

## Children Supporting Children

Montessori classrooms are set up to accommodate the planes of development of children based upon age levels. The levels are: ages three to six, ages six to nine, and ages nine to twelve. The multi age classroom provides students with many leadership opportunities! I just so happened to witness one of these moments in the Upper Elementary class.

Emaleean (a fifth grader) was instructing Isabella-a fellow student and friend in the use of long division with materials. They were using a material called Test Tubes-you put out the number you are sharing (dividend) into the appropriate cups and share them out with the divisor on wooden boards. As they were working I overheard the "teacher" say to her fellow classmate and student "You know if you can multiply, you can do this faster...let's see how many times do you think 5 will go into 17?" It was classic!! The two of them continued to share out the beads and discuss the world of operations. The young teacher's words were kind and supportive as well as encouraging and thoughtful. Her lesson ensured me that she herself has a strong grasp of both operations.

An informal assessment like this is done all the time and lets the teacher know that the student who taught can move onto next levels in such work. You know that you have provided excellent role modeling in the room when you hear the language and see the actions! This little snapshot is indicative of all the classrooms. Children are supporting and encouraging each other on a daily basis. There generally is no feeling of competition or rivalry-we are all capable to do something that will inspire and engage others.

Maria Montessori observed this and allowed spontaneous teachable moments to transform the lessons. After initial presentations by the adult, the child can choose to work with the material over and over. At some point you want to encourage the child to then teach it to someone else. I am always amazed at the purposeful interactions in a Montessori classroom. Are there ways that you could have your child "teach" at home? If they are allowed these opportunities, you can then observe your child and be able to pick up on cues that are helpful to their development and being.