

Osmana's view

Osmana is the grandmother of Elma.
She is also the great-aunt of Shelia.
She sat talking with us at the lunch table.
Osmana talked about respect.
Respect before the war.
Respect for each other.
Respect for our world and for the people of the world.
“We should say thank you for this food.”
Osmana said all of this very gently and quietly.
Her face is gentle and warm.
I began to think about what she had said.
I began to think about the ways in which we could all say thank you.
Thank you is part of respect, appreciation and a way of acknowledging and deepening relationships.
I asked Htwe how Burmese people say thank you for food. She said, “We always say thank you at the end of the meal.”
I asked Sadia from Afghanistan the same question. She said, “We always say thank you at the end of the meal.”
I talked again with Osmana. I could sense that this was very important to her. We talked about how childcare centres and teachers can support family and cultural values.
I thought in this case we could say a grace before eating, as a mark of respect.
Thank you for the world so sweet,
Thank you for the food we eat,
Thank you for the friends we meet,
Thank you for the birds that sing,
Thank you God for everything,
seemed appropriate.
We introduced it that very day.
I have asked Osmana if she will write her story for me.

Robyn, 28 June

I want to put this grace up on the wall in the dining area.

I want to explore some simple karakia that could be suitable.

Our Māori proverbs could be a way – a pathway through. We may eventually have a collection of graces from all cultures within our centre.

July

Memories from Osmana

I remember gladly the times when grown-ups as well as children had much more respect for food.

I've had six sisters and my father was the only one who was working. It was very hard to provide food for eight family members. The lunch was the main meal – just like dinner in New Zealand.

Between 3 and 4 p.m., we all had to be on time for lunch. Instead of chair and table, we were eating on the thing called “siniya”, which is a very low round table, from which you could eat by sitting on the floor, with bent legs. Older sisters would be helping with serving. Usually, when the meal was served, our father would start by saying “Bismilah irahman irahim”, which means “In the name of merciful God”. When finishing the meal everybody would say “el-hamdulilah” meaning “Thank God for everything”.

No one was allowed to refuse any food or even say something bad about it. All leftovers and crumbs were thrown to birds. If someone wasn't there for lunch, he wouldn't get anything to eat until dinner. The times have changed. So did customs, and I'm trying to understand and respect everything new that is coming.

What's happening here?

This is another exemplar about a centre acknowledging the diverse cultures and traditions of its home communities. The teacher researches different families' customs around saying thank you for food at mealtimes and describes one possible way the centre might be able to incorporate a similar thank you at mealtimes to show respect for the cultural values present at the centre. Osmana, Elma's grandmother, writes about the customs in her culture.

What does this assessment tell us about the learning (using a Contribution/Mana Tangata lens)?

By writing down her family's customs and details of the past, Osmana is teaching Elma about them and is providing a lesson to do with respect for food. She also contributes this knowledge to the teachers and the other children at the lunch table, recalling and telling about a different time and place.

How might this documented assessment support Contribution/Mana Tangata?

This story can also be shared with other children, extending their knowledge of other customs, as well as developing their sense of respect and gratitude for food.

What other strands of Te Whāriki are exemplified here?

This exemplar, with its emphasis on the cultures of the home communities, ties in with the children developing a sense of *belonging* to the two communities of home and the centre and developing their cultural identity, which extends their personal sense of Well-being/Mana Atua. Communication/Mana Reo is implicated with Osmana's inclusion of her home language in her description of the past. So is Exploration/Mana Aotūroa as the children develop working theories for making sense of the diversity of their social world.