

Heroes Theme

adapted with strategies from Totally Positive Teaching

This is a lesson that is part of a larger unit I created for a class called “Heroes Every Kid Should Meet” I started this school year off with a Hero theme and this lesson was the kick off. We will continue to work on heroes and identify heroes in literature, film and history. This came out of a slight frustration that my students were not feeling heroic and were only understanding heroism as it is portrayed in comic books and through superheroes in popular culture. After finishing the coursework for Totally Positive Teaching, I added some strategies that would increase fun, peer to peer work and leadership for my students.

Description of lessons and activities

Lesson 1. Explore and define the qualities of a hero.

Ask students to discuss with their partners some of their favorite heroes.

Come back together as a group and ask students to share what they heard from their partners.

Make a list of heroes on the whiteboard.

As a group, create a class definition of hero and qualities that heroes have.

Most of the students will, I predict, offer examples of comic book or film heroes who “fight bad guys”. From this discussion we will connect “bad guys” as people who hurt people, break laws or create laws that are unfair or harmful to other people. We will define rights and responsibility and discuss how heroes take responsibility for protecting people’s rights.

Students will write the class definition of a hero and draw a picture of their personal hero.

Students will share their portraits of heroes during morning circle time.

The students will work together to hand the portraits in the hall on a “Hero Hall of Fame Display”.

The students will make invitations for other classes to view the Hero Hall of Fame and invite them to make their own contributions to the Portrait Gallery.

My students responded really well to this lesson. Tapping into a high interest area was an effective way to get the creativity flowing and it was fun for them. I allowed them to talk to each other about their heroes for about 10 minutes. It was a little challenging to reign them back in to a group discussion but we got there eventually. In trying to make connections between super powers and heroic qualities the students needed some help so I ended up creating a check list of heroic qualities. helps people, inspires people, makes sacrifices of self, inspires others and takes risks. It was then easier to examine each hero and connect their abilities to concepts of heroic qualities. This became our working list.

The students used water color crayons on their hero portraits and they turned out really bold and wonderful. Under each portrait the heroic qualities were listed. They enjoyed presenting their heroes in the group and had lots of feedback and connections for each other.

We’ll post the portraits and make the invitations this week.

Overall I think that this lesson was enhanced just by having an awareness of the fun and leadership that students need to get out of their school experiences.