**Dear Parents/Guardians,**

Henry David Throreau, one of the great Transcendentalist thinkers of all time, said, “Nature is full of genius, full of the divinity; so that not a snowflake escapes its fashioning hand.” I happen to agree. Your children are full of genius, chock-full of questions, bursting with creativity and insight. Admittedly, all that genius, questioning, or creativity is not necessarily “academic” in nature...but what if it was? What if I told you that this year in Room 100 I plan to ask your students what THEY want to learn about? What if I told you I could provide your students with TIME to explore something about which they are truly passionate and in so doing I would not simply engage your students but also meet a medley of Common Core Standards in the process? Would you be intrigued? I know I certainly am... Welcome to Genius Hour!

**What is Genius Hour?**

Genius Hour is time set aside in class for students to satisfy their thirst for knowledge about a topic that interests them. They may set a goal to accomplish something they never thought they’d have the time to pursue. They may work to learn a new skill. They may investigate a problem and seek its solution. Genius Hour provides TIME and OPPORTUNITY for students to ignite their passions and fire up their desires to learn.

**Why is Genius Hour important?**

When students have a vested interested in their learning, they begin to own their education. During Genius Hour, students learn about something that fascinates them, drives them, concerns them. Genius Hour sparks curiosity, and students have an opportunity to find the Genius within. Genius Hour encourages lifelong learning, imagination, perseverance, self-awareness, adaptability, as well as a host of other life-sustaining skills. The purpose of this project is to allow students time to enhance their intrinsic motivation to learn, to improve their digital literacy, to practice the research process, and to create a product they find meaningful.

**How does Genius Hour fit with the Common Core State Standards?**

The great thing about Genius Hour is not only do students get to pick something to work on about which they are passionate and engaged, but also the work they do on the project and the presentation of their work naturally ties in with nearly every ELA Common Core State Standard.

**How will Genius Hour work in my classroom?**

Students will participate in Genius Hour once a week on Fridays for approximately a full class period. After mini-lessons and idea-generating sessions about potential project ideas, students will choose a project topic to pursue with Teacher Approval. Students will be given time in class to work on the project with the teacher serving as a Facilitator. At an agreed-upon date, (towards the end of the semester) students will present their findings to the class, to the school, to the community, and/or to a worldwide audience. The focus for the presentation is NOT simply information about the topic, rather the focus is the student’s learning journey: project challenges, project successes, self-reflection, and improvement.

As part of this project, I have asked each student to establish a Weebly site with a blog page in order to document progress and research throughout the semester.  A blog functions as an online journal of sorts, where students can record their progress, their struggles, and their successes. Because students are presenting their work to a broader audience online, they often end up producing higher quality work for this unknown audience. They are also able to include pictures, videos, and links, creating a more multi-dimensional product than they could using a word-processing program or a simple presentation program.

Furthermore, they are learning and practicing skills they might be asked to use at the college level or in certain career fields. These particular blogs, used solely for academic purposes, and have many positive aspects, one of which is the opportunity to open up a conversation about how to become a responsible digital citizen.

***Attached to this letter, I have included a “Guidelines for Responsible Digital Citizenship” page. We have discussed this at length in class. Please review these guidelines with your child and then sign the bottom of the page. Your student must return this signed form to class by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.***

**What does a Genius Hour project look like?**

Because I have no prior experience facilitating a Genius Hour program, I do not have former student projects to use as examples; however, I have performed extensive research on classroom implementation of Genius Hour and have linked several student examples on my webpage. Here are a few ideas from other Genius Hour projects: battling bullying, designing video games, creating apps, founding charity organizations, filming music videos, seeking to become published authors, learning to code, repairing a car engine, pursuing a patent for an invention, learning to knit, running for local government.

**What is the Parent/Guardian role for Genius Hour?**

I promise to do my best to inspire excitement, enthusiasm, and passion in your student every chance I get in Room 100. My hope if for you to do the same in your home . Also, I encourage you to speak with your student about his or her project (if you haven’t already) and to serve as an additional guide and mentor during this process. Frequently check my Genius Hour page on my webpage, kendalynnsutton@weebly.com, for updates, schedules, and project due dates.

I am bursting with anticipation to begin the Genius Hour projects with my students. One might say that Genius Hour implementation in Room 100 is my own Genius Hour project. I am excited, enthused, and passionate about the learning opportunities this project will provide for my students. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to teach and learn with your students. I never forget how fortunate I am to have the opportunity to do what I love. Thank you.

If you would like to discuss Genius Hour in more detail, please feel free to contact me at

(779-2670) (ext. 1100) or ksutton@kingsford.org.

Sincerely,

Kedalynn Sutton

English Teacher

Kingsford High School

e- mail: ksutton@kingsford.org

webpage: kendalynnsutton@weebly.com

**Guidelines for Responsible Digital Citizenship**

As a student learning and growing up in the 21st century, you are constantly exposed to technology and the online community of the World Wide Web. In order to make sure you are a responsible, informed, and prepared digital citizen, take some time to read the statements below. As you read, initial each to verify your understanding.

\_\_\_\_\_ Any pictures, videos, music, links, or written content I post will be carefully reviewed. It is

                important to watch videos, listen to songs, and examine links in their entirety to make sure

                language, visuals, and content are school-appropriate.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will not provide any personal information, like my phone number, e-mail address, home

                address, etc. in my posts or in replies to individuals who comment on my blog.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will not claim the work of others to be my own and therefore, will make sure to provide

               appropriate credit when needed.

\_\_\_\_\_ If I choose to allow comments on my blog, I will report any inappropriate comments or

               solicitations for personal information to my guardian(s) and Mrs. Sutton immediately. Under no

               circumstances, will I respond to these comments.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will never use my blog as a forum to attack, berate, or make fun of a group or individual.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will respect and abide by the wishes of my parents as they relate to the content and privacy

                settings of my blog.

\_\_\_\_\_ If I have a concern or question about a particular post, I will ask my teacher and/or guardian for

               advice before posting.

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I understand the terms above and accept full responsibility for the content and use of my blog. If I have any questions or concerns during this project, I will report them immediately to Mrs. Sutton and my guardian(s).

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_                       \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_         \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

        (Student Printed Name)                                         (Student Signature)                                (Date)

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I have read and discussed these guidelines with my student.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_                     \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_       \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

    (Guardian Printed Name)                           (Guardian Signature)                    (Date)