

MEDIA – MRS. CAULFIELD

For the hero project, I decided to focus on a different person at each grade level, in order to tie in to that grade's **curriculum**.

In **kindergarten**, we learned about **Angelo Siciliano**, better known as **Charles Atlas**. After reading the story together, rather than have the students come up with one **“Word to Live By”** as we usually do, I encouraged them to come up with as many words as they could. Each class was able to list at least a dozen. The over-riding message of this hero, was that he turned a negative (his puny size) into a positive (he became strong) and used his new-found strength to help people rather than take out revenge on those who had hurt him when he was weak.

In **first grade**, we **“traveled”** to the United States to learn about **Betty Skelton**, a woman “ahead of her time”. She was not only a pilot and race car driver, but she was actually the first woman who trained as an astronaut with NASA. Although she never had the opportunity to go to space, she paved the way for the women who eventually did. One of the most telling comments I heard from the first graders in our discussion was that “She asked for help when she needed it.” I loved that some of the students saw that even though Betty was a trailblazer and exceptionally confident and strong-willed, she was not too proud (or arrogant) to ask for help when necessary.

In **second grade**, we read about the college football player **Roy Riegels**, who made a huge mistake (running the wrong way during the Rose Bowl Game in 1929) and was able to bounce back. I think it's important for students to realize that “heroes” are not perfect super-human beings, but ordinary people who are brave enough to make the choices that help them become better. In 1st and 2nd grade, we had oral discussions, but in 2nd grade, each student was responsible for writing down what life lesson they learned. We also talked about **biographies**, and all the students checked out a biography – many of them commented the following week that they were inspired by the person they read about and wanted to take out more biographies!

In **third grade**, we talked about “collective biographies” – biographies of more than one person (part of our unit on learning about all the different types of books in the nonfiction/Dewey **section** of the library). We focused on a woman explorer, **Louise Arner Boyd**, who traveled to the Arctic. A big theme we discovered was that Louise chose adventure and took calculated (rather than foolish) risks and had an exciting rather than comfortable/predictable life.

In **fourth grade**, as a culmination of learning the ten **Character Connections words** through biographies and literature over the past ten weeks, we read about the first African American woman astronaut, **Mae Jemison**. Each student was responsible for filling out a chart giving specific life instances when Mae displayed each of the character words.

In **fifth grade**, we read about one of my personal heroes, **Harriet Tubman**. Although she is deservedly famous for being the “Moses” of the Underground Railroad, I wanted to make sure the 5th graders knew that there was much more to her than that – being a nurse, a spy for the Union Army, and a caregiver for the poor and homeless until her own old age. Students were responsible for filling out exit tickets describing how Harriet Tubman was a hero.

So, through oral discussion and written responses, students learned about various heroes, especially those that coincided with Black History Month and Women’s History Month. Their responses (all **their** direct quotes – **none** of my words) are on display on the bulletin board near the library. Hopefully this display will inspire more students to learn about these heroes and others, especially by reading biographies.

