



Introducing a *Genius Hour* Project to Enhance Collaboration for Year 6 Boys

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Introduction

- Upper primary students familiar with working in groups.
- Struggling with roles and responsibilities in “higher stakes” collaborative projects.
- Explicitly outlining/ teaching of the subskills required for successful collaboration.
- Providing the opportunity for students to practise collaborating in a meaningful and motivating context.
- Raised awareness of the skills of collaboration – adapt to all group learning interactions.

The Research Question

How might the introduction of ‘Genius Hour’ enhance collaboration for Year 6 boys?

Research Context and Participants

Shore (Sydney Church of England Grammar School) is an independent comprehensive school for boys from Year 3 to Year 12 (approximately 1500 students) with a K – 2 co-educational campus (150 students). The school promotes a Christian understanding of the world, celebrates the pursuit of personal best in a culture of learning and thinking, and challenges all to be responsible citizens with an attitude of service to others.

The research participants were from my class of Year 6 boys who were particularly enthusiastic about having some input into what they would be learning during their final few months of primary education.

“I learned
what other kids
could do.”



“Teamwork is valuable ... you
have to work together to do well.”

The Research Action

- Review of collaborative skills - fostering a shared understanding of what successful collaboration may “look and sound like” (using Harvey’s & Daniel’s ‘How Proficient Collaborators Think and Act’ strategies)
- Preparation and display of classroom posters that outlined strategies for successful collaboration
- Genius Hour project introduced
- Wide variety of topics – from magic tricks to soccer skills; from paper plane aerodynamics to launching of rockets
- Assessment guidelines and a rubric were established including a social skills component
- Genius Hour sessions, typically on a Friday afternoon (6 + introductory session).
- Teacher facilitation included regular reference to “How Proficient Collaborators Think and Act” strategies.
- “Product” sharing celebration with the entire class as culmination.



Data Analysis

Findings collected through the pre-project survey of attitudes towards collaborative tasks informed focus areas for reviewing the skills required for successful collaboration. Observations throughout the project, regular student feedback and the post-project survey results were collated to identify changes to student attitudes and behaviour.

Key Findings

- During sessions, students were quite aware of collaborative behaviours and were able to correct and coach their peers appropriately, typically with reference to the posters displayed in the classroom.
- In the post-project survey it was clear that the students more strongly agreed with all statements ie. that group members had successfully displayed the desired behaviours. Responses were positive to all statements – there were no apparent areas of negativity as noted in the initial survey.
- Overwhelmingly, responses to the post-project survey indicated that group members had successfully displayed the desired appropriate collaborative behaviours.

“What I learned was that you didn’t have to stick with the same idea.”
“You have to be flexible if the rest of your group doesn’t agree with you.”

Conclusion

A successful learning experience for the students in terms of improving their understanding of, and practical demonstration of, appropriate collaborative behaviours.

Students were motivated by the Genius Hour concept, with its flexibility and freedom, and this enthusiasm was successfully leveraged to promote a deeper understanding of how proficient collaborators think and act.

Future research could focus on how to best ensure the generalising of these attitudes and behaviours to a range of collaborative learning tasks, and to investigate the best model for the explicit teaching/ learning of these vital skills.

Key Readings

- Harvey, S. & Daniels, H. (2015). *Comprehension & Collaboration*. Portsmouth, NH : Heinemann.
- Juliani, A. J. (2015). *Inquiry and innovation in the classroom: Using 20% time, genius hour, and PBL to drive student success*. New York: Routledge.
- Stringer, E. (2014). *Action Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

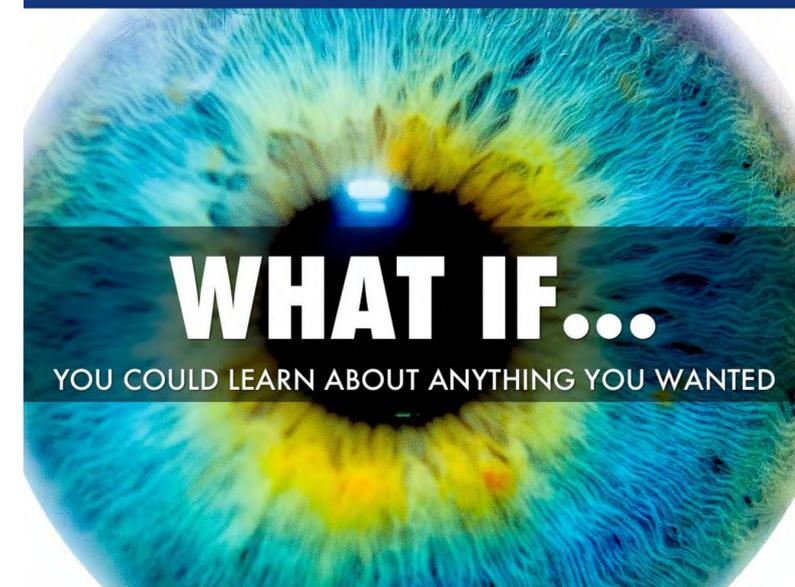


Image viewed at <https://www.haikudeck.com/copy-of-genius-hour-education-presentation-lwNYBcNPI>

Further Information

This poster and further information is available at
<http://www.theibsc.org/>

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