


# GENIUS HOUR



## *Parent Letter*

### **What is Genius Hour?**

Genius Hour (also known as 20% Time or Passion Projects) is an inquiry-based learning approach in which students work on projects focused on their passion. This project stems from the companies Google and 3M, who give their employees 20% of their time to work on a passion-driven project. Post-It Notes and Gmail were invented while these employees were pursuing their passions and using their creativity. Genius Hour brings this mindset into the classroom. Students will receive classroom time (one hour per week during homeroom) where they can create, explore, learn, build, invent, research, write, or follow any passion!

### **Why is Genius Hour *important*?**

A Genius Hour project gives students ownership in their learning by allowing them to collaborate, create, and communicate about what they are learning. The best part is they choose what they learn about based on their passions and interests! Genius Hour projects spark curiosity and motivate students to dive deeper into their project because the topic is something important to their own lives. Genius Hour not only gives students the chance to dream and to believe that they are talented, gifted, and unique, but it also teaches life skills, responsibility, planning, overcoming obstacles, perseverance, research and technology skills, goal setting, and more in one short hour a week!

### **How will Genius Hour work in Ms. Bad's classroom?**

Genius Hour challenges students to answer their own questions, plan their own process, create innovative solutions, and figure out how they are going to meet their project goals. This means that Genius Hour will be a STUDENTS DRIVEN project while Ms. Bad's role is to support as needed, help troubleshoot, and provide research materials for students to explore.

Students will participate in Genius Hour once a week on Fridays for 1 hour in homeroom for the duration of about 10 weeks. After mini-lessons on how to write a "guiding question" and how to plan a project, students will choose a topic to study *with teacher approval*. During class work time, students will be working with 1-2 partners to answer their guiding question. Students will be responsible for creating a proposal, setting and achieving weekly goals, monitoring their progress, gathering needed materials, and using their time wisely during Genius Hour worktime. At the end of the project, students must present their learning to the class by sharing their final product and reflections on learning. Each week after Genius Hour worktime, students will have 10 minutes for a quick reflection in which students will self-evaluate their time-on-task, learning progress, and adherence to their project plan. This reflection can take the form of an online blog.

### **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 with others.
- To practice planning and monitoring progress to achieve determined goals.
- To provide students an opportunity to develop skill sets that are valuable in any learning situation (research, experimentation, collaboration, creativity, problem solving, and critical thinking).

### **Grading**

The purpose of a Genius Hour project is to explore passions and think of creative solutions while apply problem solving and critical thinking strategies, meaning every students' project is going to be different in content and pacing. As a result, the grading process assess whether overarching requirements are accomplished along the way in their explorations, NOT the content of their projects. These requirements are:

1. Student's project has good, quality driving question(s) that requires deep thought, research, and perseverance to answer.
2. Student completes in-depth research on the topic and shares it digitally with Ms. Bad.
3. The final product answers the guiding question(s) completely and shows learning in a creative way.
4. Student stays on-task during Genius Hour worktime and uses time/resources appropriately. Partnerships followed the GROUP Expectations.
5. Student completes every weekly reflection and posts it on their Weebly portfolio. Each post answers the reflection questions completely and using complete sentences.
6. The final presentation is under 5 minutes, showcases the final product, and creatively communicates how student(s) answered guiding question(s).

## **Project Components**

**Brainstorming:** At the beginning of the Genius Hour course, students will begin brainstorming ideas for a project proposal. Students are encouraged to make the project product-focused and to incorporate technology to some extent. Options and ideas will be discussed in class, but students are encouraged to also brainstorm at home and with their family/friends.

**Proposal Plan with Guiding Questions:** Once a topic is chosen, students will be required to write a "guiding question" that will focus their efforts on answering a question or solving a problem. . The proposal will include the project's guiding question(s), learning objectives, final product goals, materials/assistance needed, and tentative weekly goals to keep students on track. Proposals will be reviewed with Ms. Bad, then Ms. Bad will conference with each student/partnership to discuss project goals/plans.

**Research:** Students will spend lots of time researching their topic to become "experts." Research will be saved and shared digitally using Microsoft Office Online and Student Office 365 accounts.

**Weekly Reflection Blog Posts:** Each week after worktime, students will post on their Weebly Student Portfolio Genius Hour Reflection Blog. The purpose of this reflection is to help students monitor progress, assess work ethic, and reflect on the day's learning.

**Final Product:** Projects should be focused on creating a final product that creatively shows how students answered the guiding questions and/or solved the problem. The actual product students create is up to them!

**Final Presentation:** To showcase final products and celebrate the hard work and learning, students will present (in 5 minutes or less) their project. How students present is up to them! The presentations should focus on describing the final product, sharing insights and information learned, and reflecting on the process.

### **As a parent, how can I help?**

As students decide what they want to do, they will need help expanding their ideas and finding resources. Discussing your child's ideas and helping with where to find those resources will be extremely important. While Ms. Bad will provide some basic resources and technology, students may need more specific items that WPA may not be able to provide. If possible and within reason, providing the materials your child needs is greatly appreciated. Finally, Ms. Bad will need help in the class during Genius Hour work time. Parent helpers will aid with classroom management and troubleshooting technology problems. *Please contact Ms. Bad if you are interested and able to help during the 1-hour Genius Hour work period from 1:00-2:15 on most Fridays (email Ms. Bad for the tentative dates/schedule).*

As with all long-term projects, some dates and expectations may need to be tweaked as the project progresses. All changes will be communicated to students in class and to parents via email. Thank you for your support in this exciting opportunity to help WPA students explore what they are truly passionate about while learning important life-long skills along the way!

**Questions, comments, or concerns?** Please email Ms. Bad at [pbadizadegan@wasatchpeak.org](mailto:pbadizadegan@wasatchpeak.org).