

# MY HERO

## A Guide for Teachers and Afterschool Educators

Written by  development  
without limits

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## MY HERO Guide for Afterschool Educators

### An Introduction

#### About MY HERO

MY HERO is an interactive educational project for children, families, teachers and librarians that encourages use of the Internet as a positive and rewarding educational experience. It uses new communications technologies, in combination with traditional and non-traditional information sources, to promote critical thinking regarding the meaning and impact of heroes and heroism.

Our mission is to enlighten and inspire people of all ages with an ever-growing Internet archive of hero stories from around the world. MY HERO uses current web technologies to provide a unique educational experience that promotes literacy and cross-cultural communication.

Now more than ever, children, teachers, and parents yearn for messages of hope and courage to face the challenges that lie ahead. The MY HERO website hosts thousands of stories of remarkable individuals written by children and adults alike. These stories serve to remind us that we all have the potential to overcome great obstacles and achieve our dreams by following in the footsteps of our heroes.



#### Why Afterschool?

These days, programs that foster increased technological and cultural literacy are essential for young people, but there aren't always opportunities for this type of learning during the school day. For this reason, afterschool programs are an ideal setting for the implementation of a MY HERO program. Afterschool environments offer students a safe environment to participate in hands-on activities they might not otherwise get a chance to try.

These types of learning opportunities also reinforce school day learning, help young people build confidence, and develop other important life skills. Through participation in a MY HERO project, young people develop skills including typing, researching, interviewing, writing and editing, and increased comfort and confidence using web-based technologies, all of which can lead to increased success in school.

Afterschool programs can successfully run a MY HERO program even if access to computers is somewhat limited; the idea is to use your existing resources to create a meaningful learning experience for your students. This guide offers tips and suggestions for how best to utilize the resources currently available to your agency, and some ideas of where to look for additional resources.



### How to Use this Guide

This guide was intended to be flexible and user-friendly with the afterschool practitioner in mind. The activities in this guide can be adapted to suit the needs of young people across a variety of age ranges and skill levels, regardless of their geographic location.

Additionally, adult afterschool staff members can successfully run a MY HERO program regardless of their own level of technical know-how. The process is designed so that anyone can participate, even if they have little or no prior experience with web design.

Before implementing your MY HERO program, look through this guide to see which activities you think might be most useful. You do not necessarily have to do all of the activities in this guide in order for the program to “work”, nor do you have to follow a strict sequence. You know best what will work in your own unique afterschool setting. We encourage you to use the activities or ideas presented here that are most helpful and relevant to your program and the young people you serve.





# **MY HERO Activities**

## Afterschool Activity Plans

### “Graffiti” Activity

**Time:**  
30-40 minutes

**Materials Needed:**  
Chart Paper  
Markers



**Objective:** To help participants define what a hero is and does, and understand why heroes are important.

**Procedure:**

1. Post several sheets of flip chart paper around the room and set several markers next to each one. Each sheet should have a question written at the top. Questions should include:
  - What is the definition of a Hero?
  - What are the QUALITIES of a Hero (what is a hero like)?
  - What are the ACTIONS of a Hero (what does a hero do)?
  - Why is it important to have Heroes?
2. Tell the group that this activity will help them understand what a hero is and what a hero does. If necessary, define the words *action* (something a person does) and *quality* (a trait or characteristic a person possesses).
3. Break students up into four small groups, and assign each group to go stand by one of the charts. Explain that the groups will have a few minutes to talk with one another about the question on the chart and to jot down a few responses. Let them know that each group will have the opportunity to visit each chart.
4. Tell participants to start. After about five minutes has passed, tell the groups to finish up what they're writing, then instruct them to move clockwise to the next chart. Repeat this process until each group has had the opportunity to respond to each of the four questions.
5. Gather participants together as a large group and review the responses to the questions on each chart. Ask for clarification if anything is unclear, and encourage students to do the same if they don't understand something that someone wrote.
6. See if you can come to a consensus about the definition of a hero. If not, don't worry. Explain to students that we might have slightly different ideas about what makes a hero and that's okay; we all choose our heroes for our own personal reasons.

**TIPS:**

- This activity can be done either individually or in small groups, depending on what will work best with your group. Make sure to instruct students to visit each of the four charts whether working in groups or independently.
- At the end of the activity if the definition of a hero still seems unclear, try looking the word “hero” up in the dictionary and sharing the definition with the group. Discuss how this definition is similar to or different from the one you came up with together.

## **Images of Heroes: Collage Activity**

**Time:**

45 minutes

**Materials Needed:**

Large sheets of paper or poster board

Scissors

Glue Sticks

Old Magazines

Markers

Tape

**Objective:** To help students identify visual images of heroes and heroism

**Procedure:**

1. Place all of the materials on tables throughout the room.
2. Tell participants that they will each be making a collage that depicts what a hero is. Instruct them to cut out images and words related to heroes or heroism. Ask participants to think about what their definition of a hero is and to find words and images that reflect that definition.
3. Give the group 20-30 minutes to work on their collages. Move around the room to answer questions or guide participants that are having difficulty.
4. When time is almost up, ask participants to finish up what they're doing. After everyone is finished, help participants display their collages around the room (by taping them up, putting them on easels, etc.).
5. Ask participants to walk around the room and look at each collage. After everyone has had the chance to look at the other collages, ask everyone to take their seats.
6. Finish by asking the group what they noticed about the other collages. Ask what similarities and differences they noticed. Based on what their collages show, ask participants what they think the definition of a hero is.

 **TIPS:**

- This activity can also be used to get students thinking about the kinds of visuals they might want to include on their MY HERO page.
- If students decide to use images from magazines on their MY HERO web page, make sure they don't forget to credit the source of the image(s).
- Consider doing this in small groups or in one large group rather than individually to build cooperative skills and share ideas.

## Local Heroes Part 1 A Trip to the Local Library

*\*NOTE: Be sure to arrange the trip to the library well in advance. If possible, see if a reference librarian can meet with you and your group to help guide you through the research you'll be doing.*

**Time:**

45-60 minutes

**Objective:** To help students discover a hero/heroes from their community; to familiarize participants with the resources available to them in their local library's reference section.

**Procedure:**

1. When you arrive at the library, remind students of the ground rules. Introduce them to the reference librarian if you're meeting with one and explain that today they'll be learning about heroes from their own community.
2. Have the reference librarian explain the different kinds of periodicals that are available at the library, (i.e. books, magazines, newspapers, microfiche, etc.).
3. Divide the group up into partners or small teams. Explain that each team will have a task they'll need to complete with the help of the reference librarian using the materials available in the reference section of the library.
4. Assign each group one of the following tasks. Remind them to take good notes and to ask the librarian for help making photocopies of any relevant documents they find. (Note: Feel free to modify these so that they are relevant to your group and your community):
  - Pick a street in your community that's named after a person and find out who that person is/was and why they earned this honor. Write a short summary of the information you find.
  - Find out who founded your town and write a short, 1-2 paragraph biography of that person.
  - Find out the name of an author from your community and the title of the books they've had published. Discuss with your team whether you think this person could be considered a hero. Why or why not?
  - Read the local newspaper and try to find a story about someone you would consider a hero. Ask the librarian to help you make a photocopy of this story. Read it with your team.
5. Once each group has finished, tell them to put away the materials they're finished with. Let them know that they will be using the information they gathered today during the next session.

 **TIPS:**

- If your students haven't spent much time in libraries before, talk with them in advance about some ground rules they'll need to observe. In particular, talk about observing the "quiet" rule, and respecting books and periodicals.
- If your local news station features a "Hero of the Week" or something similar, consider recording one of the clips to bring in and show to your group.

## **Local Heroes Part 2 Group Presentations**

**Time:**

30-35 minutes

**Materials Needed:**

Copies of the information collected during the visit to the library

Chart paper

Markers

**Objective:** To help students learn about a hero from their community; to generate a list of interview questions that participants can use when interviewing their own heroes.

**Procedure:**

1. Tell the group that today you'll be sharing the information you collected during your trip to the local library.
2. Give each group a sheet of chart paper and markers. Tell them they have about 10 minutes to write down answers to the following questions about the "hero" they discovered:
  - What characteristics of a hero does this person display?
  - What questions would you like to ask this person if you had the opportunity to meet him/her?
3. When time is up, ask each group to come to the front of the room to talk about what their task was during the library visit, and to briefly describe the "hero" they learned about. Ask them to share their answers to the questions on the chart paper as well. After each group presents, give the other students the opportunity to ask questions if they have any.
4. After each group has had a chance to present their work, finish the activity by asking the group what similarities and differences they noticed between the different local heroes discussed.

 **TIPS:**

- If it's possible to get in touch with any of the "heroes" you read about, consider inviting them to speak to your group. This would also be a good opportunity for students to ask the questions they came up with during the brainstorm.
- Compile the lists of characteristics and questions the group came up with during the brainstorm, and distribute it as a handout. This is something participants can use when interviewing their own heroes later on.

## Free Writing Exercise

**Time:**

20-30 minutes

**Materials Needed:**

Paper

Pens

Highlighters

**Objective:** To help participants identify their own hero and the reasons why they consider that person a hero.

**Procedure:**

1. Distribute paper and pens to each participant.
2. Explain to the group that this activity is meant to help participants choose a hero to write about, and to begin thinking about what heroic qualities this person possesses.
3. Tell participants that they will be asked to write for five minutes without stopping. Tell them that they will be writing in response to the question, "Who is your hero and why?"
4. Explain that the only rule for this activity is that you can NOT stop writing for the entire five minutes. Tell participants that if they can't think of something to write, they can write "I can't think of anything to write about," until something comes to mind.
5. Tell participants to begin writing. After five minutes has passed, tell the group to finish the sentence they're writing and then to stop. If at the end of five minutes everyone is still writing, give the group another minute or two to continue writing.
6. Once everyone has finished writing, ask each participant to read his or her writing to a partner.
7. After each participant has had a chance to share with a partner, give each participant a highlighter. Ask everyone to re-read their writing using the highlighter to mark the ideas or thoughts that are the most important or interesting.
8. Finish the activity by asking the group what the experience of free writing was like. Tell participants that by doing this activity they have taken the first step towards beginning to write their Hero Story.

 **TIPS:**

- Use free writing any time your group needs to brainstorm new ideas.

## Preparing to Interview Your Hero (if you can)

**Time:**

30-40 minutes

**Materials/Resources Needed:**

Pens

Paper or notebooks

**Objective:** To help students learn how to conduct an interview, take detailed notes, and use their notes to draft their hero story.

**Procedure:**

1. Tell participants that they will be learning to conduct an interview with their hero in order to help them learn more about this person. The information they collect will help them create their hero story. (Note: This activity should be done once students have already decided who the subject of their hero story will be, assuming it is someone they know personally).
2. Write the words “who, what, when, where, why, and how” on the blackboard or on a sheet of chart paper. Tell students that they will need to create one question for each of the question words on the board. The questions they ask should be things they are curious to know about their heroes. For example:
  - Who inspires you to do the work you do?
  - What was the hardest part about achieving your goal?
  - When did you decide you wanted to become a firefighter?
  - Where did you grow up?
  - Why did you decide to move to the city you live in now?
  - How did you prepare for your chosen career?
3. After students have had about 10-15 minutes to draft their questions, ask them to partner up and share who their hero is and what questions they came up with. Partners should help each other clarify any questions that are unclear. If you have time, ask the pairs to come up with one more of each type of question for each hero.
4. Once each participant has come up with a list of questions, tell them that their next task is to interview their hero and write down the answers to the questions they've chosen to ask. They will need to bring in the answers to their questions for the next session, during which they will be drafting their hero stories.

**TIPS:**

- You can make this activity more challenging by asking participants to come up with more questions, or by having them read one of the hero stories on the MY HERO website to come up with ideas for questions they might like to ask their own heroes.
- If your group is not at all familiar with the concept of an interview, you might come up with some basic questions they can ask each other in “practice” interviews. Have them ask each other questions like “What’s your favorite food?” or “Why did you choose the hero you selected?” and write down the answers.

## Researching Your Hero on the Internet

**Time:**

30-40 minutes

**Materials/Resources Needed:**

Enough computers (with Internet access) to accommodate your group

Pens

Copies of the Hero Research worksheet, attached

**Objective:** To help students learn how to use the Internet to do research, take detailed notes, and use their notes to draft their hero story.

**Procedure:**

1. Tell participants that they will be learning to use the Internet to research their hero in order to help them learn more about this person. The information they collect will help them create their hero story. (Note: This activity should be done once students have already decided who the subject of their hero story will be, assuming it is someone famous that they do not know personally).
2. Give each student a copy of the attached Hero Research Worksheet. Ask each student to spend a few minutes coming up with several questions they'd like to know the answers to about their hero. Encourage students to come up with at least one question for each question word: who, what, when, where, why, and how.
3. Once each participant has come up with a list of questions, tell them that their next task is to use the Internet to research the answers to their questions. Instruct each participant to open the web browser and type in the following address: [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Then tell them to type the name of their hero into the search field.
4. Give the students a few minutes to click on some of the links that come up in the search results. Tell them to view at least two of the different websites they find. Remind them to look for the answers to their questions using the Hero Research worksheet as a guide. Tell them to take additional notes about the material they find on the back of the worksheet.
5. Help students look for more information about their heroes using other search engines, such as: [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com) or [www.ask.com](http://www.ask.com).
6. As students are working, circulate throughout the room to help those who might need it. Try to help students think of other ways to look up information about their heroes. For example, if a student has selected a famous painter as his hero, you might direct him to a museum website that might contain some useful information.

 **TIPS:**

- You may wish to conduct this activity in two separate sessions, one to create the questions and one to guide your students through the research process.

## Selecting and Learning about our Heroes

- If you have time (in this session or another day) tell students to look up their chosen hero on the MY HERO website: [www.myhero.com](http://www.myhero.com). If other people have already written about their hero, ask them to read through one or two of the stories about that hero. After reading through the stories, challenge them to come up with questions they *still have* about their hero that they can find the answers to through research.
- During the research portion of this activity, try to encourage students to work at their own pace.
- If possible, try to arrange a “free” computer lab session for students who might need extra time to finish their research. If this isn’t possible, find out if your local library has Internet access that your students can take advantage of if they need additional time on the computer.
- Make sure the computers you are using have software installed that will protect your students from inappropriate web content. Go to [www.netismartz.com](http://www.netismartz.com) for more information on how to keep kids safe online.

### Hero Research Worksheet

<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Source</b>
What's one new thing you learned about your hero by looking at this website?		www.
Who		
What		
When		
Where		
Why		
How		

### Learning about the MY HERO Website: Scavenger Hunt

**Time:**

20-30 minutes for the scavenger hunt

15-20 minutes for the discussion

**Materials/Resources Needed:**

Enough computers (with Internet access) to accommodate your class.

Scavenger Hunt worksheet

Pens

**Objective:** To familiarize students with the MY HERO website and format of the web pages they will be creating.

**Procedure:**

1. Bring your students into the computer lab. If there aren't enough computers for each student, ask students to work in pairs.
2. Give each student/pair a copy of the scavenger hunt worksheet. Tell them they will be looking at the MY HERO website to learn more about it in preparation for creating their own web pages. Tell students that they will have about 20-30 minutes to complete the scavenger hunt worksheet, and that all of the answers to the questions on the worksheet can be found on the MY HERO website.
3. Instruct students to open the web browser and type in the web address for the MY HERO website: [www.myhero.com](http://www.myhero.com)
4. Give the group 20-30 minutes to complete the worksheet. You might need more or less time depending on how many questions your worksheet contains. Give students a 5 minute "warning" when time is almost up.
5. When time is up, ask the group to close the web browser. If possible, bring the group back to a classroom so you can discuss the answers to the scavenger hunt questions.
6. Review the answers to the questions as a group. (You can do this as a straightforward discussion, or you can make it into a game by dividing into teams and asking them to answer the questions to earn points. The team with the most correct answers at the end wins).
7. Finish the activity by asking the group questions such as: What did you find most interesting about the website? What questions do you have about creating a MY HERO web page? What resources (or tools) did you find that will help you create your own MY HERO page?

**TIPS:**

- A sample scavenger hunt worksheet is attached, but feel free to create your own. You might consider "customizing" it to fit within a theme that's relevant to your students. For example, if your program is celebrating African American history month, you might include several questions about African American heroes that are featured on the website.
- If you work with students who are not strong readers or who have minimal Internet skills, you can create a version of the worksheet with simpler questions. Alternatively, you could pair stronger readers with those who don't read as well.

**My MY HERO Website  
Scavenger Hunt**

What is the URL of the home page?	Does the site have a motto, and if so, what is it?
List ALL of the links on the home page.	What elements do all hero stories have in common?
What is the Create link for, and who can use it?	What are the first two boxes you need to fill in to sign the Guestbook?
What are the main categories of heroes?	In what category of hero can you find: Sherlock Holmes
In what category of hero can you find: Dorothea Lange	In what category of hero can you find: Sylvia Earle
In what category of hero can you find: Ray Anderson	In what category of hero can you find: Olara Otunnu
What hero did Annmarie Williams write about in the Guestbook? What are the names of the two organizations her hero founded?	What is the title of the story written by AP Newswriter Coralie Carlson about some rescued and released mammals?
What movie is based on the life of Ron Kovic? To whom did he address a speech on July 15, 1976?	Who is Aung San Suu Kyi and why has she been in jail?
Who is Kofi Annan and what is the URL of his website?	What are the names of 3 sports heroes you never heard of before seeing them on MY HERO?

## Creating a MY HERO Webpage

### MY HERO Website Scavenger Hunt ANSWER KEY

What is the URL of the home page? <b>(answer:www.myhero.com/myhero)</b>	Does the site have a motto, and if so, what is it? <b>(answer: Anyone can be a hero!)</b>
List ALL of the links on the home page. <b>(answer: changes regularly – check the current page_)</b>	What elements do all hero stories have in common? <b>(answer: category of hero, name of hero, author of story, credits, related links, other heroes in the same category)</b>
What is the Create link for, and who can use it? <b>(answer: to upload your story onto the MY HERO website and create your own web page honoring your hero; anyone can use it)</b>	What are the first two boxes you need to fill in to sign the Guestbook? <b>(answer: “Who is your hero?” and “Why is this your hero?”)</b>
What are the main categories of heroes? <b>(answer: angels, animals, artists, business, community, earthkeepers, explorers, faith, family, freedom, hero’s hero, lifesavers, literary, peacemakers, poets, scientists, sports, teachers, writers)</b>	In what category of hero can you find: Sherlock Holmes <b>(answer: literary)</b>
In what category of hero can you find: Dorothea Lange <b>(answer: artist)</b>	In what category of hero can you find: Sylvia Earle <b>(answer: explorer)</b>
In what category of hero can you find: Ray Anderson <b>(answer: business)</b>	In what category of hero can you find: Olara Otunnu <b>(answer: lifesaver)</b>
What hero did Annmarie Williams write about in the Guestbook? What are the names of the two organizations her hero founded? <b>(answer: Her hero, Craig Kielberger founded Free the Children and Leaders Today, organizations devoted to children’s rights.)</b>	What is the title of the story written by AP Newswriter Coralie Carlson about some rescued and released mammals? <b>(answer: “Rescued Pilot Whales Released”)</b>
What movie is based on the life of Ron Kovic? <b>(answer: Born on the Fourth of July)</b>	Who is Aung San Suu Kyi and why has she been in jail? <b>(answer: a political activist in Burma)</b>
Who is Kofi Annan and what is the URL of his website? <b>(answer: former Secretary General of the United Nations, <a href="http://www.un.org/News/oss/sg/">http://www.un.org/News/oss/sg/</a>)</b>	What are the names of 3 sports heroes you never heard of before seeing them on the MY HERO website?

### Writing it Down: Drafting a Hero Story

**Time:**

45-60 minutes

**Materials/Resources Needed:**

Enough computers (equipped with word processing software) to accommodate your group participants' notes from their hero research or interview

**Objective:** To help students create a first draft of their hero story.

**Procedure:**

1. Tell participants that they will be writing the first draft of their hero story using the information they collected during their interview with or research about their hero.
2. Tell participants that they will begin by writing the lead sentence. Remind them that the lead sentence is the main point of the essay and should summarize who their hero is and why. Give the group a few minutes to complete this step as you circulate through the room to provide assistance to anyone who might need it.
3. Next, instruct the group to continue writing. Their goal should be to write one to three paragraphs during this session. Each paragraph should contain interesting information about their heroes
4. Then tell participants to move on to their conclusion paragraph. (They can go back later and add more to the body of the essay if they need to). Remind them that the conclusion paragraph should restate why this person is a hero.
5. When time is up, help participants save their work to a disk or onto the computer (if it is safe to do so). You could also print out copies of the drafts if you have access to a printer. Let participants know that you will be reviewing their essays to provide suggestions for improvement before the next session.

** TIPS:**

- If possible, have copies of a sample hero story on hand for students to look at in case they get stumped. You can print one out from the MY HERO website and make copies for your group. This will give them an idea of what their finished essay should look like, and what type of information to include.
- If participants aren't familiar with the format of an essay, you might spend some time in advance of this session reviewing the basic format (i.e. introductory paragraph, body of the essay, conclusion paragraph).
- You are likely to have participants of various skill levels in your group. Encourage students to work at their own pace. Give time between instructions for students to complete each step and circulate around the room to answer any questions or assist students who may need extra help.
- Protect the privacy of your students, their family members and friends. Make sure that they do not include last names or any personal information such as a date of birth, address, etc.

### Revision: Editing the Hero Story

**Time:**

45-60 minutes

**Materials/Resources Needed:**

Copies of each participant's hero story  
Colored pens (preferably blue, and purple, and green – not red)

**Objective:** To help students work together to edit their hero stories.

**Procedure:**

1. Explain to participants that today they will be working together to edit their hero stories. If necessary, explain that editing means making corrections and improvements to something you've written.
2. Ask everyone to find a partner. Give each participant a green pen and a blue pen, and have the pairs swap copies of their hero stories.
3. Explain that everyone will be reading their partner's draft and helping them edit it. Tell them that the first step is to read through the entire hero story once without writing anything on it. Give everyone a few minutes to read through their partner's draft.
4. Once everyone has had a chance to finish reading, tell them that they are now going to read through the draft again, this time using the blue pen to circle any mistakes they notice. These can be spelling mistakes or errors in punctuation.
5. Next, tell the group to go back through the draft (they can scan it rather than reading it word for word), using the green pen to write down any questions they have. They should ask questions about anything that is unclear, or anything that they might want to know more about the subject of the hero story.
6. Finally, tell everyone they're going to go back through the draft one more time, using the purple pen to write down any positive feedback (praise or compliments) they have about their partner's work.
7. At the end of the session, have each participant return the drafts to one another. Tell participants that they should revise their essay based on their partner's feedback between now and the next session.

** TIPS:**

- If time is limited, you can have participants read through the stories just once, still using the colored pens as outlined above.
- Since participants in your group will be at all different reading and writing skill levels, you will still have to help them proofread their essays for errors. Try not to edit the content of the essay too much. You want participants' stories to be as unique and creative as possible.

### Creating Hero Artwork

**Time:**

45-60 minutes

**Materials/Resources Needed:**

As many of the following as possible: markers, crayons, paint, clay, magazines, glue sticks, scissors  
Paper  
Digital/disposable camera(s)

**Objective:** To create original artwork which students can include on their MY HERO web page

**Procedure:**

1. Set all of the art supplies out on tables around the room. Tell participants that this session will be devoted to them creating their own hero artwork. Explain that they can choose to create a picture/painting/collage/sculpture (depending on what materials you have available).
2. Explain that they don't necessarily have to create a picture of their hero. They could choose instead to create an image of something else that is related to their hero. For example, if their hero is a firefighter, they could choose to create a sculpture or painting of a fire truck.
3. Give students as much time as possible to create their artwork. If some students finish very quickly, encourage them to create another work of art, or give them time to work on something else (writing/editing their hero story, etc.).
4. Leave about 15 minutes towards the end of the session for participants to share their artwork with each other. If time is too limited, ask each participant to find a partner and show him/her their finished product.
5. After the session, use your digital camera to take pictures of each piece of art. You can later upload the photographs onto the computer for your students to use as they create their MY HERO web page.

** TIPS:**

- If possible, in advance of this session, ask students to bring in a photograph of their hero or another image that is related to their hero. Give each participant the opportunity to share the image they brought in to help inspire them as they create their own original artwork.
- If you do not have access to a digital camera, you can purchase a disposable digital camera from most drug stores. Alternately, you could use a regular disposable camera and scan the photographs onto the computer OR you could mail the photographs in to MY HERO and they will upload them for you.
- Encourage students to look for other images they might want to include on their web pages using books, magazines, the Internet, etc. Remind students that they will need to credit any artwork they choose to include on their web page that they did not create themselves.

### Giving Feedback to Your Students

As you guide your students through the process of creating a MY HERO web page, you'll want to give them regular feedback on the work they're doing, their written work in particular. Below are some hints on how to give constructive feedback to the students in your group.

- First and foremost, remember that your students' work is their own. Encourage individuality and creative expression, and try to focus on correcting grammar and punctuation errors rather than "correcting" students' beliefs or opinions.
- Make sure you set aside time during and between sessions in the computer lab to give students individual attention as they're working. Remember that everyone will be working at his or her own pace, and try to remain encouraging.
- Make sure students have a clear understanding of the goals of the program, as well as the objectives of each step in the creation process. Encourage them to ask questions when they don't understand something.
- Be constructive. Make sure your criticism addresses something specific about the child's work and not their personality or behavior.
- Be positive. Even when correcting mistakes, let students know what you like about their work.
- Give regular feedback in a consistent format so students know what to expect.
- You may wish to have your students give you their MY HERO user name and password so that you can access their stories to edit them.

### Planning a Successful Culminating Event

Culminating events are a way for you and your students to celebrate all of their hard work and accomplishments throughout the course of the program. These events give young people a chance to share their web pages with family and friends, and to receive recognition for their efforts.

#### Preparation

- Make sure to secure a space for the event well in advance. Be sure the space can accommodate all of your students and guests you plan to invite to the event, and that there are enough chairs for everyone.
- Fill out any required building permits well in advance. Inform security officers and custodial staff about the event to avoid conflict with other events that might be taking place in the building.
- Arrange to have a microphone and sound system available for your students to use. Test the system out so that you are familiar with how it works before the event.
- Try to videotape the event or take photographs to document it.
- Make sure any equipment you need is working and available for use the day you plan to have the event. You might want to arrange to have a laptop computer, projector and screen so students can formally present their web pages to the audience.
- Make sure to invite guests far enough in advance. Make printed invitations and ask guests to RSVP. Make follow-up phone calls to any guests that haven't responded about a week in advance.
- Provide refreshments for guests. If you do not have a budget for this, consider making it a "potluck" event.
- Develop a program for the event that includes the following information: date, time, place, who is hosting the event, what presentations are taking place, and the names of the students who will be participating in the event, as well as the names of their heroes.
- Review the program with students in advance and help them practice their presentations. Arrange to seat students in the order that they will be presenting in the first few rows. Make sure each student has a chance to practice using the microphone and laptop if you're using one.
- Create a "gallery" of student artwork and copies of all of the hero stories that guests can look at when they arrive while they're waiting for the presentations to begin. Make sure each piece of work is labeled with the artist/author's name.
- Have a staff person from your program MC the event, introducing the MY HERO program and each student before they present.
- Set up a computer displaying a MY HERO Classroom Index Page of your students' submitted and activated stories for parents and students to access and view. To create an index page of your students' stories, use the eCreate program in the Teacher's Room.

#### During the Event

- Begin on time!
- Make sure there is an adult in charge of the laptop and sound system.
- Have one or two students serve as a "greeter" for guests as they arrive. Ask them to help guests sign in so you have a record of who attended the event.
- Before beginning the program, remind audience members to turn off their cell phones, and explain what it means to be a respectful audience member.
- Sit staff members throughout the audience to help keep people quiet.
- If students get nervous before or during their presentations, encourage them and remind them to take deep breaths to help calm their nerves.

### How to Create a MY HERO web page: An Overview

1. Begin at <http://myhero.com/create>

2. On the lower righthand side of the page, click on **Register**. Fill in the required fields on the registration form, then click **continue**.

**Note: It is recommended that students use the afterschool program's contact information, rather than their own personal contact information. Keep in mind that parental consent may be required for students to provide any personal or identifying information.**

3. Choose a **username** and **password**. Be sure to write this information down somewhere safe.

4. Log in. You'll be prompted to **Create a New Hero Story**. Under *Hero Information*, list your hero's full name and select the appropriate hero section from the drop down menu. Click the *Create MY HERO Story* button.

5. **Write your MY HERO essay**. Completed essays can be saved as text files on your computer, then cut and pasted into the MY HERO template. You may return online to edit and revise your essay as often as you'd like.

6. **Add images to your MY HERO web page**. Any images you'd like to include on your web page must be saved as jpg or gif files at a maximum resolution of 72 dpi, and a maximum file size of 200k. If any of the images you're using were created by another person, be sure to credit him or her.

7. **Add appropriate links to your web page**. Research links to other relevant websites, then copy and paste the URL (web address) into the area provided for links in the MY HERO web design program. For example:

Link: The MY HERO Project  
URL: <http://myheroproject.org>  
Link Detail: MY HERO celebrates the best of humanity

8. **Edit and Revise your MY HERO web page**. You can log in with your username and password to edit your web page, adjust image sizes or layout, and add additional information. Make sure you've included credit information for any images you didn't create. Check the spelling and punctuation in your essay.

9. **Submit your MY HERO story**. When you are sure your work is finished, click on the button that says *I'M FINISHED – SUBMIT THIS PAGE*. Note that once submitted, MY HERO web pages can no longer be edited.

### Tips for Implementing The MY HERO Project in Afterschool Programs

- Begin the program by sending a letter home to parents explaining what the MY HERO initiative is about and detailing the project students are about to undertake.
- Designate a specific time and place for your student group to meet. Decide how often, at what time, and for how many sessions you'll meet with the group. Make sure students understand how much time they'll have to work on their MY HERO web pages.
- Make sure the program has a clear beginning and end. Organize a culminating event so students have a chance to celebrate their accomplishment. (See p. 22 for ideas on how to run a successful culminating event).
- Be creative about utilizing your resources. If you don't have access to a digital camera, see if there is another organization or community center that might have equipment you could borrow for free or rent for low cost.
- Remember that students in your program will be at various skill levels in reading, writing and technological literacy. Make sure to allow time to give students individual attention as they work on their MY HERO web pages.
- Some students will finish these activities very quickly. Try engaging these students as "helpers" for their peers who are working at a slower pace.
- Encourage more advanced students who finish their web pages very quickly to create more artwork, research additional links to include on their web page, or create another MY HERO web page.
- Choice is key! Make sure whenever possible, to give young people the opportunity to choose between different options. Give them free time to decide which component of their MY HERO web page they want to work on (artwork, the essay, researching links to include, etc.).
- Give regular feedback to students on their work, particularly their essay drafts. See page 21 for ideas about how to give effective feedback.
- Customize your MY HERO program to fit with other programming taking place in your afterschool program. For example, if you're observing Earth Day, think about spending some time focusing on "environmental heroes".
- Similarly, try to link your MY HERO program to what's happening during the school day. Students can choose literary heroes, artist heroes, scientist heroes, or focus on other categories of heroes that are relevant to what they're studying in school.
- If you have time, set aside a few sessions to watch film clips or read stories about heroes with your students to help them deepen their understanding of what heroism is.
- Take advantage of the MY HERO resources available in the Teacher's Room on the website including flyers, a Teacher Training CD, The MY HERO Report DVD, stickers, posters and more.