

Learning Through Heroes

Heroes inspire. Everyone wants to be associated with ordinary people who accomplish extraordinary feats. Recently, educators have recognized the importance of using heroes to teach children and adolescents various subject matters ranging from values to science.

Tony R. Sanchez, Assistant Professor of Social Studies Education at Purdue University recognizes that using role models and heroes can be quite effective when teaching values education. He claims that by examining the spirit of heroism, it serves as an invitation for the students to adopt the heroic spirit for themselves.

Dr. Mae Jemison, the first African-American in space, created the Jemison Group, which aims to bring the technological advancements to people across the globe and hopefully nourish students' love for science. This explorer hero is very active in her undertakings. Schools on the other hand are actively using her as an example when teaching science. A few years ago, West Clayton Elementary School invited the astronaut to give a talk about space travel. After the visit, a significant number of students became more engaged in the subject matter. Children are inspired to learn of the countless possibilities that await them if they try hard enough to pursue their dreams.

The use of heroes in the classroom is becoming more and more popular. However, careful thought should be put in the curriculum design if educators want to ensure the effectiveness of the method. Here are a few tips:

The instructor needs to find a suitable hero to use. There is not generic hero that can be used across all subject matter, although heroes by and large have universal attributes. For instance, it may be more appropriate to use Michael Jordan as a role model when teaching sports rather than using Oprah. It is important that the instructor does not take away the human-element in heroes. They are not super humans, and it is important for children and young adults to understand this. They need to know that they can be their idols; they can be the heroes who always put things into perspective, who makes sound decisions based on careful reasoning and who thinks of the greater good more than self-interest. Students need to be able to see the hero potential in each of them.

About the Author

Brian Stocker is a writer and former teacher. Visit his website for [Hero Lesson Plans](#), as well as literature lesson plans, math and science lesson plans.

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