

Tips for Organizing a Heroes Fair

What is a Heroes Fair?

Most educators have attended, organized, or participated in a science fair at some point in their lives so for a “big picture” overview of a heroes fair, think about a science fair; however, instead of student displays of the procedures and results of a scientific investigation, substitute pictures and information about the life and work of a person who made (or who is making) a positive difference in the world. A heroes fair is often the culminating activity of a heroes unit or is the end product of lessons on using media center resources to research a topic. Either way, students research a hero and create a display of materials that help communicate what they learned. These projects are then shared with an audience usually made up of students from other grades, classmates, and/or parents.

Where did we get these tips for organizing a heroes fair?

We went to the experts- i.e. teachers who have done it, but we didn’t ask enough questions because most sections of this document could use more ideas. Teachers who haven’t done an heroes fair but who would like to try really need sample handouts/ letters/ rubrics etc, so if you have experience organizing a heroes fair and are willing to share tips, please contact Dr. Denenberg! (For e-mail see CONTACT on the home page.)

Who are the heroes that the students research?

We asked teachers who have organized heroes fairs for advice on whether or not to let students choose any hero to research. Most agree that while an introductory activity can include brainstorming names of heroes and then discussing what makes someone a hero, for the heroes fair students should be given a list of heroes to choose from for their research project. This avoids the problem of students perhaps choosing popular entertainers or sports figure “heroes” who might not, in fact, be good role models.

Unsurprisingly, since the teachers we surveyed have used this web site, most recommend the book 50 American Heroes Every Kid Should Meet by Dennis Denenberg & Lorraine Roscoe as one of the best collections of biographies of role models for whom kids can easily find information. However, you don’t have to buy the book to acquire the list of names, (although you’re missing out on an excellent resource if you don’t!) The list of names is found on a web site called National Heroes Day (<http://www.nationalheroesday.com/>) under “Activities for Recognizing National Heroes Day” and is

also found on this web site (<http://www.heroes4us.com/>) at the end of the heroes fair tips.

The 50 American Heroes Every Kid Should Meet are, of course, only American heroes. For a good international list, one science teacher we talked to used the scientists featured in a series of volumes from the Core Knowledge Foundation by E. D. Hirsch Jr. These books are written for each grade level from Kindergarten through 6th with grade level variations on the title of What Your First Grader Needs to Know. The short biographies found in these books are excellent for portraying why each scientist is considered a hero, but if you don't want to spend the money on seven books just to get a few biographies per book, then that list of names and more can be found in the book Core Virtues- A literature-based program in character education K-6 by Mary Beth Klee. Chapter 7 of that book lists names of more than 50 people around the world, scientists and others, who are featured in the Core Knowledge curriculum because they exhibit heroic characteristics and virtues.

If you are doing your heroes fair in February, you may want to check a website (<http://www.biography.com/blackhistory/people/scientists.jsp>) called "Celebrate Black History," which lists 200 famous African Americans.

Many of the "Notable Tradebooks for Young People" in the 2000-2008 book lists appearing on the web site of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) (<http://www.socialstudies.org/resources/notable>) are biographies, and a list of heroes can be compiled from those titles.

A printable set of 75 biography cards is available for teaching about famous people (and generating a list of heroes to research) on the "Garden of Praise" web site. (<http://gardenofpraise.com/leaders>)

Incredible-People.com (<http://incredible-people.com/>) provides the online biographies of hundreds of famous people who contributed positively to the world. This "Famous People" list includes historical figures, celebrities, writers, authors and others who have influenced people's lives.

Finally, confer with your school's media center specialist who may have enough biographies in the stacks to serve as introductory sources for each student.

Tips if allowing students to use web sites as sources

Much of the information that is available online is flawed, either deliberately with an intent to mislead or scam the user, or due to unintended inaccuracies. Review with your students some of the things to look for and what to avoid if using web sites as sources. Look first at extensions. The most reliable are .gov and .edu. A .com web site can

provide good information, but the student needs to be aware that the purpose of a .com is always to sell something. A .org extension at one time would have meant a non-profit organization, but anyone can now buy a .org so use the same degree of awareness you would use with a .com. A web site extension of .net should be avoided unless the author's credentials convince the user that the information is trustworthy. Avoid web sites with more than a few spelling or grammar errors, or dead links; if authors don't care about accuracy in spelling and grammar, or don't check their links periodically, they may be just as sloppy with their facts.

What kinds of information should the students be gathering about their hero?

Teachers who have organized heroes fairs recommend establishing some requirements that every child must include on his project display (e.g. the hero's name and picture) and/or for his oral presentation (e.g. what characteristics/contributions make this person a hero) and then having each student additionally select a number of other things to include from the rest of the list provided by the teacher. Examples of items that might be on such a list are:

- A description of the characteristics that make this person a hero. Perhaps the student must give examples from the hero's life that provide evidence of one or more of the character traits the teacher or school district is promoting.
- A picture of the hero.
- A quote by the hero or about the hero.
- An illustrated timeline of the hero's life and accomplishments.
- A map of the places the hero lived/worked.
- Costumes and props -The student dresses as the hero with props, and prepares a short speech for when they have an audience at their display, or in the case of a "wax museum" activity, when a "button" to their "animatronic" wax figure is pressed.
- A "Homepage"- Students set up (on paper) an imaginary homepage for that hero on a social networking web site. (The teacher should create a graphic organizer that mimics the homepage of a social networking site such as Facebook™ in order to specify what kinds of information the student needs to include. For example, the student should find or draw a picture of the hero (or, perhaps, of some object that represents the hero) to serve as the profile picture. Profile

information might include friends of the hero, activities, interests, quotes, education, and work.

- A Hero Fan Club T-Shirt: The student designs (on a paper cut-out of a T-shirt or on an actual T-shirt) the official fan club T-shirt for the hero which includes the hero's full name and a logo, symbol, picture or slogan that reflects the hero's work.
- An acrostic with facts about the hero where the first letter of each statement spells out the hero's name, or perhaps, the word "hero" as in the sample below for Walt Disney:
 - **H**e didn't give up when he found out that he would not get any royalties for his first series of successful cartoons.
 - **E**ven though his own father did not believe in fun or toys for children, when Walter grew up and had children of his own, he worked to create amusement parks.
 - **R**ides that were safe and imaginative were part of his amusement park dream.
 - **O**scar was the name of one of the more than 1000 awards Walt Disney received in his lifetime.
- A video of the "hero" being interviewed on a time-travel talk show.
- An ABC book with information from the hero's life and work.
- A pop-up book with information about the hero.
- A Venn diagram or other graphic organizer on which the student compares and contrasts information about the hero from two different sources.
- A game using information about the hero.
- Photocopied bookmarks or trading cards with information about the hero to distribute to audience members.
- The contents of a "trunk" or back-pack belonging to the hero with objects that would have been used by the hero in his/her life or work.
- Citations for the sources used.

What are the physical parameters of the displays and of the fair?

The display should be at least poster size and needs to be able to stand on a table at the fair.

If computers are available, students might create a video or Power Point that presents the life and accomplishments of the hero.

Some teachers were able to set up the fair in a large group activity room that did not have to do double duty. One teacher was allowed to set up in the media center which was closed to classes that day. Most teachers squeezed the fair into their classroom by moving the desks to the perimeter of the room.

Inviting/scheduling the audience & publicity for the event

This section is "under construction." We are hoping that teachers who have held heroes fair events will be willing to share sample invitations, schedules, letters to parents, and descriptions of how they obtained publicity for the event. Please contact Dr. Denenberg if you are willing to share ideas and examples. (For e-mail see CONTACT on the home page.)

How to manage the audience so that all projects receive visitors and no project is swamped

One teacher described a ticket system for insuring that the audience at each display was balanced, but we haven't gotten the details yet. We would welcome (as in all sections of this document) your suggestions for this important management piece. Please contact Dr. Denenberg if you are willing to share ideas and examples. (For e-mail see CONTACT on the home page.)

How to assess the heroes projects

We have compiled pieces of rubrics into one large example at the end of this section but it is too comprehensive to be useful to most teachers. We would really appreciate being able to share samples of rubrics you have found useful in assessing your students' heroes fair projects and presentations. Please contact Dr. Denenberg if you are willing to share ideas and examples. (For e-mail see CONTACT on the home page.)

Sample rubric items for assessing a heroes fair research project, display, and oral presentation.

	3	2	1	0
Hero's name prominently displayed on the poster	The name of the hero is in large, easy to read lettering; the lettering is neatly done and eye-catching; and the name is spelled correctly.	One of the top-rating expectations for the hero's name is lacking.	Two of the expectations for the hero's name are lacking.	The student did not prominently display the hero's name.
Picture of the hero prominently displayed on the poster	There is a neatly displayed picture of the hero that is large enough to be seen easily. The picture may be hand drawn or it may be photocopied with the source cited.	One of the top-rating expectations for the hero's picture is lacking.	Two of the expectations for the hero's picture are lacking.	The student did not display a picture of the hero.
Positive character trait of the hero.	The student has named and defined a positive character trait of this hero and given at least one example from the hero's life as evidence of that trait. This information (which may also appear in the body of the paragraph section) is displayed separately, neatly, and prominently.	One of the top-rating expectations for the hero's character traits is lacking.	Two or more of the expectations for the hero's character trait are lacking.	The student did not present information on the hero's character traits.
Quote	A quote by or about the hero (which may also appear in the body of the paragraph section) is displayed separately, neatly, and prominently.	One of the top-rating expectations for the quote is lacking.	Two of the expectations for a quote are lacking.	The student did not display a quote.
Biographical information: Content & Sources	The student has displayed at least three paragraphs of biographical information about the hero including his/her positive contributions to the world.	There is only one error in the content of these paragraphs.	There are 2-3 errors in the content of these paragraphs.	There are numerous content errors.
Biographical information: Conventions: Sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, spelling, and paragraphing.	Sentence structure is correct and flows smoothly. Work has no errors in punctuation, capitalization, grammar, spelling, and paragraphing.	Sentence structure is generally correct. There are, for example, few run-ons, fragments, or missing words. Work has few errors in punctuation, capitalization, grammar, spelling, and paragraphing.	Work contains some sentence structure weaknesses and/or work has several errors in punctuation, capitalization, grammar, spelling, and paragraphing.	Work pays little attention to proper sentence structure and/or work has many errors in punctuation, capitalization, grammar, spelling, and paragraphing.

Additional display item/information 1 of 2	The student has included a neatly presented additional display item or informational piece such as (but not limited to) a costume, timeline, acrostic, map, "hero home page," T-shirt design, Venn diagram comparison, pop-up book, ABC book, or props.	The additional item or information contains a content error or display flaw.	The additional item or information contains two or more content errors or display flaws.	The additional item or information is missing.
Additional display item/information 2 of 2	The student has included a neatly presented additional display item or informational piece such as (but not limited to) a costume, timeline, acrostic, map, "hero home page," T-shirt design, Venn diagram comparison, pop-up book, ABC book, or props.	The additional item or information contains a content error or display flaw.	The additional item or information contains two or more content errors or display flaws.	The additional item or information is missing.
Oral Presentation	During the oral presentation, the student had eye contact with the audience, and spoke clearly and enthusiastically with sufficient volume.	The oral presentation was lacking in one of the 3-rating expectations.	The oral presentation was lacking in two of the 3-rating expectations.	The student did not make an understandable oral presentation.

List of Heroes from *50 American Heroes Every Kid Should Meet*:

Jane Addams	Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Susan B. Anthony	Lewis and Clark and Sacajawea
Clara Barton	Robert E. Lee
Mary McLeod Bethune	Abraham Lincoln
Elizabeth Blackwell	Yo Yo Ma
Rachel Carson	George Marshall
Jimmy Carter	John Muir
George Washington Carver	Sandra Day O'Connor
Mary Cassatt	Rosa Parks
Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta	I.M. Pei
Roberto Clemente	Christopher Reeve
Bill Cosby	Cal Ripken, Jr.
Walt Disney	Jackie Robinson and Branch Rickey
Frederick Douglass	Roy Rogers and Dale Evans
Thomas Edison	Eleanor Roosevelt
Albert Einstein	Franklin D. Roosevelt
Benjamin Franklin	Theodore Roosevelt
John Glenn	Jonas Salk
Martha Graham	Tecumseh
Matthew Henson	Harry Truman
Milton Hershey	Harriet Tubman
Langston Hughes	George Washington
Thomas Jefferson	Elie Weisel
Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan	Ida B. Wells
Jackie Joyner-Kersey	Wilbur and Orville Wright