

SPOTLIGHT ON: ROBIN ROSS

Robin Ross is a new kindergarten teacher, new to Clinton School that is. She hails from P.S. 9, a gifted and talented school on New York City's Upper West Side.



Robin Ross in her kindergarten classroom April 2011

When did you decide to become a teacher and why?

After I graduated from college, I was in finance and then recruiting, but never felt fulfilled. My sister is a teacher and would come home and talk about her day, so I decided to substitute teach one day to see how it was. At the end of the day, the kids were all making these pictures for me, and it meant something. I applied for graduate school that night to become a teacher. It made sense, since I've always loved school and was very into being a student.

Where were you before coming to Clinton?

I went to the University of Wisconsin for undergrad, and to Mercy College for my Masters in education. I became a kindergarten co-teacher at a Montessori school and then taught pre-K at P.S. 9, a gifted and talented school on the Upper West Side. I went on maternity leave for three years and had a girl and a boy. Last year, when my son was two, I went back to P.S. 9 to teach kindergarten. This summer I got my job teaching kindergarten at Clinton.

What is special about teaching kindergarteners?

I think that the growth that you see in kindergarten is so great. It's a really rewarding feeling. I love watching how much they grow through the year, socially, emotionally, and academically. They leave kindergarten completely different from when they came in. We also do lots of art projects, and I really do like all that crafty stuff.

What's the biggest challenge you face as a teacher?

In kindergarten, you have children coming in at different levels. The challenge is in finding the best lessons and tailoring them to the different levels. As a kindergarten teacher, you also have to have a level of patience.

Can you describe yourself as a teacher?

I really like routines. I give the kids accountability for how the day is run so they know what to expect. We use a lot of manipulatives, singing, and movement. I'm also very mothering, and give my share of hugs throughout the day.

Is there anything about being at Clinton that has been particularly rewarding or challenging compared to other schools you have worked at?

I love the community. It's a very warm feeling. Right away, the teachers and families in my class embraced me (I really have great families in my class!). We have a strong kindergarten team and we work well together.

What do you do in your free time?

I like to travel. We're on the go a lot. My favorite road trip is driving to Long Branch for the day to go to the beach. I'm also constantly doing kids stuff, even after I get home from teaching all day. My husband and I also like to listen to music and have been to our share of concerts.

Do you have any pets?

I have a six-year-old black Labrador retriever named Jasper.

Tell me something interesting about yourself.

When I was 25, I spent two weeks volunteering for an Earthwatch program caring for chimpanzees who spoke sign language. I was also the captain of the cheerleading team my junior and senior years of high school.

—Laurie Tarkan