



## What We Can Continue to Learn from Fred Rogers

### *Creativity: Why It's So Important*



I just learned something fascinating about creativity. Creativity is a much better predictor of achievement in life than IQ!

That's come out of the follow-up research of thousands of children who have taken the Torrance Creativity Test

since 1958. But research also shows us that since 1984, children's creativity scores have dramatically decreased. That's a major concern. But we in early childhood can help change that.

Creativity was at the cornerstone of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. Fred helped children see that creative thinking is important in all walks of life - whether you're a plumber or an artist. Creative problem-solving was embedded in the Neighborhood of Make-Believe stories, especially because the situations played out over the course of a whole week. Fred would often ask children what they thought might happen next to help solve the problems.

Fred made a special point to introduce children to creative artists and musicians, potters and poets. Watch what he said and did to encourage creativity on his visit with the rhythmic performers of STOMP.



You play such an important role in boosting children's creative thinking, creative play, and creative problem-solving. Here are some things to keep in mind:

#### **Role Models**

Creativity is contagious! Fred often told the story of the sculptor who visited the child care center every Friday and sat at a table just "playing" with the clay. The teachers found that the children that year did the most imaginative things from clay because they were around him - and because they sensed that he enjoyed sharing his love of clay with them. Fred liked to end that story with one of his favorite quotes, "Attitudes are caught, not taught."

What a gift it would be for children if you invite parents and/or grandparents or other community members to

### *Timeless Wisdom from Fred Rogers*



"Creativity and imagination are the beginning of problem-solving in a young child."

### *Creative Counterparts*

In last month's newsletter, I mentioned that I hoped to share with you what I'm learning from my project with the taped conversations about the *Neighborhood* scripts between Fred and his chief consultant, Dr. Margaret McFarland. I recently came across a statement that Dr. McFarland "delighted in being the counterpart for the creative person" ...the one to inspire...to encourage. And she found great joy from seeing how Fred used their conversations to create the ideas, songs, and stories for the *Neighborhood*.

You, too, are the counterpart for the creativity in the lives of the children in your care as you inspire and encourage, spark their ideas and their problem-solving, and support their play and their learning. We now know how important creativity is for children's achievement and success in life - and just think about how important that is for

share something they enjoy doing. And you can assure them they don't have to be experts to inspire young children!

### Resources

There are tons of commercial playthings available, but you offer so much more when you give children everyday "stuff" to play with, to manipulate, to build with. What might they make from paper towel tubes, paper bags, stones, cardboard boxes, or cove molding?

Soon enough, in their formal schooling, they'll be faced with, "There's only one right answer." If, early on, you give them experiences with multiple ideas and different ways to use things, you'll be laying the foundation for creative thinking and problem-solving for times when they need to think "out of the box."

### Responses

You could tell how much Fred appreciated the STOMP performers - from his words, his facial expression, his gestures, his interest in them, and his readiness to join in. You, too, have many ways to applaud children for their ideas - for what they say...for what they create. Your response means so much -- with your words, with a high-five or an appreciative look on your face. Even if the children's ideas seem outlandish, you can help them feel good about coming up with their own unique ideas.

Thanks for being our neighbor,



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