
SOCIALIZATION IN THE MONTESSORI COMMUNITY

By Gail Guthery

The *Oxford Dictionary* defines the word society as “the sum of human conditions and activity regarded as a whole, functioning interdependently”. This is most certainly true for each of the classrooms, preferably called communities, here at CMS! We cannot actually teach socialization, but we have situations set up in which the child actually lives and experiences society. We do this through several features of our prepared classroom environments. Each classroom environment is carefully prepared, with attention paid to every detail, to allow the child to develop intellectually as well as socially. Through the Primary years the child develops as a centered, self-confident and self-motivated individual. He then enters the Elementary class with a strong interest and desire to work in a group, and will be able to be a productive part of the group.

Each classroom has mixed ages of children, which reflects our real society. There are young, middle, and oldest! Older children help younger ones. One child with a particular knowledge or skill teaches it to another. **This provides constant practice dealing with socially acceptable situations. The child learns to respect the work of others and their work together, and forms bonds of affection and feelings of worth.**

Another aspect of the prepared environment that aids socialization is the fact that the materials are generally limited to one (or in some cases, a few) of each. If a piece is in use, then the child will have to wait for it. The child learns to respect the work of another, not because he is told to, but because of his daily experience. The idea of respect for others and the act of waiting one’s turn become a habitual part of life. The child develops patience.

Children also have freedom: to make choices of work based on knowledge, to talk and socialize at a snack table or during a group project, or to be quiet and contemplative. Our communities are active and alive! Each person’s needs can be fulfilled within the structure of the whole

This process of socialization begins early for children, first at home when a child learns how his particular family operates. Then, in the Toddler community a child learns to co-operate and take turns. The Primary classroom prepares a child to be a confident, motivated, and intellectually prepared individual who then can become a strong and productive member of the group work that is so prevalent in the Elementary classrooms. **You only have to sit and listen quietly in any of these classrooms to know that socialization is occurring constantly. The conversations about work or thoughts and ideas are happening all the time!**

We, as Montessorians, are entrusted with developing the whole child, intellectual as well as social. This socialization is a process that will occur more readily when the child lives the experience.