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Digging Into Your Passion: A School Improvement Plan

Isaac Ryan Heard

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Digging into your Passion

Digging into Your Passion: A School Improvement Plan

Isaac R Heard

Northwestern College

A School Improvement Plan Presented
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Education

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Abstract

To help bring choice into a student's learning environment, educators need to find ways to add time into school's daily and weekly schedule. Genius Hour and passion clubs are two ways that allow for students to ask questions and seek answers through project-based learning while utilizing the core skills in each content area. The problem is that the option for having choices is missing from the middle school curriculum. The purpose of this school improvement plan is to create a hybrid of in-school and after-school clubs that provide students an opportunity to dig into their passions while expanding upon their academics in a unique way. A literature review was conducted to research the studies of Genius Hour, clubs, school connectedness, motivation, and choice. The literature review helps to support the school improvement plan and provide evidence of the need for future research.

Keywords: Connectedness, Motivation, Choice

Introduction

Students do not have a choice whether to attend middle school. Choice is one thing missing from a student's elementary and middle school years. At the elementary school there are those foundational needs that must be met, which often do not allow for student options and choices. For high schoolers, choice is more prevalent. Students choose their math, science, and history courses because more exploratory courses are offered. The problem is that the option for having choices is missing from the middle school curriculum. Choice and passion go together. If students have a choice to work on their passions in school, they will see the rest of their academic success improve. Genius Hour is an opportunity where students can spend a given portion of time working on projects that follow their passions (Allen 2015). Sioux Center Middle School has implemented Genius Hour for several years. It is a class opposite of physical education, where students meet two to three days a week. Genius Hour at Sioux Center Middle School has recently been discontinued due to the lack of space and time in the school day. Several factors contributed to the discontinuation of the program, which included some projects becoming redundant, kids losing productivity in classes, and a change in administration. The time needed for the necessary components of school began to take precedent over the time traditionally reserved for Genius Hour at the middle school.

Hurd, et al. (2017) completed a literature review about the benefits of increasing social and emotional learning (SEL) through offering after-school programs. Hurd, et. al (2017) found that students benefit from daily activities that provide time for them to process their emotions, share experiences, listen to others, work together, solve problems, and reflect on their decisions. The purpose of this school improvement plan is to create a hybrid of in-school and after-school

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clubs that provide students an opportunity to dig into their passions while expanding upon their academics in a unique way.

This literature review examines research-based peer reviewed articles within the last ten years that focus on the need for reform within education. The main topics included in this literature review include: Genius Hour, motivation and choice, clubs, and school connectedness. The keywords used to research the topic of Genius Hour and passion clubs were school clubs, student motivation, school connectedness, and genius hour. The topic was narrowed down into four subtopics by reading peer-reviewed articles on Genius Hour first and using subtopics and keywords to see the need for further research.

The literature review supports the schools' improvement plan by sharing the implementation strategies of Genius Hour and its benefits. Through Genius Hour, student projects have led to deeper questioning and understanding of topics of value to students. School clubs have mirrored Genius Hour as an extension of deeper learning that has become student driven with support from teachers and other school staff. The literature review will share the findings of the research on the need for an increase in motivation and school connectedness among middle school students.

Literature Review

For many years, the main focus of schools has revolved solely around academics, but within the last ten years, schools have begun to incorporate social emotional learning skills that aim to encompass student connectedness, choice, passion, and motivation. With the implementation of the social emotional skills (SEL) in the school setting, research has expanded upon the benefits of including Genius Hour and school clubs as a tool for improving student's SEL skills.

Genius Hour

In the last ten years, research has documented the impact of Genius Hour as a tool for improving student's SEL skills. In a literature review on how Genius Hour has created change in education, Coke (2018) defines "Genius Hour as a time set aside in class for students and for teachers to follow their own questions and curiosities" (p. 26). Genius Hour is designed as a time for students to not work specifically on math, writing, or science, but instead to put knowledge they've gained from those core classes into a project that drives them to become lifelong learners. Research about how the Genius Hour truly works, Allen (2015) writes, "[Students] pose a question, research it, and create a vehicle to share their project with the greater world" (p. 25). Genius Hour is not vastly different than inquiry-based learning or project-based learning (PBL); however, with Genius Hour, time in the school day is set aside by a school district or building just for Genius Hour rather than activities happening in a content-area classroom (Allen 2015).

Similar to other PBL, Genius Hour calls for an environment with sufficient space. Robinson (2018) uses the term "makerspaces" to describe the place where Genius Hour is happening. Makerspaces are defined "as a physical location where students have the opportunity to explore their own interests, learn to use new tools and materials, and develop creative projects" (Robinson, 2018, p. 18). Some students may need this space for the creation of their projects, but others do not need a large physical space. Giving students the needed time and space for creative projects is worth it as it leads to purposeful learning and mastery of content (Robinson 2018).

Genius Hour seems to leave teachers out of the equation, but it needs to be remembered that this time is not about teachers. Researching engagement in Genius Hour, Allen (2015) examines how teachers can become redundant during Genius Hour. Just as it takes creativity and

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passion from the students, teachers need that same level of passion and creativity to promote Genius Hour. In research on Genius Hour and student success, Aysenur et. al (2016) describes three groups of teachers when trying to promote Genius Hour: the “that’s awesome” group, “that sounds great, but ...” group, and the “that’s crazy” group. A level of buy-in needs to take place to get Genius Hour promoted and with this buy-in comes responsibilities from students, teacher, parents, and administrators. Once that buy-in happens, Genius Hour can become part of your school curriculum and schedule. A fifth-grade teacher who put Genius Hour into action after years of research expressed that she had to put all her fears and doubts of losing instructional time away to implement Genius Hour. Once she did that, she found that Genius Hour deepened student’s thinking skills and that the depth of student learning was worth the loss of a specific amount of time in the school day (Katrein 2016). Coke (2018) researched how Genius Hour has enhanced teachers’ abilities beyond the core curriculum. Coke (2018) found that Genius Hour has helped to combat teacher burnout as it leads to finding the intrinsic meaning behind what teachers do. Genius Hour leads to giving up some classroom power in exchange for student-led projects and provides a level of autonomy. This was seen through Robinson’s (2018) research on the autonomy given to students during makerspaces. Robinson (2018) found that as teachers mentor students, the students begin to develop leaderships skills and techniques. The makerspaces give a space for Genius Hour to thrive because of the environment students and teachers create.

As with all PBL and inquiry-based learning in the school, Genius Hour is not without flaws; it is still in need of more significant research. For example, the book *Inquiry and Innovation in the Classroom: Using 20% Time, Genius Hour, and Pbl to Drive Student Success* by Juliani (2014), Aysenur et Al. (2018), researched how the implementation of Genius Hour has

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been used to address issues within schools. Aysenur et al. (2018) raise the question of whether using innovation and inquiry should be the only solutions to problems in a school. Reviewing and examining this research challenges researchers to think critically about all elements behind new approaches to inquiry-based learning such as Genius Hour. The lack of quantitative research on Genius Hour is a limitation of this topic. Further data is needed regarding Genius Hour's impact on academic achievement.

Motivation and Choice

Seeking drivers for student motivation has been a long process in education. Motivation is different for every person and group, but it is something everyone needs to succeed in their desires. The desire to learn is often rooted in one's social representation. Researching how deeper education programs can create deeper engagement, Koshkin et al. (2018) defines social representation as "a stock of values, ideas, beliefs and practices that are shared among the members of groups and communities in course of interpersonal communications" (p. 317). Koshkin et al. (2018) notes it could be any of the values, ideas, beliefs, or practices that students must increase to increase their motivation; "certain social representations of students about education should influence their behavior and create certain incentives and motivations for continuation of education" (p. 317). Teachers strive to recognize student motivational differences to encourage and enhance the motivation of students whose social representation is less inclined toward academic learning.

Research suggests that student choice is an element that increases motivation and drives student's desire to succeed in school. For example, in a mixed method study using both quantitative and qualitative data, Allred et al. (2020) researched the effects of student choice on motivation. After noting that students found teacher-assigned texts to be "boring, irrelevant, and

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difficult to understand,” the group of researchers decided to study “what would happen if students got to decide what type of literature to encounter” (p. 27). In an eleventh-grade class that had become increasingly diverse, the results from this study showed a positive impact on the students in terms of motivation. There were fifty-three students in this study used to create two different research groups, and the groups were divided into two subgroups. Group A had twenty-eight participants with twenty male and eight females, while group B had twenty-five participants with fifteen male and ten females in their group. After completing a survey, students were given texts that fit their own reading desires which evidence showed, was a huge benefit for the students. Through the use of choice, student motivation increased along with the student’s assessment scores.

Motivation to attend and work hard at school is not the same as someone who does not have any motivation. A common thread missing from the research from Allred et al. (2018) was the component of students who simply did not like school. The research showed that students were lacking a certain level of motivation. What the research didn’t show was the desire or motivation one had for attending school regardless of choice. Walking in the door of the school and attending classes can be affected by factors such as choice, but other factors not reported were family values, access to the internet, along with other factors that could be impacting student learning.

Clubs

After-school clubs or activities have often been implemented to build SEL skills. After researching the different strategies used to benefit SEL development, Bailey, et. al (2019) claimed that educators gain a better understanding of students and their behavior when they begin to recognize how toxic stress can affect their emotions and ability to function. With so

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much of the day centered around activities that are deemed stressful to some students (e.g. reading, writing, math, and more), clubs that promote a growth in SEL have been found to be of benefit to students. Two professors studied the effectiveness of SEL-focused after school programs. The qualitative study accounted for attendance variables because of the nature of after-school programs not being mandatory. Many students who signed up for the after-school program had a strong desire to attend. This strong student desire to attend led to a non-curricular program that implemented SEL-focused after-school program that was successful. Lead researcher and professor Noelle Hurd, (2017) says,

Out-of-school settings, such as after-school programs and community organizations, are natural sites for social and emotional learning (SEL) interventions. Because these programs and organizations do not have schools' curricular demands and often have broader developmental goals and missions, they can focus on SEL skills and outcomes to a greater extent than schools can (p. 96).

Not all clubs occur after school. They can occur at different times within the day with some clubs being embedded into a school curriculum. This does not mean that the club is more educational or takes away from the necessary SEL tools being implemented. Clubs that are embedded into the school day have been shown to give students a break from their typical schedule to work on SEL targets. Through a mixed-method research study on how career programs help students find their way and dig into their own passions, Broadbent et al. (2012) examines the benefits of clubs within a school's daily schedule. The research study surveyed 273 participants that were divided into focus groups and qualitative data was collected through interviews. The findings of this research study showed that students who participated in the school-sponsored clubs had stronger

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ties to the school, had a higher priority toward academic learning, developed stronger SEL skills, and had improved academic skills.

Learning through after-school clubs occur in different ways and styles because no two students are alike. Casey (2012) conducted a qualitative study on multimodal learning clubs to discover the effect of learning individually vs. collaboratively. The survey was conducted through a middle school health class that was changing its curriculum to incorporate more student choice and collaboration. Research data was gathered to identify the benefits of student learning through student collaboration. Surveys from the twenty-four students in the study showed that student choice in choosing texts, working in groups, and student-to-staff relationships had a positive correlation on student motivation. Students reported that when they worked in collaboration groups with their peers, they felt more motivated learn, a deeper engagement in what they were learning, and enjoyment towards learning. Collaborative group work led students to further engagement in the content and improve student learning success.

One of the biggest gaps in research in terms of school activity participation is between students with disabilities and those students without disabilities. Coster et al. (2012) conducted a mixed method research study on the effects of participation in clubs for students with disabilities compared to students without disabilities. The study consisted of 576 students with an average age of eleven. The students were broken into two groups between elementary and secondary ages. Surveys were administered to the students' parents to see the comparison of five activities in which students participated. The activities examined were classroom activities, field trips and school events, school-sponsored teams or clubs and organizations, getting together with peers outside of class, and special roles in school. The findings of this research study concluded that students with disabilities were not nearly as involved in activities compared to students without

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disabilities. Across all five categories of research, students without disabilities were more active participants than those with disabilities. After researching the disparity in participation between students with disabilities and those without, Pence et al. (2015) conducted a qualitative research study to discover what types of activities led to the most participation and engagement by students with disabilities. Three types of activities were investigated: school clubs, organized sports, and performance and creative activities. The research findings concluded that school clubs were the highest in attendance by students with disabilities because of the extra need for peer support. It was noted that students who had an established relationship with another peer or adult felt more comfortable trying new things.

As schools continue to change the environment in which learning takes place, the creation of makerspaces is a new place for clubs to grow. As education and technology have evolved, the school environment in which student learning takes place has changed. Researching how a club's environment impacted academic achievement, Ennen et al. (2015) completed a mixed-method study that examined 252 participants to see how trust would be developed, accounting for the environment in which the clubs met, and surveying the groups perceived similarities. The relationships between student trust and the similarities of the learning groups were examined. The theory of environment is discussed as helping to form a level of trust within groups, and as groups began to form, the environment where the clubs met created a level of trust within those different clubs.

The environment a club meets in and the supportive adults in that environment affect all individuals in the setting. Accounting for the environment and the adults in that environment, Pence et al. (2015) researched the importance of getting the right clubs to align students' interests and using an inventory to determine potential clubs for individual members. The use of

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interest inventories were found to narrow the list of clubs that matched student interests and needs. One key finding concluded in Pence et al.'s (2015) research study was the issue of student trust between members in a group or club based upon having similar interests and passions. In the research, students completed deep inventories to discover where their interests were so the school could align their interests with members to create a group of similar passions. The inventories were used as part of a qualitative method of study to have a comparison data point. As students were placed into clubs, the data was used to place students into groups associated with their interest that would impact their academic and functional life skills.

Research on how well clubs develop and improve student's SEL skills is still evolving. Some SEL studies and programs being less than two decades old, further research must be completed to have full quantitative and qualitative information. Researching the effects of SEL on academic learning is a key next step in the understanding for the need for such implementation. Through their research on trust and satisfaction within learning groups, Ennen et al. (2015) concludes their research finding that higher levels of trust did have a positive impact on student performance. Waiting for the evaluation and funding to catch up without research could take a while, as SEL has been going on for two decades. Students, teachers, and support staff may be the first ones to act before the research catches up.

School Connectedness

Through a systematic research study, Chapman et al. (2013) found a correlation between school connectedness and similar words such as community, engagement, attachment, and connectedness. The goal of Chapman's (2013) research was to examine how school connectedness decreased risk-taking behaviors among students. Chapman (2013) included students who were considered as belonging to a team, students with suicidal thoughts or

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emotional and behavioral disorders, as participants in his study. Findings from this research revealed that the students felt connected to the school had fewer negative thoughts and behavioral actions.

School connectedness relates to a student's personal connection with the environment, climate, and staff in a school building. School connectedness stems from research about peer and teacher relationships. Through their research on teams and the effectiveness of being part of a team, Carney (2019) notes the effects that being on a team can have on a student's feeling of connectedness. Carney's (2019) research found that a student's feeling of connectedness increases through group motivation, enjoyment, and energy.

The components of self-esteem, mattering, and wellness are indicators of how connected a student feels in a program or school. Through quantitative research, Watson (2018) found that if school counselors work to incorporate holistic wellness into their routines, students are less likely to participate in delinquent behaviors. Many of the psychosocial feelings that lead to incomplete adult wellness were found and targeted early in the findings of these 254 participants in the research. Researching the different variants in holistic wellness, Watson (2018) studied how middle school students sensed their own connectedness to a school and how it affected their self-esteem.

Watson's (2018) findings were similar to the findings of Marsh's (2018) study on the components associated with the feeling of school connectedness among that students with emotional and behavioral disorders. In the research, Marsh (2018) found that there are differing levels to be addressed within school connectedness. The components of school connectedness include: school bonding and attachment, school climate, and engagement. Marsh (2018) writes, "for students with EBD (Emotional and Behavioral Disorders), the opportunity to access

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afterschool activities hinges on concerns with the structure of the settings and their engagement in problem behavior” (p. 69). So many students with emotional and behavior disorders lose privileges or have their opportunities for after-school programs taken away for extrinsic reasons.

Not only does a level of connectedness apply to students with emotional and behavior disorders, but it has shown to positively affect students associated with risk-taking behaviors. Marraccini et, al. (2017) used a systematic meta-analysis to research three ways in which students were positively affected by their feelings of connectedness to school. A systematic literature review examined students from grades six to twelve and how they connected to their school. Ten of the studies showed that students who experienced a strong school connectedness had a decrease in their suicidal thoughts and behaviors. On average, these students also revealed having positive social and emotional health, rating their level of suicidal thoughts as low. It was noted that students with a high level of connectedness to the school and environment were less likely to participate in risky sexual activities (Marraccini). Marsh (2018) finds that as students establish relationships, they become invested in school and are more engaged in the success of their school.

Need for Plan

Over the past ten years, Sioux Center Community Schools has seen significant growth among all grade levels. The district has seen an average growth of forty students per year over the past ten years with the 2019-20 school year seeing a growth of ninety students added to the district. While the 2020-21 school year saw an enrollment decrease by two students, administrators believed the decrease was due to the COVID-19 circumstances. As the district grew over the past ten years, student participation in sports and music has not followed the same trend at the middle school level.

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As the levels of participation in sports and music stayed neutral, the concern for student connectedness began to be of concern. The school district recognized this concern and administered a survey (Appendix A) to their eight grade classes asking them one big question: “what is currently missing from Sioux Center Middle School?” The data gathered from the survey identified a starting point for discussion on how to build participation, connection, and motivation with the current school environment.

The most common answers to the question of “what is currently missing from Sioux Center Middle School” were “warrior groups”, “fifth-eighth grade buddies”, and “interactions with other grades”. Warrior groups is a combined team of five-six students in grades five through eight. Fifth-eighth grade buddies gives students a peer-to-peer relationship with someone who has experience in the building and allows fifth graders to have a safe person in the middle school. Interactions with other grades is something that does not happen at the middle school level in Sioux Center. With the three answers being the most popular, it was recognized that students don’t know other people in their building well which adds to a lack of connection. Through conversations between administration, counselors, teachers, and students it was shown that the best plan would be to add clubs that would align all grades in the middle school. This plan will be used as part of the 2021-22 school year.

The School Improvement Plan Goals

The goal for this school improvement plan was to increase the student’s feeling of school connectedness, improve student attendance, and raise student standardized MAPS (Measure of Academic Progress) assessment scores. The driving force in this school improvement plan was the implementation of Genius Hour passion clubs. Genius Hour clubs were viewed as a way for

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students to feel like valued members of the school while their voices were considered to hold value in the school decision-making processes.

A concern of the implementation of Genius Hour was that academic time would be lost during the school week. Reasoning against this concern, was that Genius Hour would incorporate academic content knowledge, increase academic achievement while building student school connectedness.

Plan Implementation

As part of a study for the school improvement plan, the 2020-21 8th graders at SCMS completed a survey highlighting their participation in extracurriculars offered at the school. Of the 93 students who participated in the survey, 38 students were involved in only one or zero of the five sports offered. Similarly, 56 students were involved in one or less music activities. Greater than one-third of students have limited participation in sports and over half of the students have limited to no participation in music. Many of these students are the same students who do not participate in either category.

Watson (2018) researched the importance of school connectedness and its relationship to a student's self-esteem and mattering. The research finds the students who feel more connected to their school have higher academic achievement and less behavior issues. This aligns with the connectedness survey completed by 8th graders at Sioux Center Middle School. (Appendix A) Students who have lower participation in music and sports (i.e. scoring a 1 or 0) have lower standardized tests scores and have lower attendance. In the research on school connectedness of Watson (2018), the findings pointed out that positive peer and adult relationships increased academic work which positively impacted behaviors and attendance. Combining extracurricular participation with academic achievement and feelings of connectedness to school, there was one

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more question that SCMS 8th graders answered. The question asked, “how do you feel about coming to school?” and students answered on a scale of 0-4, 0 being the lowest and 4 being the highest. Many of the same students with low participation and low success rates answered as not being excited or not feeling strongly about coming to school. Taking the survey data and the research into account, Sioux Center Middle School is implementing school wide passion clubs called Genius Hour to grow school connectedness and give students a purpose for coming to school.

During the last teacher professional development of the 2020-21 school year, the teachers at Sioux Center Middle School gather and discuss what non-academic activity that they would like to host with a group of students during Genius Hour implementation for the 2021-22 school year. The implementation of Genius Hour is led by the school administrator and school counselors. The comments from the teachers will guide the discussion for the various Genius Hour clubs that will be offered to the students. Each student will be assigned a Genius Hour club that interests them. Teachers will be given time to respond to the question “what non-academic activity would you want to participate in and host with students?” This question will be posed by the school administrator and counselors. The data collected will be used to pair teachers with potential project groups. Students will be asked to do a similar survey as the teachers. They will be asked which passion clubs are “most interesting to them.” Students will rank all the available choices that came out of the teacher survey with an additional box left for commenting as “other”. The results of that data will be used to pair 6th – 8th grade students into groups with similarly like-minded students and teachers.

In August of 2021, staff at Sioux Center Middle School will read the book “Inquiry and Innovation in the Classroom: Using 20% Time, Genius Hour, and PBL to Drive Student

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Success” (Juliani, 2014). The basis of Juliani’s (2014) book is to understand how students will gain new opportunities to be innovative and collaborative while coming up with new project ideas, similar to how Google uses the idea of Genius Hour for their employees.

Sioux Center Middle School (SCMS) has a period of the school day called “homeroom time” where each teacher mentors twenty students in hopes of creating a deeper connection with their homeroom group of students. Additional homeroom time of 1 hour per week will be added to the school schedule to allow for Genius Hour clubs. The students will participate in Genius Hour one day a week for a 45-minute time segment beginning in September until the end of the school year. Every Wednesday, homeroom time will be a seven-minute period for students to complete their morning check-ins and gather their belongings to head to their Genius Hour space where they will participate in passion clubs. In a study completed by Robinson (2018) on makerspaces related to Genius Hour, it is noted that there needs to be an end game in mind with Genius Hour. SCMS will not grade any of the success in passion clubs. The end game will be a product that students produce that can come in any format, such as an event or presentation. On the first Wednesday of the year, students will see the results from their answers to the questions posed in May of 2021 “which passion clubs are most interesting to you”. All answers will be given to students and they will rank their top 3. At professional development, teachers will work to group students based on conversations about students’ interests, survey results, academic achievement, and behaviors. Prior to the upcoming Wednesday, all students at SCMS will be placed into a passion club.

As noted in appendix B, Genius Hour and passion clubs will be a seven-week introduction period that prepares for the clubs to be running fully by Wednesday, October 13. Sioux Center Community Schools has a full, in school Genius Hour that will run from 9:30 –

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10:15 on Wednesdays. That time will be in collaboration with teachers and students leading together. This is not a preparation time for teachers as they will be just as involved with the clubs at this time as students. The time from 2:30 – 3:30 on Wednesdays will be run by student leaders with supervision from counselors and paraprofessionals in the building. Robinson (2018) researches the hesitancy of teachers to give up the time needed for their content to give time for Genius Hour. It is noted by the research that this reaches a needed level of autonomy that provides students with an extended level of motivation. Students may not be in their core, content-area classes but they are still using every level of standard that needs to be reached.

Middle School teachers will be given time during professional development on Friday, October 8 to reflect on successes and struggles as Genius Hour continues and passion clubs begin to expand after school. The time after school will not be dedicated to teachers because that time is needed for professional development. Counselors and other adults within the district will be supervisors during that time. The 9:30 – 10:15 period on Wednesdays will be called “Genius Hour” and 2:30 – 3:30 will be called passion clubs. The name will continue to evolve as each group names their projects and clubs take shape.

Assessment

At the beginning of the 2021-22 school year, all Sioux Center Middle School students will complete the connectedness survey in Appendix A. The data will be tracked on a Microsoft Excel sheet to share student data with each grade level teacher, the school counselors, and administrators. Students will complete this survey at the end of the first semester and at the end of the school year. Each student will have a student profile kept confidential with the counselors to track any changes from the survey.

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Taking mandatory COVID-19 quarantines into account, data will be collected on student attendance from the 2021-22 school year during the implementation of the Genius Hour clubs. The data will consider the attendance of students in grades 6th-8th grade at Sioux Center Middle School, who participated in the Genius Hour clubs. Utilizing the school's attendance system, Infinite Campus, attendance will be broken down by quarters to compare each student to the previous school year. Changes in attendance, both positive and negative trends, will be added to the student's confidential profile to track how participation in clubs impacts a student's attendance at school.

In the fall of 2021, students will complete the state-standardized MAPS (Measure of Academic Progress) test. Results of these tests are kept in a student profile and held on the Summit Learning platform. The platform tracks student growth and academic progress throughout the student's middle school years. Each student will complete the MAPS assessment in the spring and in the fall of every school year. Each student will have a profile of their connectedness survey, school year attendance, and MAPS assessment scores. The middle school student's profile data will be compiled and charted using Excel spreadsheets and growth by May of 2022. The data will be analyzed for improvements and changes as the school continues to use the plan in future years. Trends in the student data will be identified to identify the effects of the Genius Hour implementation plan.

Conclusion

Aiming to achieve the purpose of this school improvement plan, creating in-school Genius Hour clubs, SCMS has a chance to be at the forefront of implementing Genius Hour and passion clubs. As education continues to change, SCMS is finding itself in a place where it can implement new parts to the schedule. Implementing opportunities for students to seek out their

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passions, ask questions, discover answers, and find motivation for school will all play a role in a successful implementation of this plan.

With the problem at SCMS being a lack of choice in the student's middle school experience, this school improvement plan aims to give students a voice. The success of the implementation plan of Genius Hour will be determined if the end of the school year student survey data, attendance, and MAP assessment scores indicate a growth or increase that aligns to the research on school connectedness. The plan will be evaluated at the end of every year from a student, teacher, and administrative level. Everything the school does will be done through aligning goals of the district, wishes of the students, and be backed by years of research.

Appendices

Appendix A: Connectedness Survey

How many sports do you participate in at Sioux Center Middle School?

0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5+

How many music activities are you in at Sioux Center?

0, 1, 2, 3, 4+

How connected do you feel to people in your grade?

- 0 - Not connected at all
- 1 - I know a couple people. I don't feel they know me.
- 2 - I have 1 or 2 good friends. They know a lot about me.
- 3 - I have many friends that know me or about me.
- 4 - Connected to a strong group of friends.
- 5 - Very strong connection to friends and other groups.

How connected are you to your teachers?

- 0 - Not connected at all
- 1 - I know a couple teachers. They don't know me.
- 2 - I have a relationship with 1-2 teachers. They know a lot about me.
- 3 - I have many teachers who know me well.
- 4 - Connected to a number of teachers.
- 5 - Very strong connection to most/all teachers

How connected are you to other adults at school? (Paras, cooks, secretaries, counselors)

- 0 - Not connected at all
- 1 - I know a couple "other" adults. They don't know me.
- 2 - I have a relationship with 1-2 adults. They know a lot about me.
- 3 - I have many adults who know me.
- 4 - Connected to a number of adults.
- 5 - Very strong connection to adults at school.

How connected are you students not in your grade?

- 0 - Not connected at all
- 1 - I know a couple people. I don't feel they know me.
- 2 - I have 1 or 2 good friends. They know a lot about me.
- 3 - I have many friends that know me or about me.
- 4 - Connected to a strong group of friends.

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5 - Very strong connection to friends and other groups.

How do you feel about coming to school?

- 0 - I cannot stand coming to school
- 1 - There's a lot of things I'd rather do
- 2 - I come from 8:10 - 3:20 and it's okay
- 3 - I see the value in school and enjoy coming
- 4 - I really love school. It's great!

What motivates you to succeed?

Sports/Music, My Parents/Family, Myself, Grades, Not motivated

How would you describe yourself?

Introverted, Extroverted, In the middle

What is currently missing from Sioux Center Middle School?

(Short answer)

Appendix B: Implementation Schedule

Week	Completed on this day
1 – August 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students complete survey answering the question “which passion clubs are most interesting to you”. Must answer and rank at least three choices.
2 – September 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers send invitations to the students who were place into their club groups - Students attend first meeting during Genius Hour
3 – September 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and students work together to develop their end goal for the clubs. The clubs will end on Wednesday, April 27
4 – September 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers create a survey questionnaire for students who wish to be club leaders within their respected clubs - Students begin naming the group and researching other Genius Hour projects that have been completed in schools similar to Sioux Center Middle School
5 – September 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers announce group leaders and find an adult who can facilitate during the professional development period after school - Students begin to take roles within the club that they’re assigned to develop their own connected piece of the club
6 – September 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers create lists of responsibilities for each student. First major responsibility is finding a mentor who is in a business that is similar to their clubs or groups - Students spend Genius Hour researching possible mentors
7 – October 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During Genius Hour students make phone calls or Google Meet with people in the industry or people known to have similar interests to their clubs - Teachers help to make the connections, but allow students to lead all phone calls and Google Meet conversations

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