



## *Jasmine Classroom News—March 2016*

### *Manners While Eating at School*

*What are the best manners you can expect from toddlers? Our answer—excellent manners. Toddlers are spontaneous, creative, temperamental, and gregarious..... Their goals are to be like adults—they want to do whatever they see us doing. Their manners will be as good as the model provided for them as well as the expectations adults have for them. If they see us purposefully spread a napkin on our lap every time we eat and use it to periodically wipe our face and fingers, they will want to do the same thing. If they see us purposefully lean over our plates as we take bites of food, they will learn to do the same. If we use our fork and spoon, take reasonable bites, and chew before resuming conversations, they will learn to do the same. Meal time conversations are always very pleasant and interesting. The first 5 minutes with toddlers is always very quiet—only because they are focused on eating. They love to notice what other children have on their plates (fruits and vegetables are really popular conversation points—so keep sending them please). We purposefully model please and thank you. Even if a child is not speaking clearly yet, I guarantee they are trying to say please and thank you if this is something they hear often in their environment. At school, we use placemats, napkins, and real utensils and real glass glasses and pitchers. Before going outdoors, each child sets up their lunch space—or as much as they are able to do. Often, the older children help set up for the younger*

*children. Setting up for lunch takes a little time, because we ask them to always carry one item at a time, using both of their hands. This takes 6 trips: placemat, plate, fork/spoon, glass, pitcher, and napkin. While the children are outside, we put their food on their plates and have it waiting for them. When they come inside, rather than rush to wash hands and sit quickly to eat, we invite the children to begin the lunch routine with a bit of calmness by sitting with us while we read a book or two to. One child at a time is invited to wash their hands and sit down for lunch. Earlier in the day, children have often chosen to do the flower arranging work, so we enjoy vases of flowers on the tables. We also have the lights dimmed and interesting music to listen to and talk about. Once the children sit down, they are welcome to begin eating. Children may only eat while sitting down—they quickly learn to stay seated. The children pour their milk (or water) from a small pitcher into their glass. (There is a lot of spilled milk as they master this process). When children are finished eating, they are welcome to fetch their lunch bag and begin putting their food back into their containers. Children who have hot lunch take their plate and scrape leftover food into the compost bucket. Then children carry their plate, fork/spoon, glass and pitcher to the dirty dishes cart (one item at a time) and their placemat and napkin to the laundry. The last step is to use a roll up at the mirror—cleaning food from their face and hands. The older children enjoy helping us clean the tables and chairs or sweeping the floor.*