



What We Can Continue to Learn from Fred Rogers

Thinking Outside the Box -- Thanks to Eric Carle



At this gift-giving time of the year, we usually think about presents that come in a box. But for this newsletter, I wanted to give you a "gift" of one of our favorite *Neighborhood* videos that has a great example of thinking "outside the box." It's Fred's visit with author-illustrator Eric Carle, who has given us such wonderful books as *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and *The Very Busy Spider*.

Hungry Caterpillar and *The Very Busy Spider*.

When you watch this video, you'll have a chance to meet this delightful man and learn about some unusual ways that he creates artwork for his books. Eric Carle has inspired lots of teachers to think "outside the box" -- and that's a great present in itself.



Any time I've shown that video in a workshop, teachers are amazed at the paint tool that Eric Carle used -- a small piece of carpet! I always hear them say they never would have thought of it -- and they can't wait to try it with the children. Maybe you felt that way, too.

Here are some other ideas from this video to inspire thinking "outside the box":

Offering unusual materials

The art center is a wonderful place for creative thinking. I once saw a

Timeless Wisdom from Fred Rogers



"If you like to make things out of wood, or sew, or dance, or style people's hair, whatever you really love to do, and you love that in front of the children, that's going to be a far more important gift than anything you could ever give them wrapped up in a box with ribbons. And what's more: the last thing in the world you have to be is perfect at it. It's the spirit that gives that kind of gift its wings."

teacher give children long-stemmed flowers to use at the art table. Intrigued by this new tool, the children held the stem, dipped the petals into paint and used them like a paint brush with some very interesting effects.

Just think about how much you offer when you think "outside the box" and give children unusual art material, like torn bits of sponges, cotton balls, droppers, or curly bows from holiday wrappings. More than a fun art experience, you're modeling -- and encouraging -- creative thinking which is a key 21st century learning skill.

Offering encouragement

So many people have found Eric Carle's *Neighborhood* visit inspirational. In part, I think it's because of his obvious delight in what he's doing. You can see it in his face, and you can hear it in his voice. In the same way, children pick up all sorts of non-verbal cues from your excitement. It's like one of Fred's favorite quotes, "Attitudes are caught, not taught."

Your words are encouraging, too, like when you hold up some unusual material and say, "You have such good ideas. I wonder what you might do with this?" Children have a natural tendency to "think outside the box," and it's fun to hear their ideas when we give them that opportunity.

I always hear teachers laugh when, after Eric tells Fred he's made enough dots, Fred can't resist making one more. We all know children and adults like that, and we've probably all had moments like that ourselves -- when we can't resist just one more (especially at the holiday table!) It's another one of those times when Fred shared with us his honest self...his humanness. And doing so, he made us feel good about who we are, even when we can't resist just one more. Thank you, Fred!

Thank you, too, for caring about our work...and for all that you do on behalf of children and families. You're an inspiration to so many, as Fred used to say, "just by being you."

Your neighbor,



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P.S. I thought you'd like to know the full Eric Carle visit is available at www.pbskids.org/rogers. It's one of 30 free *Neighborhood* episodes and short classic videos, like the crayon factory and the visit to the pediatrician.

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