

Educator in the Neighborhood:

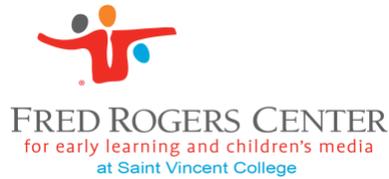
Katy Carroll, Kindergarten teacher, Pittsburgh Faison K-5

Katy has been teaching for 31 years in Pittsburgh Public Schools. This is her ninth year at Pittsburgh Faison. She has a Ph.D. from the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh and has worked as both a literacy coach and a classroom teacher. She lives in Point Breeze with her dog Gabby.



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

Coming home from Kindergarten, half-day Kindergarten, I would walk home with my siblings and have lunch. Then they would go back to school. As they would leave, I would sit down and watch Mister Rogers' Neighborhood with my younger sister. I was one of eight children. I think my mom was probably cleaning up after lunch and it was a quiet time for her. It felt like a special time for me because I was done with school. I felt a little jealous that I didn't get to go back with my siblings, but it felt like I had my own special thing because I could watch Mister Rogers and they couldn't. I felt grown up being able to watch Mister Rogers.



What made you want to join this Educators' Neighborhood group?

Renata [Faison colleague] mostly. She had wonderful things to say about her experience with her students last year watching episodes of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood. I wanted that same experience for my students. Also, I had such great memories of Mister Rogers as a child. I wanted to share that experience with my students.

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

The hula hoop episode ([1720](#)) because it's so much about trying and not getting it, and being okay with that. And trying and getting better. And if you keep trying and practicing, trying and practicing, you can become an expert. It shows all of the stages of development in learning something. Shows a novice, and then each level of practice to get better and better and better and better.

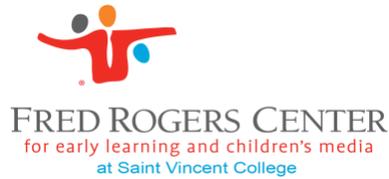
Has anything surprised you about sharing MRN with your students?

This may be naïve of me, but I never realized how "Picture Picture" was about making something. To go back and watch those segments, I think of the book, *Agatha's Feather Bed* by Carmen Agra Deedy, how she says "Nothing comes from nothing. Everything comes from something." It makes me think of this when we get to find out how things are made in "Picture Picture." The curiosity of the kids when they watch... how construction paper is made. We watched how they make garden hoes. I get fascinated. I get excited. We share that together. Then they get excited to go off and create. How they take that information and use it and say, "Oh, this is just like we saw, maybe we can do ___." They apply things that they learn to so many different situations. This is important. You don't just go out and buy something. It came from somewhere. Somebody made it.

How has MRN impacted your teaching?

I think Fred Rogers has made me more thoughtful because every child is unique and sometimes it's not always easy to remember that when you're in the middle of 100 things, and this is due, and this is due, and everything. And the songs are so important to me. I love you just the way you are. [It's You I Like](#)... I love that one. I love it. I read something this year... a coach was observing a teacher who called roll for students and the teacher would say, "I see you, [name]." So, I started to do that. I call the name, they say "here," and I say, "I see you, [name]." They thought it was funny. But one day I didn't say it, and someone asked, "Don't you see me?" Yes, I see you. It is important for me to say that: I see *you*. I like you just the way you are. The episodes have made me more cognizant that I need to see them just for who they are.

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



Oh gosh. I love X the Owl and Henrietta. Their friendship makes me happy, that they accept each other for who they are. They support each other no matter what. I try to do that in my friendships and relationships. Sometimes I can be Henrietta and be shy and not sure of myself. I can also be X the Owl and be the protector and the cheerleader and say, "You can do it!" I think I identify with both of them for different reasons.

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

Lady Elaine. They like the way she says "toots." They talk about that a lot. They joke about that. I often say "Yes, ma'am" or "Yes, sir." They think that's funny, so when they noticed that Lady Elaine says "toots," we started saying it together, to each other, too. They love Daniel Tiger, too, but they know the other Daniel Tiger more from the Daniel Tiger show.

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

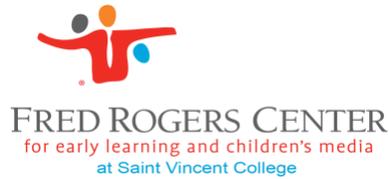
I think his understanding of the therapeutic parts of music. I identify with that. Always, but with this pandemic, especially, I have on music. It brings quietness in my house, but also helps me connect. I am part of the [P.R.I.D.E. program](#) [with University of Pittsburgh]. As part of this group, I was asked "What/who shaped you?" Music has shaped me. I appreciate how much Mister Rogers uses music to share ideas, to give praise, and to talk about things that might be harder to talk about. Music, it makes you feel good. I play it all the time in my classroom. Jazz and classical. Music helps you learn about you.

What do you want to study more next school year?

The songs. The music. Oh, the feeling you get when the opening song [of MRN] starts. You know he's coming. You know it's going to make you feel good. No matter what happens. It is affirmation after affirmation after affirmation... you are okay as you are. It is hard as the second youngest child of eight children... hard to be the one who does something first. I was 38 years old before I did something the first out of my siblings. I got my Ph.D. So, it's okay to have all of the feelings... to be happy, sad, mad... there were 10 people in my house. I'm not complaining about my upbringing, but I didn't get lots of one-on-one time. So, to have that one person talking directly to me, Mister Rogers talks to *you*, that you are okay just as you are. So, I want to study music next year. How he uses music. It would be a wonderful, wonderful way to spend my year next year.

Why do you show MRN to your students?

Because I think it's just full of good lessons. His straight-forward way of talking is a great way to deal with children. I've always tried to be as honest as I could be with children. Someone to look at you and say this is the way it is. My students need that a lot. And it's fun to re-live certain things and discover things in the episodes... like "Picture Picture" and how we can create in the classroom. This year that's been a focus... how can we create in a purposeful way?



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

That everything you're feeling is okay. Grown-ups, kids, we are all going through a range of emotions, sometimes on a daily basis. There's no wrong way to feel. Processing it, people may need help with that. But what you're feeling, it's all okay.

Is there anything else you'd like to say?

I really enjoy this experience. To be with Renata and Toni [Kindergarten team colleagues]. For the kids asking, "Are we watching Mister Rogers today?" It has been really positive and I'm really sad we didn't get to finish up the rest of this year. So, I'm grateful to the Fred Rogers Center and for Renata. And grateful for your support. This is a really positive experience for me.

--

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