7**

We had bell peppers to share again, but they weren't as popular as Tuesday. Patrick was the last student done eating. He forgot his lunch today, so had to have the forgotten hot lunch. It is an Uncrustable Peanut Butter and Jelly sandwich. In the past, when has had this meal, he pulls apart the seams of the crust (although there is no crust) and then the entire sandwich collapses into a giant mess. Today, he didn't pick apart the sandwich and there was no mess. In addition, he ate about 7/8 of the entire sandwich which is a huge improvement, especially since he began the meal by announcing that he doesn't like jelly, just peanut butter.

**3.12**

We had strawberries for lunch snack to share. There were lots of requests to "please pass the strawberries."

**Clean-Up****1.31**

When Jack, the first one done was ready to clean-up, I walked all of the students through the process. The students had a very hard time understanding the idea of carrying the placement over to the garbage without dumping the crumbs. One thing that really surprised me was how neatly the students ate with the exception of Patrick and Andrew who had crumbs all over.

**2.12**

Quick note about the clean-up, the students showed marked improvement today. I didn't have to remind them how to clean-up and no one complained about having to wash their plate or put their chair away. The order of clean up is: 1) throw away your trash; 2) wash your plate and silverware; 3) put your cup back in the basket 4) carry your placement like a taco and dump any crumbs into the garbage. 5) Put away your placement. 6) put away your chair. 7) table crumb if needed or pick up large pieces of food spilled on the floor if needed. Ever since the first two days, no student has had to crawl on the floor to pick up large pieces of floor

**2.14**

The students were a bit messier today, but tidied up well. With that said, they are still having a lot of difficulty understanding the idea of catching their crumbs with their napkin or placement and then carrying over without spilling.

**2.19 .**

We actually got the entire classroom cleaned up before the Angelus at 12:15. Not that I am striving for a quick lunch, but that is at the same time every day so I can gauge how long lunch or clean-up is taking on whether students are still eating, cleaning up, or not. The floor was a bit messier than it has been. Patrick had chips and Pip had popcorn, but they both did clean up the floor after the finished eating. There is still a bit of difficulty with the clean-up.

However, when it comes to the clean-up, there is just a level of stalling. The procedure is that they throw away their garbage. Put their glass back into the basket, wash their silverware and plate. Carry their placemat like a taco over to the garbage and shake it out. Put their chair back. (As I write this, I realize that it is quite a few steps.) But, I also know that they are capable of these steps. We usually get through the first few steps, but the placemat and the chair (the two easiest steps) they need reminders for. In addition, they are still not quite getting the idea of how to carry the placemat.

**3.5**

The students remembered how to clean up and at least four of them asked to be excused after lunch. Other than Pip and Tom, the students are finally mastering the idea of how to carry their placemat without spilling their crumbs

Warren still seems a bit flummoxed by the sweeping element of his job. We have had to discuss what are crumbs and what needs to be swept up. He also seems confused by the notion that he is allowed to move the chairs in order to sweep under the table, but with a little direction, he does a great job.

**3.7**

There were crumbs on the floor. Despite all of our conversations regarding catching crumbs, I am not certain that the students still quite get the concept. But, the clean-up was easy. Warren is still a bit confused by the vacuuming, but I think some of his reluctance was because he wanted to lie down and play with his stuffed animals.

**3.12**

This might have been the first meal where I didn't have to remind a student to carry their placemat "like a boat" or "like a taco" so as to prevent spilling out all the caught crumbs. Natalie was eating a Lunchable pizza meal which is one of my least favorite because it is messy. However, having the plate was a big help and she was careful and thoughtful with how she ate it and had minimal mess. Actually, the mess overall this afternoon was minimal. There were two napkins on the floor, but other than that just crumbs mostly. Andrew did a great job with the

sweeper. He was the first one that I haven't had to give much direction to, as he knew how to sweep.

### **3.14 .**

There were minimal crumbs at the end of the meal. The students washed their dishes.

## **Afternoon Observations**

### **1.31**

The afternoon flew by. I didn't know if that was because lunch went so long. I will say 1) the volume level seemed a bit lower; 2) Patrick found a work

### **2.5**

The afternoon went incredibly well. In all fairness, I don't think that can be credited with the lunch. It was likely that not having Patrick and Warren in class is what made the difference. Nevertheless, there was more concentrating and less interfering than usual. Andrew spent 70ish minutes on the long 7 chain. Pip spent 30ish minutes tracing 3 letter phonetic words that he had built with the movable alphabet. I was able to work with Jack on static addition with the golden beads for an hour following lunch;

None of the students complained that gym was cancelled.

### **2.7 .**

I can't say for certain of the behavior in the afternoon was an improvement or not. The kids were out of sorts for most of the day. I would like to blame the snow, but I don't know. We got outside for recess, so it wasn't that they had pent-up energy. But the entire day was a bit of struggle. I can say that the afternoon was less frazzling than the morning.

We had P.E. in the afternoon which the students love. Mrs. Watterston the gym teacher tried to have us work the parachute, but we were too small of a group for it to really work. She began the class by telling the students that they had to use their best listening, but Patrick was not listening. He kept making waves with the parachute when Mrs. Watterston was talking. I should mention as well that Patrick was gone the last two days sick, but I feel like I am making excuses for him.

All in all, the meal was pleasant enough, but I didn't witness much improved behavior in the afternoon. I would say that regarding my mood, I was a bit harried. I don't think that today, I gained much by way of an improved attitude by having lunch upstairs

**2.12**

I rather messed up the afternoon today. I made the mistake of bringing out paper templates of the geometric solids to show two students. Well, everyone wanted to do the work. Since, everyone seemed distracted and unable to work, and since we had such a small group, I allowed all five students to gather around the large table and cut out the geometric solids. I thought that we would have time for more work, but that activity took us right up to 2:30. After that we cleaned up the scrapes. Natalie swept the floor and used the table crumber on the table. Patrick also swept the floor. Then Pip swept the floor. By the end of the day, you wouldn't have known that we had 1) eaten in the classroom or 2) spent the afternoon cutting and littered the floor in paper scrapes. So, on the one hand, I wasn't able to witness the students working individually. But to have all five students working around the same table for more than hour does show improved concentration and cooperation. The students had to take turns asking for help from me and Miss Berg to tape the edges of the cut-out in the geometric shape. The students also were quite responsive when I asked them to help clean up and to pack up for the end of the day. I wasn't rushed. The students weren't rushed. And it made for a calm afternoon

**2.14**

So far, I am not seeing the increased collaboration and manners extended in the afternoon behavior. But, I have felt like the behavior is calmer and more concentrated. Today, is our gym class. After the meal finished, we had about 45 minutes before P.E. Not a great amount of time for work, but enough for these students who are old hat at this point. I explained that there were three students that I hadn't yet had the opportunity to work with and would be giving them presentations during this time prior to P.E. if there was time, then the students picked out work. I was very pleasantly surprised, that during that 45 minutes, I was able to give Tom a lesson with the movable alphabet, Andrew a lesson with an addition chart, and Jack a lesson with puzzle words #3. Usually, being the only teacher in the classroom, I would have been constantly interrupted, but the other students went about their way doing their work.

During P.E., I was very pleased to witness improved behavior from last week (although that might be setting the bar a bit low.) The students played a game of tag as well as a relay race, and it was wonderful to see the students working together on the relay race. After gym class, we were walking back to the classroom, and I had asked the students to turn off their voices and walk calmly and quietly. I turned around at the stairs, in time to witness Jack jump over a rug. I said (a bit loudly), "Jack." And shook my head. Patrick, who was behind Jack, piped up, "no jumping?" I said yes, and Patrick did not jump. The next two students did jump. It was a bit stunning to see Patrick following directions over other students. Then, we walked down to the drinking fountain, and Jack tried to budge in front of me, saying, "I want the tall drinking fountain." I told him no, that we formed two lines, and that he didn't get to budge and to use the other drinking fountain. As we were using the drinking fountains, the 1<sup>st</sup> graders came out of

their classroom. I finished at the tall drinking fountain, and Patrick would have been next. I asked him to allow the 1<sup>st</sup> grader to go in front of him as their class was going up to library. He stepped away without saying a word.

During community snack, I told a story to the students about animals. They were very respectful and listened. At one point, there was a lion walking across ice (the students supplied the animals), and everyone was silent as I was describing the ice beginning to crack beneath the lion's feet. It was a very cool moment. Clean-up and Carpool went well. No one was being disrespectful during prayer or announcements.

### **2.19**

This afternoon, I was the only one in the classroom and I was being observed by my teacher, so I was a bit more on edge. With that said, there was some great examples of concentration. Andrew worked off and on and on the 1000 chain in the afternoon, making it to 240. His great difficulty is laying the arrows out in a neat manner. Pip also worked on math. We got out the tabletop number rods, and he did some basic addition. He was very proud of his work, and, despite attempts to be distracted by Patrick, kept at it. Natalie and Tom both worked independently all afternoon—which left, Patrick, Xavier, Warren, and Jack. Warren has been gone from the classroom for two weeks so I was hoping that he would be eager to get back into his work, but his difficulty lay in his desire to move. He just couldn't keep still. Xavier was working off and on with Andrew, and I also showed him the last of the puzzle words. Jack and Patrick both had a hard, hard time concentrating. Patrick just wanted to see what Pip was doing and distracting him from his work. And Jack craves so much attention. He occasionally does get lost in his work, but it seems to be happening less and less frequently.

### **2.26**

The afternoon went well enough. A brief explanation, I was babysitting my nieces and nephews the night before and I slept at their house, and while I had thought that I had had a good night sleep, I was beat this afternoon. We have been working this week on re-establishing the ground rules, so I explained to the class that I wasn't going to give as many presentations and that I wanted to observe. I observed both very wonderful behavior and also behavior that made me feel frustrated. At the end of the day, I can't say that I saw any signs of improved cooperative learning or conversation. I can say that, given my tiredness, I wasn't nearly as worn out as I could have been so I do think that the meals in the classroom, if nothing else, are working wonders on my attitude.

### **3.5**

Now five of the students are stretched out reading books. Jack and Pip are drawing and Warren is resting. It was a very pleasant lunch. We did not go out for recess which the students seemed

pleased by.

Patrick was less concerned over all regarding what his fellow students were doing and he was able to actually sit down and concentrate on his work (addition strip board and looking at books). Pip too worked independently during the afternoon.

### 3.7

The students have gotten into the habit of stretching out to read when they are done lunch. Right now, Xavier is reading to Patrick, Andrew and Pip. Patrick has asked me to read to him. As I recording my notes, I suggested he ask Andrew or Xavier. He asked Xavier, but Xavier was already reading a story about Polar Bears but said he would read it after he finished. Andrew then volunteered. Andrew began to read the book, but after about 5 minutes he said, "This is too hard. I can't read this book." (He managed to say this without getting upset or frustrated which is typical of Andrew.) Xavier came over, "I'll read it." Xavier took the book and began to read. Patrick and Andrew both remained to listen to the story. After a couple of pages, Xavier said, "I'm tired. Andrew you can read it, and I can read any words that are too hard." So Andrew commenced reading again, and did ask Xavier for help with words. All the while, Patrick was quite contently listening to the story.

We also had community snack in the classroom today. I asked the students to help set up the table as they do at lunch and it went well. Pip began to say prayer, and Warren interrupted, "No, it is my job to lead prayer."

Natalie was having a bit of a rough afternoon. She didn't seem to care for the game in gym. (Riding on scooters with a partner, picking up beanbags), but she rallied at snack time. I ate snack with the students and then read the Beatrix Potter story about Nutkin. I also brought out the pitcher of water that we use during lunch which the students seemed to really enjoy. They drank more water because they were excited to use the pitcher.

I didn't attempt any presentations in the afternoon because of gym class and because the students were doing a great job of keeping themselves busy. Because the time after lunch used to be rest time, I allow the students to read if they want. (Normally, I limit reading to one student in the reading corner.) I was quite pleased that Pip opted to get out a work (the parts of a lion). The other students were content to read until Tom opted to do the binomial cube. After gym class, there was some jockeying for positions in line at the bathroom between Tom, Andrew, and Xavier resulting in Tom shouting. I talked to all three boys, and we were able to resolve the situation without further shouting, tears, or anger.

### 3.12

The afternoon also went quite well. I had the opportunity to take Pip out into the hallway to do

some evaluating work, and, when I returned, the students were all working (except for Warren who had elected to take a rest). I did not see signs of extra collaborative work with the students, but there was quiet, individual work that took place and concentration. I gave Xavier a presentation with the addition control charts and he and Andrew were very happy to quiz each other on addition problems. Then they both sat down to write out their own addition control chart. At the end of the day when we were waiting for carpool, Xavier got out a Level 2 reading book and read it out loud to Andrew and Patrick. When he finished reading it, Andrew picked it up and began to read. It was a little outside of Andrew's reading level, but listening to Xavier read was a big help for him. Jack and Patrick (my two wanders and interrupters) were disinclined to settle down with a work. Jack spent a lot of time sitting in the waiting chair even though I told them that I wasn't going to give him a presentation until I saw signs of concentration. Another point of interest is that we had cookies for snack today, and three students did not take snack. That was rather shocking when I saw the three cookies left in the bowl because often snack is a source of contention, especially when it is something out of the ordinary like cookies. (Perhaps they were full from their earlier strawberry consumption).

### **3.14**

The students fell into their usual routine of reading books following lunch. After a while, some of the students opted to do work or take a rest. Andrew, with some urging on my part, choose three sentences to write about frogs which he has been researching for the last week. He worked really hard at that work, and even opted to return to the work after P.E., rather than partake of community snack. That is an example of concentration and eagerness to work that I have not witnessed previously. Xavier also opted to skip snack and work on his work, reading. During P.E., the students did have to work cooperatively during one of the games. It was interesting to watch because they had a hard time with the game but Andrew was trying really hard to be cooperative. It was scooter hockey. He kept trying to pass to Warren who didn't understand the game. Again, I think that this is example of a change in behavior. Previously, Andrew would simply try to be the best and not include his teammate. Jack and Tom also worked together during the hockey game. Carpool went very well. I didn't have to chastise anyone. The students seemed tired out, but also happy and calm. The classroom was in pretty good order at the end of the day. Minimal clean-up from me required. The students were able to complete the meal set-up well.

## **Case Study One**

### **1.31**

Patrick took a very long time with the napkins, but was methodical in his placement.

### **2.7**

We had P.E. in the afternoon which the students love. Mrs. Watterston the gym teacher tried to

have us work the parachute, but we were too small of a group for it to really work. She began the class by telling the students that they had to use their best listening, but Patrick was not listening. He kept making waves with the parachute when Mrs. Watterston was talking. I should mention as well that Patrick was gone the last two days sick, but I feel like I am making excuses for him.

### **2.12 .**

Patrick – forks and spoons. He began by placing both the fork and spoon on the napkin, but after I reminded him about the how to place them, he places them all correctly.

When we eat downstairs, Patrick usually only makes it through his sandwich, but upstairs, he is able to eat his entire lunch in not that much more time. I suppose it is the lack of talking.

Speaking of Patrick, I would say that I am seeing the most benefit to him with the new meal time arrangement. He has been more subdued in the afternoons. He is also calm at lunch. When he is downstairs, he spends much of time clowning around for attention, up on his knees, and turned around. In the classroom, he is able to focus just on his meal

Patrick also swept the floor. Then Pip swept the floor.

### **2.14**

There is one student in particular though who I am seeing very polite behavior, Patrick. This is amazing because he is the one student who gets the most out of control at lunch when we eat downstairs. Yesterday, he very nearly missed recess because he was being so disrespectful at lunch. During the lunch in the classroom today, he wasn't very talkative and put his attention into his food. It is a bit worrisome that this behavior isn't translating at all into polite behavior in the classroom.

I was careful to observe Patrick during the meal since he the student that I have been noticing the most marked change on during the lunches. He was not directly across from Pip which was good as the two of them like to get silly. He is a bit of a picky eater. At the start of the school year, his parents were having him get hot lunch because they couldn't pack anything he liked. He didn't much like hot lunch either. Now, his Mom and Dad have finally hit upon a meal he does like, a bagel with butter. (not cream cheese. That didn't go well.) Well, today, he didn't have a bagel, but instead had a container full of I don't know what. I would suspect vanilla yogurt because it was white and had yogurt-like consistency, but he also had a Go-gurt. He took out the container, and asked, "What should I start with because I don't like this." I reminded him that he needed to take at least one bite. He took a bite, re-stated that he didn't like it and then ate his yogurt, his banana, and his bar. It was overall a pleasant exchange with him.

After gym class, we were walking back to the classroom, and I had asked the students to turn off their voices and walk calmly and quietly. I turned around at the stairs, in time to witness Jack jump over a rug. I said (a bit loudly), “Jack.” And shook my head. Patrick, who was behind Jack, piped up, “no jumping?” I said yes, and Patrick did not jump. The next two students did jump. It was a bit stunning to see Patrick following directions over other students.

I finished at the tall drinking fountain, and Patrick would have been next. I asked him to allow the 1<sup>st</sup> grader to go in front of him as their class was going up to library. He stepped away without saying a word, and then took a drink.

### **2.19**

Then, we discovered that Patrick also needed a hot lunch, so he got the “forgotten” lunch item—Uncrustable PB&J which he didn’t like. The other students had meatball sandwiches. I had brought grapes in to share which I placed in the bowl in the middle of the table. The students all had their same chores, which Patrick was not happy about. He was very slow with putting out the spoons and forks, but he did do it.

Patrick did not like his sandwich, so he ate his peaches, grapes, carrots, and a bag of chips. All in all, I didn’t think that was too bad of a lunch.

Patrick had chips and Pip had popcorn, but they both did clean up the floor after the finished eating.

Patrick just wanted to see what Pip was doing and distracting him from his work.

### **2.26**

I am still amazed at how well Patrick sits and eats his meal when he is in the classroom versus downstairs. Today, he was actually seated across from Pip (a recipe for disaster), but he just sat and ate and ate and ate.

### **3.5**

Patrick was less concerned over all regarding what his fellow students were doing and he was able to actually sit down and concentrate on his work (addition strip board and looking at books).

During the lunch, Patrick did a wonderful job eating his food and didn’t talk quite as much

Patrick was on pouring water duty again which I was a bit worried about, but he didn’t get silly or try to fill up the water glasses too much.

**3.7**

Patrick was the last student done eating. He forgot his lunch today, so had to have the forgotten hot lunch. It is an Uncrustable Peanut Butter and Jelly sandwich. In the past, when has had this meal, he pulls apart the seams of the crust (although there is no crust) and then the entire sandwich collapse into a giant mess. Today, he didn't pick apart the sandwich and there was no mess. In addition, he ate about 7/8 of the entire sandwich which is a huge improvement, especially since he began the meal by announcing that he doesn't like jelly, just peanut butter.

**3.12**

Once again, I was impressed with Patrick's attitude during lunch. For some reason, the act of eating in the classroom seems to make him approach lunch much more seriously.

**3.14**

Patrick once again did a wonderful job at lunch, focusing on his work.

### Case Study Two

**1.31**

Pip - absent

**2.5 -**

Pip who had been missing on Thursday when we began our experiment was confused (as might well he would be.)

Pip spent 30ish minutes tracing 3 letter phonetic words that he had built with the movable alphabet.

**2.12**

Pip – grace and table sweeper. Pip seemed a bit bewildered to be leading prayer, but also proud and he did a wonderful job.

Pip was initially quite reluctant to do his floor sweeping. However, once he began to sweep the floor, he didn't want to stop

Pip at one point was eating an Oreo and piece broke off and fell into his lap. His reaction, "Hey! My napkin caught it!" He was also very pleased that he still got to eat the Oreo given that it didn't fall on the floor.

**2.19**

Patrick had chips and Pip had popcorn, but they both did clean up the floor after the finished eating.

Pip also worked on math. We got out the tabletop number rods, and he did some basic addition. He was very proud of his work, and, despite attempts to be distracted by Patrick, kept at it.

**3.5**

Pip too worked independently during the afternoon.

**Teacher Attitude****2.5**

Another successful lunch. The students did a wonderful job setting up and remembered their duties well.

Considering we didn't have a recess, I was pleased with the afternoon.

**2.7**

The entire day was a bit of struggle. I can say that the afternoon was less frazzling than the morning.

All in all, the meal was pleasant enough, but I didn't witness much improved behavior in the afternoon. I would say that regarding my mood, I was a bit harried. I don't think that today, I gained much by way of an improved attitude by having lunch upstairs

**2.12**

I am ending this day feeling at peace. It was a pleasant afternoon. I enjoyed sitting with them and helping them make their geometric solids. I didn't feel harried. I didn't feel disrespected

**2.14**

My mood – calm and happy. I enjoyed the day. I enjoyed watching the students work. I enjoyed watching them in P.E. class. And I enjoying sitting with them during snake telling the story.

**2.19**

Overall, considering that I didn't have my aide, the afternoon went okay. It was hardly the best example of work, but I think that I contributed to the air of anxiety given that I was being

observed. My mood was pretty good. I got frustrated a few times with Patrick and Jack, but considering I was by myself, I was able to give a couple of presentations. When the day was over, I felt like it had been a productive afternoon and I was still in a good mood.

**2.26**

The afternoon went well enough. A brief explanation, I was babysitting my nieces and nephews the night before and I slept at their house, and while I had thought that I had had a good night sleep, I was beat this afternoon. We have been working this week on re-establishing the ground rules, so I explained to the class that I wasn't going to give as many presentations and that I wanted to observe. I observed both very wonderful behavior and also behavior that made me feel frustrated. At the end of the day, I can't say that I saw any signs of improved cooperative learning or conversation. I can say that, given my tiredness, I wasn't nearly as worn out as I could have been so I do think that the meals in the classroom, if nothing else, are working wonders on my attitude.

**2.28**

Wow, today was far better than Tuesday.

**3.5**

A pleasant afternoon.

My attitude post lunch – relaxed. My attitude at carpool – relaxed

**3.7**

The day continued to go well. Overall my attitude – positive

**3.12**

Lunch went well. Overall, it was a pleasant mealtime. A pleasant and productive afternoon. My attitude = calm, relaxed, happy.

**3.14**

It was a pleasant afternoon. My attitude – calm and well-pleased.

## Appendix F

## Pre-Study Interview

Student One –

1. Do you like lunch time? **No.**
2. What is your favorite part of lunch time? **My sandwich.**
3. If you could change something about lunch, what would you change? **The food.**

Student Two –

1. Do you like lunch time? **Yes.**
2. What is your favorite part of lunch time? **The end. When we go outside for recess.**
3. If you could change something about lunch, what would you change? **Longer.**

Student Three –

1. Do you like lunch time? **No.**
2. What is your favorite part of lunch time? **Recess.**
3. If you could change something about lunch, what would you change? **I would make it bigger.**

Student Four –

1. Do you like lunch time? **No.**
2. What is your favorite part of lunch time? **Nothing.**
3. If you could change something about lunch, what would you change? **Longer**

Student Five –

1. Do you like lunch time? **Yes.**
2. What is your favorite part of lunch time? **Eating my dessert.**
3. If you could change something about lunch, what would you change? **Not wearing my snow pants because I don't like getting them off.**

Student Six –

1. Do you like lunch time? **Yes.**
2. What is your favorite part of lunch time? **Eating by the table.**
3. If you could change something about lunch, what would you change? **Nothing**

Student Seven –

1. Do you like lunch time? **Yes.**

2. What is your favorite part of lunch time? **Chitchatting.**
3. If you could change something about lunch, what would you change? [No reply.]

Student Eight –

1. Do you like lunch time? **Yes.**
2. What is your favorite part of lunch time? **Sitting with my friends.**
3. If you could change something about lunch, what would you change? **Not so much chitchatting rules.**

## Appendix G

## Post Study Interview replies from students

Student One –

1. Do you like lunch time? **No.**
2. Which did you prefer: Lunch in the cafeteria downstairs or lunch in the classroom?  
**Downstairs.**
3. Why? Do you have a comment about lunch? **Ah, I do not know. Sandwich.**
4. What is your favorite part of lunch? **Nothing.**

Student Two –

1. Do you like lunch time? **Yes.**
2. Which did you prefer: Lunch in the cafeteria downstairs or lunch in the classroom?  
**Lunch up in the classroom.**
3. Why? Do you have a comment about lunch? **Because I like sweeping. Because I like my job.**
4. What is your favorite part of lunch? **Recess!** [I then prompted if he had a favorite part other than recess or a food item.] **Um, doing someone else's job when we have lunch up in the classroom.**

Student Three –

1. Do you like lunch time? **Yes.**
2. Which did you prefer: Lunch in the cafeteria downstairs or lunch in the classroom?  
**Cafeteria. Is there a cafeteria here?** [I clarified that the cafeteria was where we eat downstairs and then re-asked the question.] **Uh, I think up here.**
3. Why? Do you have a comment about lunch? **Because um because we get to have gym class after. I liked to do works after. And after works, I like to go to gym class.**
4. What is your favorite part of lunch? **Because I get to get those Oreos with those frosting.** [I then promoted if he had a favorite part other than a food item.] **Because I get to eat with my friends.**

Student Four –

1. Do you like lunch time? **No.**
2. Which did you prefer: Lunch in the cafeteria downstairs or lunch in the classroom?  
**Lunch downstairs.**
3. Why? Do you have a comment about lunch? **Because I sit.** [I mentioned that we sit upstairs and asked if he had another reason.] **I talk to Wim** [his brother in first grade].

4. What is your favorite part of lunch? **Eating.** [I then promoted if he had a favorite part other than eating.] **Throwing trash away because it's not littering.**

Student Five – **Yes.**

1. Do you like lunch time?
2. Which did you prefer: Lunch in the cafeteria downstairs or lunch in the classroom?  
**Lunch upstairs in the classroom.**
3. Why? Do you have a comment about lunch? **Because I like the long table. I do not like turkey.**
4. What is your favorite part of lunch? **When I eat my cheese stick because I like cheese.** [I then promoted if he had a favorite part other than a food item.] **When I be done and I clean-up.**

Student Six –

1. Do you like lunch time? **Yes.**
2. Which did you prefer: Lunch in the cafeteria downstairs or lunch in the classroom?  
**Lunch in the classroom.**
3. Why? Do you have a comment about lunch? **Because I like having it in there.**
4. What is your favorite part of lunch? **Hmmm. Hmmm. Chitchatting.**

Student Seven –

1. Do you like lunch time? **Yeah.**
2. Which did you prefer: Lunch in the cafeteria downstairs or lunch in the classroom?  
**Lunch in the classroom.**
3. Why? Do you have a comment about lunch? **Ummm. I don't know.**
4. What is your favorite part of lunch? **Taking the trays downstairs.**

Student Eight –

1. Do you like lunch time? Nodded his head affirmatively.
2. Which did you prefer: Lunch in the cafeteria downstairs or lunch in the classroom?  
**Lunch upstairs in the classroom. I like to be upstairs.**
3. Why? Do you have a comment about lunch? **Because you would bring other foods in to put on the trays.**
4. What is your favorite part of lunch? **The chocolate milk.** [I then promoted if he had a favorite part other than a food item.] **Pouring water.**