

# How might the introduction of Genius Hour foster creative and critical thinking in Year 3 boys?

## Introduction

Step inside our school staff meetings and you will no doubt hear discussions focussed on resilience rather than adaptability. We are not focussing enough on the important soft skills like creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration, which are vital in ensuring we develop adaptable learners. With rapid improvements in technology reducing the need for hard skill acquisition, the modern workplace demands collaborators, creators, and critical thinkers. As teachers, we need to provide students with a platform for developing and fostering these skills.

Within a classroom context, Genius Hour provides learners with a sense of autonomy and ownership, as well as increasing their intrinsic motivation. Essentially, it provides a culture of adaptation by allowing students to "climb their own mountain."

## Research Context and Participants

Established in 1901, The Southport School is an independent Anglican, day and boarding school for boys in Queensland, Australia. It is a non-selective school for all boys from Preschool to Year 12.

As the action research project was conducted as a team, our participants were a group of 18 randomly selected boys from two Year 3 classrooms.

## Data Collection and Analysis

Surveys

Focus Groups

Reflective Journals

Interviews

Presentations



The boys' completion of an online survey and presentation of their Genius Hour projects allowed them to identify differences between Genius Hour and regular class work, of which "the ability to be creative and critical," became one of our key observations.

## The Research Action

Brainstorm

Create a Question

Critique Questions

Undertake Project

Present Findings

Reflect

"It challenged me to get it done in time and made me rethink my ideas."

"It was really good because we got to be creative and do what we were passionate about."

*Genius Hour enabled 16 out of 18 boys to feel more creative and think more critically than when completing regular classwork.*

"Genius Hour is a program that inspires kids to open up their mind and be creative. It is inspirational."

"It sort of failed but we learnt from it, so next time..."

## Key Findings and Discussion

Throughout our action research project, we observed a range of findings that indicated the boys' growth in a multitude of areas. These areas of growth included:

- ❖ An enhanced ability to think *CRITICALLY*
- ❖ Improved *PERSEVERANCE* and *ADAPTABILITY*
- ❖ Greater *MOTIVATION* for learning
- ❖ A more purposeful approach to *CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM*
- ❖ More opportunity to be *CREATIVE*



## How Effective was Genius Hour?

Genius Hour proved to us that we can no longer merely judge our boys' success by numbers and grades. During our initial brainstorming stages at the project's commencement, the vast majority of Genius Hour questions and project ideas suggested by the boys were, although interesting and "creative," completely impossible to execute at a Year 3 level. Once the boys actually began to sink their teeth into their own projects, however, the changes in their ability to think critically quickly became apparent. They began to see their own and others' ideas in a more realistic manner and their predictions became more accurate. This factor, along with their enhanced perseverance and motivation for learning were significant enough to make Genius Hour an extremely worthwhile component of our classroom programming.