Genius Hour Project Explanation

To Students and Parents:

We are introducing Genius Hour in the Language Arts classroom this year. Also known as "passion projects" or "20% time," Google is credited for making "the 20% project" what it is today.  They asked their employees to spend 20% of their work time on a pet project…anything. As a result of the 20% project at Google, we now have Gmail, AdSense, and Google News. Every week students will have self-directed time to pursue their passions, choose what they will master, and inquire about their own curiosities. Over the course of "Genius Hour" students will choose their passion, guide their learning, and develop a project of their choosing. Along the way, we will enhance our research and digital literacy skills, curiosity, connectivity and creativity. In the end, each of our students will be a genius, contributing to the world and teaching all of us!

Goals of this project:

* To promote, support, and model creative, innovative thinking and inventiveness
* To allow students an opportunity to discover/investigate one of their passions and reflect on/share their learning
* Provide students an opportunity to develop skill sets that are valuable in any learning situation (research, experimentation, collaboration, creativity, problem solving and critical thinking)
* To provide an opportunity for classes to share their Genius Hour Projects with others

Brainstorming

Students will begin brainstorming ideas for a project proposal. While brainstorming, we will encourage students to make the project product focused. At the end of the year, we want them to have made something that is a completed product. It might be anything from an event or service to help others in the school or community to a digital project like a short film or TED Talk.

Genius Hour Plan

Once a student has an idea of what project they want to pursue, they will begin writing the proposal. In this proposal, students will answer the following questions.

* What is your project?
* Why is this project worthwhile?
* What do you expect to learn from this project?
* What end PRODUCT will you share?
* What sort of equipment will you need, and where will you get it?
* What is your timeline for completing (or launching) your project?

Weekly Reflections

Each week, each student will be required to write a blog post or answer a Google form to discuss their progress. They will write about the week, what they worked on, what they learned, what challenges they faced, and what they anticipate in the future.

Genius Hour Class Days

Throughout the year, students will have one day a week to work on their projects. Students will use the scheduled class time as a productive research and working period. It is expected that students will be prepared and bring materials that they will need to work on their project during class.

Genius Hour Showcase

At the end of the year, students will showcase their work to parents, friends, and the community members at our 8th Grade Mills Park Genius Hour Family Night. This night will be dedicated to showing off what students learned and gained from participating in Genius Hour. ☺

Got questions about Genius Hour?  Please get in touch with your student’s language arts teacher.  You may also be interested in exploring others’ ideas of Genius Hour around the Internet--try Google searching key terms such as *passion projects*, *Genius Hour*, and *20% time.*  Showing your own interest in the topic will get your student excited, too!