

What We Can Continue to Learn from Fred Rogers



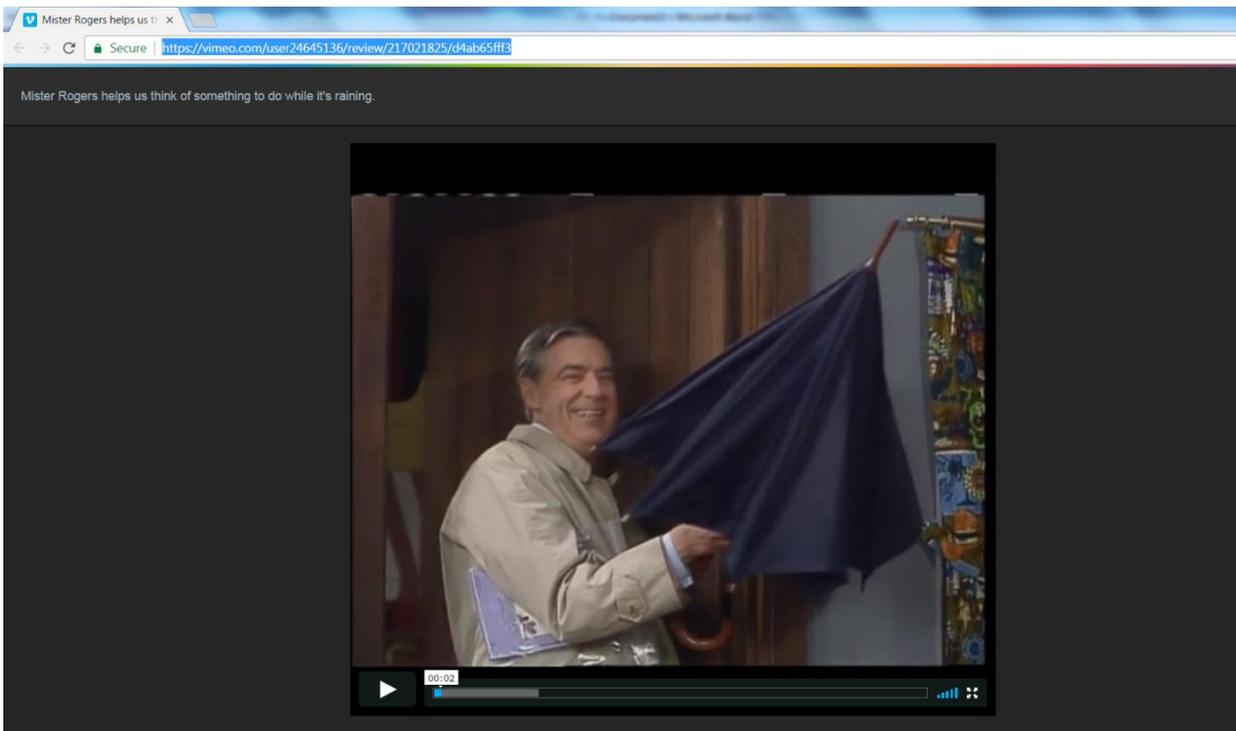
Save for a Rainy Day



I don't know what this spring has been like in your neighborhood, but it's been raining a lot around here. I even caught myself singing, "Rain, rain go away. Come again another day," hoping the rain would go away. Then I remembered a teacher who had a very different way to think about rainy days – Carla turned them into an adventure, dressed the children in rain gear and opened the door to all

kinds of learning.

That's the perspective Fred gave us, too. He didn't distract children from disappointing or upsetting times. Instead, he took advantage of the moment as a learning opportunity. Fred even included a rainy day in his television *Neighborhood* so that he could help children appreciate days like that.



Taking a walk

Some teachers, like Carla, hear there's a rainy day in the forecast and get ready for a walk. They have the children bring rain gear -- boots and raincoats with hoods or rain hats. Just in case, they get extra rain gear from second-hand stores for children who don't have them or forget to bring them. Of course there are rainy days when it's best to stay indoors. When it's lightning or thundering, children need to know grownups want them to be indoors where they'll be safe.

If you can go on a walk, let the children experience it with all their senses. Encourage them to talk about what's different in the air when it rains. Let them experience what it's like to taste rain on their tongues...to feel it on their hands...to see the water splash when they jump in puddles...to float leaves or tin foil boats in puddles...to see the rain bounce off the sidewalk...to hear the sounds of the rain.

Talking about science

There are lots of ways to start conversations about the rain -- beyond the typical calendar-time question "what's the weather today." This is a great time for open-ended questions like "What do you know about rain? What do you think makes the rain? Why do you think we need rain? What would you like to know about rain? How would you measure how much rain fell today? How could you draw a rainy

day?”

You can also introduce children to words that scientists use, like “evaporate” (when the sun heats the rain on the ground and it becomes part of the air) and “meteorologist” (a man or woman who studies the weather).

Encouraging creative and caring conversation

You can use a rainy day for other kinds of language enrichment, too. Ask the children to help you make a list of words or phrases they would use to describe the rain. You might even hear some intriguing ideas, like a child who said, “The rain is like tears.” You could talk about some of the words we use to describe different kinds of rain, like “a light shower,” “a downpour,” “a storm.” To extend the conversation, use the library or the Internet to find books or poems about a rainy day.

You might also ask children to describe how they feel on a rainy day. They may say they’re disappointed, sad, angry, quiet, etc. There are lots of ways to feel about a rainy day, and it helps children to know you care about how they feel.

If you think about all the possibilities for learning on rainy days, maybe you, too, will find that it’s not so hard to turn those into beautiful days in your neighborhood!

Thank you for being our neighbor,



Hedda Sharapan

M.S. Child Development

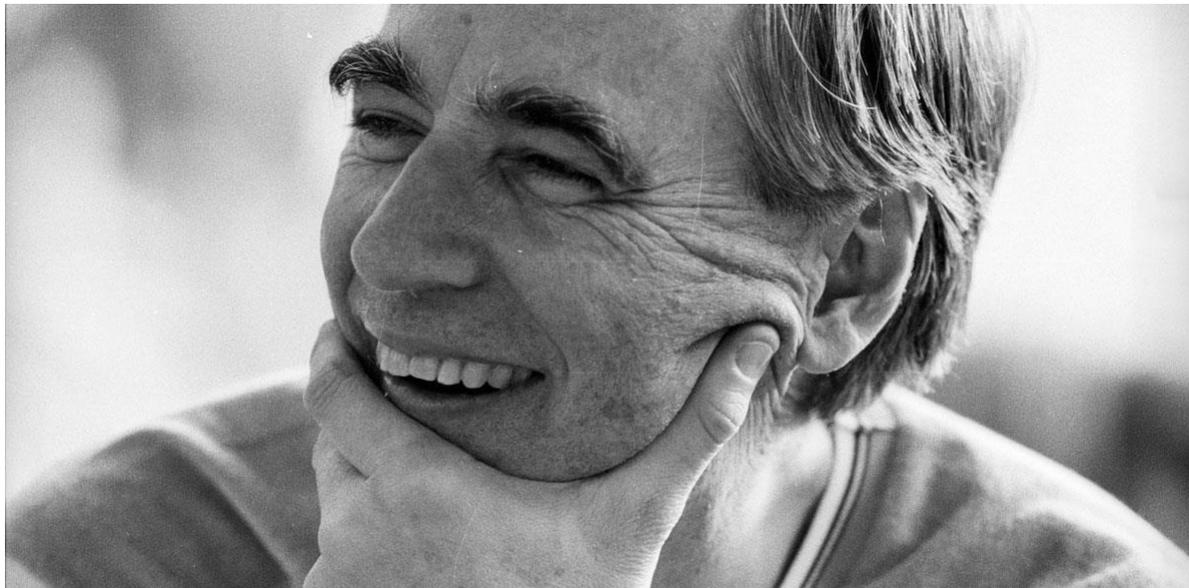
PNC Grow Up Great Senior Fellow

hedda.sharapan@stvincent.edu

P.S. On Sunday, May 21, I will be at the Heinz History Center presenting *Rewinding Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* starting at 2:00 p.m. As the Rogers Center's PNC Grow Up Great Senior Fellow, I've been studying audio recordings between Fred Rogers and his chief consultant, Dr. Margaret McFarland. This presentation provides a special behind-the-scenes look at *Mister*

Rogers' Neighborhood and will explore how Fred Rogers' relationship with Dr. McFarland shaped the show's content and direction. To register, click [here](#).

Timeless Wisdom from Fred Rogers



"Children love puddles and can be fascinated by stars in the sky. Why not build on the things that naturally fascinate children and invite them to explore water, air, and space?"

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Saint Vincent College
300 Fraser Purchase Road
Latrobe, Pennsylvania 15650-2690

