Dear Parents,

This year your child will be participating in Genius Hour by working on a Passion Project. Based on the concept 20% Time by Google, students will spend a block (45 minutes) a week exploring their own passions by investigating new ideas or skills that are significant to them. Since Google started 20% time, many products, including Google News and Gmail, have been brought to fruition. We know that students are more engaged when they have choice and are in charge of their learning. Genius Hour is a problem-based learning activity that allows students to acquire knowledge and wisdom through self-driven learning. I feel that this is a great opportunity for students to study and learn about topics and ideas that interest and engage them.

Students will spend this time focusing on researching their topics, learning all they can, perhaps constructing a product, and creating a presentation of their learning to share with the class and others, including parents. Students will not be assessed on the outcome of their learning (**failure is okay**), but they will be assessed on the **process** and their **presentation**.

As a class we will be working on the types of topics that will be worthwhile and will enable students to be productive. Further, we will explore and discuss how the topic then needs to be put into the form of a driving question which will allow students to use deep thought to effectively investigate and research their ideas. We will also discuss options for how and where to research information for their topic.

Throughout the term, students will be responsible for completing a project approval form, note-taking sheets, check-in sheets, exit slips, and they will also have conferences with me to discuss their progress. Again, Genius Hour and Passion Projects are not about the end product, it is about the learning and the process.

At the end of each term, students will present their learning. Thus, we will discuss various means and methods of presenting and each student will decide how he/she want to share his/her learning. Presentations can be a poster, PowerPoint, video, skit/play, video, or any other approved presentation format. All parents are welcome to attend the presentations. As presentations approach, students will send an invitation with the date and time of their presentation.

Students can work alone, or with a partner of their choosing. It is imperative that if students opt to work with a partner that the topic is one that both students feel passionately about. Once the students receive approval from me on their idea, they are then required to get approval from you, their parent(s)/guardian. Once this is done, they will explore information using the internet, books, library resources, interviews, etc.

For the first term and a half, students are able to pursue any interest of theirs. As long as they are able to develop a driving question to research, as well as demonstrate their learning, they are able to complete a passion project in any area.

For the second term and a half, students will work on a passion project that will have an impact on either our local or our global community. Again, they are free to choose the path they would like to take, however this time it will be entrepreneurial and they need to gear the project, and their learning, towards making a difference. More information will follow when we begin this project.

Students need to plan Passion Projects that they can work on at school. However, some students may want to choose a topic that requires some extra work at home. Further, depending on the path they choose, your help may be needed in purchasing materials. N.G.E. will supply basic materials such as paper, cardstock, poster paper, tape, glue, felts, etc., but if the projects require more than the basics, it is up to students to come prepared with the required supplies. Thus, it is up to students and parents to decide if they want to undertake projects that require extra materials and/or time at home. Please know that even if students do work at home sometimes, they are still required to come to school prepared to work on their Passion Projects during our Genius Hour block each week. A form will follow, once students have had their topic approved by myself, requiring your signature to indicate that you have discussed your child’s Passion Project with him/her and that you will help him/her as needed.

Genius Hour will increase students’ engagement in their learning, it will assist students in learning more about themselves, and it will develop students’ understanding of setting personal goals. Working on their Passion Projects will further enable students to meet several learning outcomes, curriculum competencies, and Big Ideas in the Career and Language Arts curriculum. Also, depending on the path they take, students may also work on learning outcomes from Social Studies, Science, Math, P.E., and/or Art. This project is cross-disciplinary and will assist students in developing their 21st Century skill set.

 I thank you in advance for your support of this learning opportunity. If you have any questions about Genius Hour and our Passion Projects, please call, email, or stop by the classroom. I also encourage you to check out the Genius Hour section of my website as it has some videos to help further explain Genius Hour.

Sincerely,

Lara Davies