

Educator in the Neighborhood:

Molly Ouchis, Kindergarten teacher, St. Ignatius Loyola Regional School

Molly has been teaching for five years. She graduated from St. Vincent College in 2015 with a degree in Early Childhood Education, and she feels fortunate and blessed to have gotten a teaching job right out of college. Molly lives with her family in Reading, PA.



What's your earliest personal memory of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood?

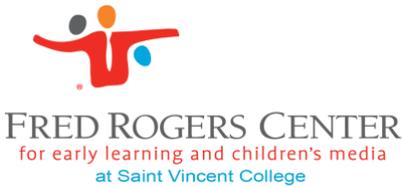
If I can think back, my first memory is not of any particular episode. But it's of my brother and I watching it when we were kids. I can remember seeing Mister Rogers on the TV screen.

What is your favorite episode you've played for students? Why?

Oh, my goodness. It was early in the school year, the episode when Lady Elaine took the King Friday dolls and painted her face on them (episode [1493](#)). That whole week we were reading and talking about empathy and what it means to be selfish. Many conversations came up after that episode. One of my students realized that Lady Elaine was only thinking of herself and not how King Friday would feel. At age 5, I felt as though it was really thoughtful and insightful for this student to realize that. To have a response like that is very powerful. I feel as though my students understood the message the episode was trying to portray.

Do you have a most memorable MRN classroom moment?

We were watching an episode when he visited performers from Stomp (episode [1695](#)). For me, what was profound about it was that the cues that Mister Rogers had on the cards, my students



saw them and just followed them. They just read the words “clap” and “stomp.” This is almost every time when Mister Rogers asks them to do something and they do it.

How has MRN impacted your teaching?

Well, since I’ve been showing Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood, I’ve been showing it this year and last year, he really has taught me how we should speak to children, and to all people. We need to watch our words. Children internalize everything we say. We need to watch out for not being negative. We are so used to thinking so fast and you can’t think of what to say and we say, uh... uh... uh. We need to think before we speak and slow down. It is amazing to see how attentive students are to how Mister Rogers speaks to them.

Which puppet or person of MRN do you most identify with? Why?

Oh, wow. I would say Henrietta Pussycat. With her, she can be very shy and sensitive to feelings. I’ve opened up a lot and have become more outgoing, but she kind of reminds me of me because I was always very shy in certain situations. Also, I can be sensitive in regards to my feelings and the feelings of others. That’s just the way I am. So, I think I relate to her the most.

Besides Mister Rogers, which puppet or person of MRN do your students talk about the most?

Mr. McFeely. Whenever the bell rings, they always assume it’s Mr. McFeely. They are right 90% of the time (laughs). They like when he visits and brings the tapes and shows them how things are made. Today, they don’t see how things are made and are always enthralled when they *do* see how something is made!

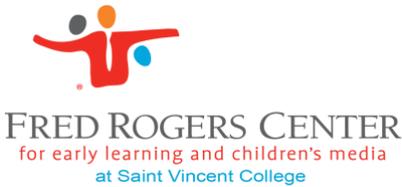
What is something you’ve learned in your readings from the FRC archives?

I can give an example from our readings in January. I couldn’t get through everything because I was so captivated with what I was reading. I really appreciate how dedicated Fred Rogers was to how he spoke with children about what was important to them. And how he worked with Margaret McFarland about the scripts and how he took every word seriously and how every single word and part of the script mattered. And it goes to show how we as adults have to think about what we say to kids.

What more would you like to learn from Fred Rogers and the archive?

I want to read more about his use of language, his mannerisms, and how he speaks to children. I’m interested in this because I work with Kindergarten. At that age, they are sponges and remember everything you say!

Why do you show MRN to your students?



I think for me it was quite by accident in the 2018-19 school year when I was showing it to my students the first time. It stuck ever since. They don't see a lot of what Mister Rogers shows and he is at a pace that we're not used to all the time—we're just go, go, go. Developmentally, children need that slow pace and to interact with each other and hold their focus and attention. And that's what MRN does. That's part of the reason why I show it to them. And the other reason is I think a lot of the time kids don't hear that they're special or that "I'm proud of you just as you are." They need that. They need to hear that someone loves them. And the manner that he talks with them—like they are the only child in the room. Even as an adult, he still captures *my* attention.

Is there anything else you'd like to share?

At the same time as the kids are learning, I am learning myself. I find myself just watching and saying, "Oh, 30 minutes has gone by!" To share that with them is really special. It makes my heart smile that they love watching Mister Rogers and especially with kids these days being so fast paced. It's nice to see that he's having a positive impact on them. I say that because we will be in the middle of a lesson and sometimes my students are able to relate it to Mister Rogers. I think watching *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* will pay off when they're older.

What message from Fred Rogers do you think matters right now for families at home with children [due to Covid-19 closures]?

Fred Rogers once told us, "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.' " With all the news surrounding Covid-19, look for the good, look for the helpers because you *have* to find the positive amidst all the negative. Children need to know there are people out there doing their best to make the situation better.

--

Educators' Neighborhood interviews are conducted and transcribed by Melissa Butler.