

**Tips for Parents** by Susie Kohl

## *Celebrating Teachers' Gifts to Children*

**W**HEN MY FIVE-YEAR-OLD GRANDSON sees me struggle with something, like pulling out of a parking place, and then achieve my goal (getting back into the flow of traffic), he shouts, "You did it, Grandma, you did it!", using the same tone I do when I acknowledge one of his successes. We all know children imitate people in their surround, but I find it interesting that my grandson exhibits the same feelings I have when I note one of his accomplishments. I can see that he feels very, very proud of me.

It would make sense that children learn about feelings through imitating those around them. Research shows that imitation is the primary way that children learn social cues, including acting empathically or learning how to be helpful. Positive role models demonstrate the feelings behind those pro-social behaviors, and children drink in the words, the actions, and the emotions, adding their finely tuned observations to the whole fabric of their knowing.

At this time of year, I think about children's enormous capacity for imitation as it relates to the rich, loving relationships they have with teachers at our school. Though children may be moving into new classrooms, they have spent at least a year imbibing the unique blend of qualities and intentions that each of their teachers brings to the class.

If you think back to teachers who made a difference in your life, you will remember that subtle elements, like their belief in you or their enthusiastic encouragement to try something new, are palpable memories. Our teachers actually leave us with a legacy, and this is the time of year to celebrate that bond.

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