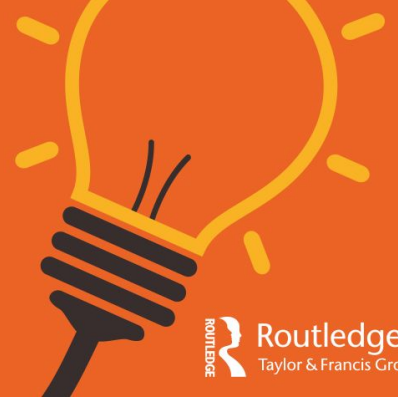# What You Need to Know About GENIUS HOUR

THE GENIUS HOUR GUIDEBOOK
A Resource Site for Passion, Wonder, & Inquiry in the Classroom
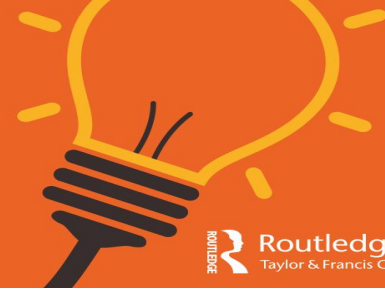
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GENIUS HOUR is a movement that allows students to explore their own passions and encourages creativity in the classroom.

- *It provides students a choice in what they learn during a set period of time during school.*

While it cannot be pinpointed exactly where/when it began, there are at least two events that have impacted the "creation" of Genius Hour:

GOOGLE: At Google, engineers get to spend 20% of their time working on any "pet "project that they want. The idea is very simple: Let people to work on something that interests them, and they will be more productive. Google's policy has worked so well that it has been said that 50% of Google's projects have been created during this creative time period, like Gmail and Google News.

DANIEL PINK: In his book _DRIVE_, Daniel Pink wrote, then blogged, about how the "experiment" at Google has beenused in other corporations: "e*mployees take 60 minutes to work on new ideas or master new skills, which in turn has allowed them to come up with a range of innovations, including training tools for other branches..*"

When people are passionate about what they are working on, good things (LEARNING) happens!

So.....how can this work in EDUCATION?

Teachers can use the same Genius Hour principles in the classroom as they are used in the corporate world:

- *The teacher provides a set amount of time for the students to work on their passion projects.*
- *Students are then challenged to explore something to do a project over that they want to learn about.*
- *Students spend several weeks researching the topic before they start creating a product that will be shared with the class/school/world.*
- *Deadlines are limited and creativity is encouraged.*
- *Throughout the process the teacher facilitates or guides the student projects to make sure students are on task.*

How this benefits students in the 21st Century World

Genius Hour is all about helping students to develop autonomy.....about building agency. Students today are already using technology to learn about what they are passionate about OUTSIDE of the classroom: *how to make connections, build community, and create.* As educators, we need to bring that into the classroom - students really do want flexibility in their days to be able to conduct research, develop advocacy skills, reach out to a broad-based community, and use the tools available to them to make meaning.

Jennie Magiera *(a former AUSL colleague)* had the chance to see this in action at a school she visited in New Zealand and wrote about the experience in EDWEEK: (http://blogs.edweek. org/teachers/teaching_toward_tomorrow/2014/12/undiluted_student_agency_going.html)

Matt Levinson, Head of School at University Prep, also has some insights on how this can help develop student agency: http://www.edutopia.org/blog/next-generation-learning-student-agency-matt-levinson

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Want to start Genius Hour in your classroom but not sure where and how to begin? Already started Genius Hour and need a bit more guidance? Here are some resources that can help!

- The Genius Hour Handbook by Gallit Zvi and Denise Krebs *(available in print & Kindle formats on Amazon - I just bought it!!)*

- http://ajjuliani.com/ - AJ is one of the leaders in this field - he has LOTS of great information on his website & you can follow his blog (he even offers a free course on Genius Hour!)

- *Chris Kesler has a great website on Genius Hour* below is a sample of what you can find on his website on The Genius Hour Process:

  - http://www.geniushour.com/2013/03/29/making-time-for-genius-hour-in-the-classroom/

  - http://www.geniushour.com/2013/03/29/approching-your-administration-about-genius-hour/

  - http://www.geniushour.com/2013/03/31/genius-hour-project-introdutions/

  - http://www.geniushour.com/2013/04/01/setting-expectations-during-genius-hour/