



EAST HAMPTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

East Hampton, Connecticut

Superintendent's Update

Week of September 18, 2017



The vision of the East Hampton Public Schools: Preparing and inspiring our students to be innovative, responsible, contributing members of an ever-changing global society.

For every minute you are angry you lose sixty seconds of happiness.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

This week in our Schools

- **Monday, September 18 – Board of Education meeting in the East Hampton High School T-Bell.** Please consider attending the Board meetings and learning everything there is to know about your schools and how the Board of Education operates! Consider **livestreaming** our meeting from the comfort of your home computer if you cannot attend. You can view this meeting and past meetings at: <http://www.easthamptonps.org/2017-2018-boe-meetings>. Scroll down the page and click on “**VIDEO**” of the date you wish to view.



The Board of Education meeting will feature a presentation by the architect for the new Municipal Building/Town Hall slated to house town offices, the Board of Education central offices, and the police department. The Building Committee will be on hand to answer questions by the Board and the Public.

- **Tuesday, September 19 – Memorial School Open House for Pre K, Kindergarten, and Grade 1, 6:30 PM.**
- **Wednesday, September 20 – **TWO HOUR DELAYED START – East Hampton High School ONLY.**** The high school will have a two-hour delayed opening to allow teachers and staff members time to complete the NEASC Self-Study. **Please note:** [Buses will run at the regular time.](#) Students will be given the option of driving themselves to school two hours later or having parents drop them off two hours later. For those students who cannot get a ride to school later, there will be supervision in the library or the cafeteria.
- **Wednesday, September 20 – **Emergency CODE RED – LOCKDOWN TRAINING** for East Hampton School Employees on in the High School T-Bell at 2:45 PM and 3:45 PM.** This training is for all new teachers, staff, and volunteers and any others interested in a refresher. The training is 45-minutes and there are two sessions to accommodate High School/Middle School and Center School/Memorial School.



- **Wednesday, September – Meeting for EHHS Seniors attending the Washington, DC trip and their parents in the High School Auditorium, 6:30 PM.** All students attending this year's annual trip to DC should be in attendance with a parent.



Thursday, September 21 – Superintendent's Advisory Council at 94 Main Street, 9:00 AM. All parents and community members welcome to attend any and all meetings. The September meeting will feature a conversation on District Initiatives for 2017-18 with Mary Clark, the new Director of Curriculum and Instruction. In addition, the Town of East Hampton's Prevention Coordinator, James Olsen will be present to review a survey of our high school students and “asset” building as the strongest means of prevention.

- **Thursday, September 21 – Grade 4 Reading Celebration at the Center School.**
- **Thursday, September 21 – Memorial School Open House for Grade 2 and Grade 3, 6:30 PM.**
- **Friday, September 22 – First Day of Autumn.** It's time for the change of seasons!
- **Friday, September 22 – “OPT OUT” Requests for School Directories due.**
- **Friday, September 22 – Grade 5 Reading Celebration at the Center School.**
- **Friday, September 22 – The annual PTO Jog-a-thon at the Memorial School.**
- **Friday, September 22 – PANTHER FEST at the East Hampton Middle School.** One of the highlights of the fall feature Middle School Cross Country and Soccer teams as well as the PTO concession stand and souvenir shirts/sweatshirts.

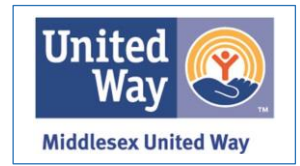


September / October Calendar

Get your event on this calendar!
Send additional events and dates to
psmith@easthamptonct.org.

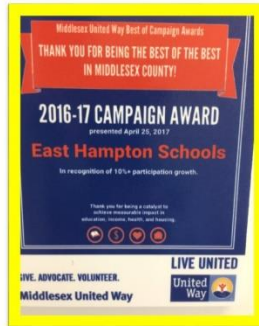
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	<p>Policy Subcommittee High School, 5:30 PM</p> <p>Board of Education Meeting - EHHS T-Bell, 6:30 PM</p> <p>Info on new Town Hall</p>	<p>Memorial PK, K, 1 WELCOME BACK OPEN HOUSE 6:30 PM</p>	<p>Delayed Start for High School ONLY TWO HOUR DELAY for NEASC</p> <p>CODE RED/LOCKDOWN TRAINING for Teachers & Staff Members High School T-Bell 2:45 PM & 3:45 PM</p> <p>High School Washington DC Information Meeting 6:30 PM</p>	<p> Superintendent's Advisory Council 94 Main St. 9:00 AM</p> <p>Grade 4 Summer Reading Celebration</p> <p>Memorial 2, 3 WELCOME BACK OPEN HOUSE 6:30 PM</p>	<p>First Day of Autumn </p> <p>Directory OPT-OUT requests due.</p> <p>Memorial School PTO JOG-A-THON</p> <p>Grade 5 Summer Reading Celebration</p> <p>Middle School Pantherfest! 3:00-9:00 PM</p>	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
		<p>High School College Funding / Financial Aid Workshop Junior & Senior Parents High School Auditorium 6:30 PM</p>	<p> East Hampton HS Band at BIG E</p>		<p>Center School JOG-A-THON</p>	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	<p>National STOMP OUT Bullying Day</p> <p>Policy Subcommittee High School, 5:30 PM</p> <p>Board of Education Meeting - EHHS T-Bell, 6:30 PM</p> <p>Friends of Education Night!</p>	<p>High School Music Boosters High School T-Bell 6:30 PM</p>	<p>Elementary PTO Center School 6:00 PM</p>	<p> Kindergarten Ice Cream Social Memorial School Cafe 6:30-7:30 PM</p>	<p> Coffee & Chat With the Superintendent 94 Main St. 7:30-9:00 AM</p> <p>Professional Development No School</p>	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	<p>Columbus Day No School</p> <p>National Fire Prevention Week →</p> <p>National School Lunch Week →</p>		<p>PSAT Day High School Sophomores & Juniors</p> <p>Middle School PTO Middle School Library 6:00 PM</p>			
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	<p>East Hampton Principals Appreciation Day (National Boss's Day)</p> <p>Stand Up for Others Week →</p> <p>National School Bus Safety Week →</p> <p>Policy Subcommittee High School, 5:30 PM</p> <p>Board of Education Meeting - EHHS T-Bell, 6:30 PM</p> <p>Budget Requests Welcome</p>				<p>Project Graduation Fundraiser "Messing with Your Mind" with Chris Mansfield Family-friendly Fundraiser East Hampton High School 7:00 PM Adults \$10 / Students \$5</p>	

Notes



The 2017 United Way campaign is underway!

The employees of the East Hampton Public Schools have a very impressive history of donating to the United Way, a charity that gives right back to our community and local area. We are hoping to continue that tradition of caring by asking once again for our employees to consider a donation to this year’s campaign.



In 2016-17 the School District was recognized by the United Way for its increase in contributions!

Thank you for your tremendous support in the past – and again this year.

Donation forms have been placed in school employee mailboxes!

While there are many calls for help as a result of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, please do not forget about the local needs that are met through our own Middlesex United Way!

Thank you to our school employees for considering a donation to this year’s campaign.

There are two options for donations: (1) a payroll deduction donation or (2) a one-time donation. For those who choose the payroll deduction, there will be 16 payroll deductions starting with the payroll of October 20, 2017, and ending with the payroll of June 1, 2018. Please indicate on the pledge form, the bi-weekly payroll deduction *and* the total dollar amount you wish to contribute for 16 payroll deductions. For those who prefer to make a one-time donation, please check that box on the form, and enclose the cash or check with the form.

Please return the form to a school office or Linda Collins at Central Office. Return the white and yellow copy with your donation. Please keep the pink copy for your charitable donation records. And, a special thanks to our teachers and staff members for your contribution to the United Way.

A special thank you to Linda Collins in the Central Office, who year after year continues to spearhead this important cause. The 2017-18 Middlesex area campaign is being led by Chairperson, Kevin Reich, and we certainly want the hometown to be well represented in the efforts!

REMINDER: School Directories coming – opt out no later than this Friday, September 22.

Directories will be available in early October and we are currently giving families enough time to “opt out” of any portion. For Memorial School and Center School, the directory for the school will be organized by classroom teacher. At the Middle School and High School, the information will be organized by grade level.

Each listing will include the following:

Student Name	Grade	Teacher (PK-5 only)	Parent/Guardian Name(s)	Address	Town	Phone(s)	Parent E-mail(s)
			1	2	3	4	5

Parents may opt to omit information in any of the columns, #1-5 as indicated above. Simply e-mail kcarpenter@easthamptonct.org and indicate which column(s) you would like omitted for your child. You can simply identify them by number.

All opt out requests are due by Friday, September 22, 2017.

We hope you will find this directory information helpful in maintaining a strong connection to each other and our school community.

The Superintendent Advisory Council Meetings begin this week and they are for everyone!

The monthly Superintendent Advisory Council meetings feature an agenda, but also allow for parent questions and concerns. Come and get accurate information – and learn about your school’s programs throughout the year.



2017-18 Superintendent’s Advisory Council Dates		
Thursday	September 21	9:00 AM
Thursday	October 26 (4 th Thursday)	9:00 AM
Thursday	November 16	9:00 AM
Thursday	December 21	9:00 AM
Thursday	January 18	9:00 AM
Thursday	February 15	9:00 AM
Thursday	March 15	9:00 AM
Thursday	April 12 (2 nd Thursday)	9:00 AM
Thursday	May 17	9:00 AM

The annual Pantherfest is Friday, September 22.

This Friday is the annual Panther Fall Sports Fest at the Middle School. (Rain date is Monday, September 25.) Join the middle School Community, the Cross Country Teams, and the Soccer Teams for a fun and very popular regional sporting event. Enjoy the PTO concession stand treats and cheer on our middle school athletes!

Boys and Girls Cross Country Teams from East Hampton, Bolton, Lebanon, Coventry, Thomas Edison and Washington (Meriden) Portland, Mansfield, St. Timothy’s, and Hale Ray will be racing the 2.1 mile course.

Boys and Girls Soccer Teams from East Hampton, Lebanon, Coventry, and Bolton will be competing in 25-minute games.

A reminder for “Remind!”

The Superintendent of Schools will be sending out text messages and other information using **Remind**. This is the fastest way to get information about school closings and other emergency notifications. *Remind* is a one-way text messaging and email system. With *Remind*, all personal information remains completely confidential. If you would like text message reminders about East Hampton Public Schools events directly from the Superintendent of Schools (including snow cancellations) please join either one of two ways:

1. Visit <https://www.remind.com/join/easthampto> and simply enter your mobile phone number.
2. Text “@easthampto” to 81010.
3. You can opt-out of messages at any time by replying, ‘unsubscribe@eastmapto’.

Or, to receive messages via email, send a (blank) email to easthampto@mail.remind.com. To unsubscribe, reply with 'unsubscribe' in the subject line.

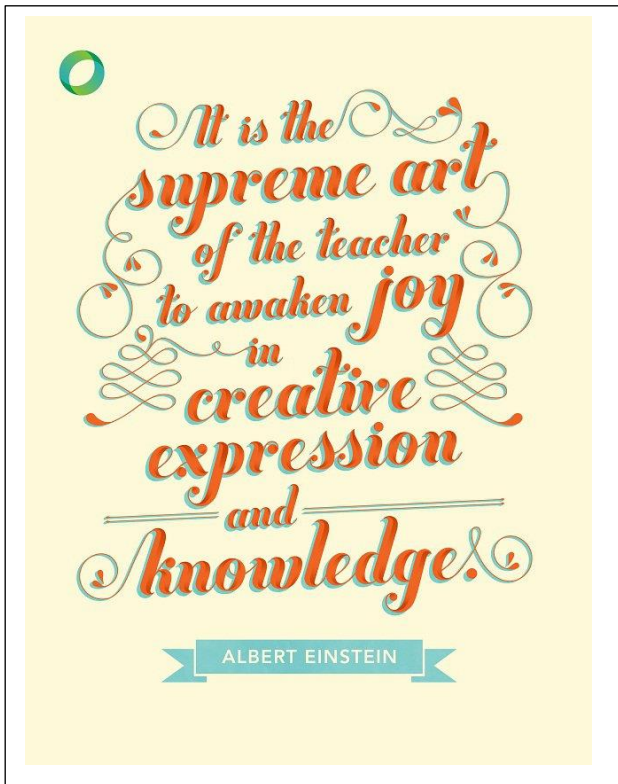


Please note that this APP will only be used by the Superintendent of Schools and information is not shared with any other party.

Thoughts



Creativity is not meant to be “part” of the day.



Make no mistake, **creativity** should not be relegated to a particular subject or class, nor should it be considered an add-on activity. Creativity should be entrenched in every moment of the classroom. If creativity is required of children, there is engagement. If creativity is required, there is personalization. If creativity is required, there is active learning. If creativity is required, there is critical thinking.

Why then, do we most often think of creativity being associated with particular subjects like art and music? Why is creativity isolated and considered to be the “fun” part of the day – often done after the “real work” is completed?

Unfortunately, the more teacher-directed a classroom is, the less creativity required by students. Release control of learning to the students and demand that creativity be called upon to solve complex problems, create solutions, or inspire new ideas.

Don't miss the opportunity to “awaken joy” in the classroom!

Creative thinkers invent, innovate, educate, problem solve, inquire, and explore. – Allie Schaital

How to Create Creative Kids By Catherine Newman in [Parents](#) (Click for article online)

We gathered five experts in creative thinking (they're all parents, too!) to share their best ideas and activities for sparking your child's imagination.

If the word creativity makes you think only of painting clouds, daydreaming, or writing experimental poetry, think again. **"Creativity is one of the most important economic resources of the twenty-first century,"** argues Gary Gute, associate professor of family studies at the University of Northern Iowa, and director of the Creative Life Research Center there. **"The call from business, industry, and education is for people to think more creatively, not only to solve problems but also to identify problems that need to be solved.** A lot of people have this notion that creativity is just a frill: puppet shows and finger paints. Not that there's anything wrong with that, but it's much bigger." Plus, according to James C. Kaufman, professor of educational psychology at the University of Connecticut, **"Creative people are more likely to start their own companies, to be happy in their jobs, to be successful in business."** And if that's not enough, they also tend to be, says Kaufman, "resilient, happier, in better moods. It's such a positive thing."

Luckily, cultivating creativity in our kids can be easy. It's a matter of what Joshua Glenn, coauthor of *Unbored: The Essential Field Guide to Serious Fun*, describes as a kind of parental one-two: **present kids with an opportunity, then get out of their way.** Because, in its broadest sense, **creativity is fostered by what kids naturally do anyway: ask questions, explore, invent, daydream, improvise, make believe, make music, and even (or especially) make mistakes.** "As long as you're encouraging them to do something creative, encouraging the process rather than just the final product, it's kind of hard to go wrong," Kaufman explains.

On the following pages, we introduce you to a handful of our favorite creative people. Mind you, these aren't reclusive artists retreating to a clean studio every day; they're in the trenches with us, with children of their own, figuring out what nurtures and excites kids (and, sure, also gives us parents half an hour to get dinner on the table). We hope you find their ideas, tips, and projects as inspiring as we do. After all, as Gute says, **"Creativity is what brings meaning and joy to life."** He laughs. "I mean, not the only thing! But it's a big one."

Turn Errors Into Opportunities

Rachelle Doorley is the creator of Tinkerlab.com, a website of art and science activities for kids.

Her Philosophy:

"The only way to be successful is to make mistakes. I believe in the expression 'fail forward,' which means that success comes from a willingness to view failures as opportunities to grow--that creative risk-taking is more important than doing nothing at all."

Her Creative Tips:

1. Call projects invitations and simply arrange a few different materials, such as colored tape, markers, and paper, in an inviting way on a cleared-off table. Kids will use them however they want.
2. A designated self-serve, hands-on area, offering easy access to paper and pens, scissors and tape, glue and string, lets kids start creating instantly, without having to ask an adult for help.
3. Rachelle doesn't make erasers readily available in her house. If one of her kids is drawing something and makes a mistake, Rachelle says, "Would you like another piece of paper, or do you want to turn it into something else?"

Inspiring Ideas:

Start with an under-the-bed-style plastic storage bin (Rachelle's is 28 by 17 by 6 inches) with a clear, latching lid. Then use it for one of these:

- **Concoction Lab:** Assemble supplies and ingredients in the bin and let your child mix, measure, and discover to her heart's content. Rachelle puts in baking soda, flour, white rice, water, vinegar, salt, ice, food coloring, and expired spices, along with funnels, corked bottles, bowls, eye droppers, and spoons. In different seasons, you can add leaves, flower petals, and snow--or whatever your kids think of. "They'll ask, 'Can we use your coffee grounds?' And I'll say, 'Sure! And maybe I can interest you in some eggshells and apple cores?'"
- **DIY Light Box:** Line the box lid with white tissue paper or waxed paper, using clear tape to secure it. Place a string of holiday lights in your box with the cord dangling out so that you can plug it in. Do what Rachelle calls seeding the project by setting a few bowls of transparent materials (beads, colored cellophane, glass pebbles) nearby, then invite your child to play. The glowing materials can be arranged to make inspiring collages.

Invent Fun

Joshua Glenn coauthored *Unbored: The Essential Field Guide to Serious Fun* with Elizabeth Foy Larsen.

His Philosophy:

"You don't want to be the over-involved parent on the one hand or the slacker parent on the other. Creativity is what happens when preparation meets opportunity. If you're a little helicopter-y and do the prep work but then leave your kids alone, creativity will happen."

His Creative Tips:

1. Set it up. Keep a mental list of things the kids need for their pursuits. Have we got enough paper? Are there batteries in the flashlight? Are the bike tires pumped up? Monitor those needs--but that's all you have to do. "**The kids will gravitate toward the things you've prepared,**" says Joshua.
2. Put limits on TV and screen time to **force kids into the opportunity zone**. Joshua doesn't ban his kids from having games on their iPad, but he makes them ask him--every time--if they can play. The point is to be thoughtful about it, so they're using the tool instead of the tool using them.
3. **Kick the older kids outside.** Joshua tells his 13-year-old and 15-year-old, "Get on your bikes and ride around the neighborhood and don't come back for an hour." Or "Here's ten bucks, walk into town with your friends and get yourselves a slice of pizza." The kids may moan and groan, but they're always very happy the second they're out the door, he says.

Inspiring Idea: Game Hacking

Joshua's family plays a lot of board games, but they refuse to be constrained by the rules. Or the board. Or the pieces included. "You can buy old board games and draw on them, make new rules, revamp the old," he says. Consider adding Sorry! pieces to Candy Land, or assigning special powers to character cards such as Queen Frostine and Gramma Nut. Make a Risk-Monopoly mash-up where you can use your real-estate earnings to fund your armies. Or simply make up games from scratch: bring plastic figures to the beach and play on squares drawn in the sand, adding dice and rules. Start

with a game you have or know, and identify the problem. What parts of it are boring, and why? If it's good, what could make it even better? What if you added dice or other game pieces? What if you dealt the cards out instead of drawing them? Examples:

- Chinese Checkers. Invent other legal marble moves.
- Candy Land. Deal out the cards and add a trading element--or, to hack this preschool game for older kids, include a marauding horde of plastic zombies.
- Yahtzee. If you don't use all three rolls, take a penny for each forsaken roll and redeem them for extra rolls during another turn.

Explore Your World

Keri Smith is the author of *The Pocket Scavenger*, *Wreck This Journal*, and ten other books.

Her Philosophy: "Small children are naturally creative. It's all there, there's no need to try and find it!"

Her Creative Tips:

1. Kids are interested in how things work. Assemble a little **inventor's kit** with broken devices (an old calculator, say) for kids to take apart and try to put back together.
2. Dress the part. One of Keri's favorite things is simply putting on some kind of **costume or uniform**. Take a cap and say, "Let's put on our scavenger hat!" Or how about an inventor's vest? It transforms the experience.
3. Get excited. Try to incorporate your interests. As Keri says, "Kids really respond to your passion. If you get excited about something, they get excited, too, and that's invaluable."

Inspiring Idea: Anywhere Scavenger Hunt "We approach life as a scavenger hunt," Keri says. "We go out and see what we can find. But it's also about developing a story about each object, whether it's real or imaginary. Sometimes scavenging will turn into a mystery: where did that come from and who left it here and why? This week we discovered a bunch of holes in the ground, and we created fantastic stories to explain them."

- Go for a walk around your neighborhood. Find five trees. Give each of them a name. (Keri's son Tilden named some trees Henry, Fergus, Moses, and the Secret Pine, which is hidden, of course.)
- Collect three of the smallest things you can find.
- Find something that is shaped like an animal.
- Find a smell you've never smelled before (a flower, a spice).
- Find four things that are in the shape of a circle.

Write About Anything

Karen Benke is the creator of *Rip the Page!* and *Leap Write In!*

Her Philosophy:

"I see that as kids get older, they stop trusting the dreaming, doodling part of their brain and start looking for the 'right' answer. It takes a lot of courage to look at the world and experience things with our own eyes and ears and tastebuds and fingertips and not just go along with the crowd."

Inspiring Ideas:

Snatched From the Radio:

Turn up the radio volume for a couple of seconds, then down again. Write down the words you hear. Whatever you snatch, that's what you have to work with. "Like skeletons on fire we ..." Write a story from those words. Or if you're in a group, pass the phrase around and everyone can add a sentence or two.

Haiku Hike

Go out in the dark with a headlamp and a notebook and look for haiku in the garden--or on your street, in your backyard. Haiku is simply a moment observed, in three short lines (for this activity, there's no need to count syllables). Look, and listen, for something happening right now and just describe this one moment. An example: "My cat at the window/ watches clouds/move over the roof."

Seven-Line Chain of Time

Cover a table with butcher paper. Think of seven words--any words--and write them on the table, spacing them however you like. Write a story or poem to connect them.

Make Art

Jean Van't Hul is the creator of the book and website *The Artful Parent*.

Her Philosophy:

"We need outside-the-box thinking. If children are allowed, even encouraged, to experiment (and to fail), they are more likely to grow creatively. **If they hear that there is just one right way to do something, they're less likely to try other things.**"

Her Creative Tips:

1. Don't be afraid to make a mess. You can do really messy projects outside or confine them to the kitchen, garage, or even the bathtub. Jean thinks, "OK, my house is going to be a bit of a mess for the next ten years," and tries not to worry. "I just won't get a white couch!"
2. Have patience for children's slower pace. Give them the chance to appreciate the magical in the everyday: Rocks! Seashells! Ladybugs!
3. Upcycle art. "I frame our kids' art and store some of it in bins, but we really can't keep it all," Jean says. She uses paintings as wrapping paper, or she and her kids cut them up into banners, buntings, cards, and decorations. Repurposing art keeps kids focused on the process of making it, rather than on the idea of keeping it forever.

Inspiring Ideas:

Body Tracing and Painting

This open-ended project allows kids to reimagine their identity. They can embellish their outlines with fanciful clothing, draw imaginary internal-organ systems, or capture their metamorphosis into wild creatures. Simply trace around your child on a big piece of butcher paper you've taped to the floor, then give her oil pastels, paints, and whatever else she needs to re-create herself.

Paint Without a Brush

Make a painting using anything but a brush, such as plastic dinosaur feet, toy tractors, spoons, and pinecones. Or try printing with things like sponges, fruits, and vegetables.

30 DAYS OF MIND-EXPANDING FUN

These quick activities will get your children thinking outside the box. Try one a day for an inspiring month!

1. See what you can build with toothpicks and mini marshmallows.
2. Write a sentence using only words that begin with a chosen letter.
3. Experiment with herbs and spices to create a new flavor to sprinkle on popcorn.
4. Write your own lyrics to simple melodies, such as "The Alphabet Song."
5. Make an aluminum-foil boat. How much can it hold and still float?
6. Paint a still life with your nondominant hand.
7. Make something in 5 minutes from five pipe cleaners.
8. On a pad of sticky notes, draw a flip book of a popping balloon.
9. Write a poem about the smell of vanilla.
10. Create a new dance move, name it, and teach it to a friend.
11. Make a magic wand by wrapping a stick with yarn and tape.
12. Draw your house as it would look if you were floating in the air 100 feet above it.
13. Invent a game you play with checkers but without the board.
14. Design the wrapper and write a jingle for an imaginary candy bar.
15. Trace your feet on cardboard and try making wearable slippers.
16. Write a letter to your pet, then write its response.
17. Collage a monster from old magazine pages, then come up with a story about her.
18. Craft a tiny picture by gluing dry rice to card stock.
19. Create a giant picture by placing lines of yarn on a rug.
20. Draw up plans for a flying car.
21. Tap your pots and pans with a chopstick; assemble the best ones into a drum set.
22. Write a plot description for a sequel to your favorite movie.
23. Draw a person using only triangles, circles, and squares.
24. Try lacing your shoes in a new, unique way.



25. Choose a spice and stir a dash into a spoonful of vanilla ice cream; taste.
26. Make space goggles using an egg carton.
27. Draw a still life of your three favorite possessions.
28. Trace your hand. How many things (besides a turkey) can the shape become?
29. Come up with a new jump rope rhyme.
30. Draw the place you think creativity comes from.

How Schools Can Stop Killing Creativity BY KELLY GALLAGHER-MACKAY AND NANCY STEINHAUER in [The Walrus](#) (Click for article online)

With the world in crisis, it's more urgent than ever for students to develop original thinking

At Douglas Park Elementary School in Regina, Saskatchewan, twelve-year-old Chloe wanted to learn about her ancestors.

She went online to find a genealogy website, but ran into various difficulties—some cost money, and others didn't have the answers she sought. Undeterred, she tried a different strategy. She went to her grandparents' house to interview them about their family history, plotting their memories into a family tree of her own crafting.

In the very same Grade 7 class, Isaac—a boy who has always loved video games—decided to build one of his own with a friend. He already knew a bit of coding, but creating a video game would require him to master a new, more complex program. By the end of the term, he had developed a chase game where his characters jumped and leaped across a background of houses, trees, and a terrain that shifted as they moved.

Chloe and Isaac were self-taught, working on projects they themselves dreamed up. Behind their creative exploration was a teacher, Aaron Warner. Warner has built creativity into his classroom. "Genius Hour" is dedicated time for his students to pursue anything about which they are passionate, learning in their own way. It is loosely based on the model developed at Google, where software engineers were expected to spend up to 20 percent of their paid time working on their own ideas. "Twenty-percent time" projects led to the development of Gmail and AdSense, the advertising software that contributes approximately a quarter of the company's vast revenue. Warner's Genius Hour builds the same principle into the classroom, with students devoting two hours a week to their creative endeavors.

Warner learned about Genius Hour through his online professional learning community, comprised of educators from across the country and as far away as Australia. Every summer, Warner and his group read a book and discuss it on Twitter. Their first book was [A.J. Juliani's Innovation and Inquiry in the Classroom](#), which addresses what the media sometimes call a "creativity crisis." It provides practical guidance to teachers trying to implement Genius Hour projects in their classrooms, from harnessing the support of other teachers, parents and students who think "this is awesome," to reassuring those whose position is "this is great, but...", to reaching out to those who think "this is crazy."

As they engaged with the book, the teachers in the online community wrestled with various questions. If they encouraged students to do self-directed work, how would they assess it? Should students get a mark for following their passions? If they did not, how would they as teachers communicate students' learning to their school leadership and to parents? The group discussed highlighting some of the skills built into, and exercised through, creative endeavours, like non-fiction writing and research skills, to demonstrate what their students were learning. As their summer of discussion came to a close, a group of teachers, including Warner, committed to adopting Genius Hour.

When he brought Genius Hour into the classroom, Warner had imagined that "magic would take place," but when he invited students to do whatever they wanted, telling them "the sky's the limit," their first question was: "What do you want me to do?" Often, contemporary teaching emphasizes clear, measureable outcomes, detailed rubrics and step-by-step directions. The goal may be transparency, to break tasks down and to help students learn to self-assess, but often it can feel like students are being schooled in following instructions. In this context, it is a bit unsettling to be told: "You can do anything you want to."

It was a pretty big hurdle. Warner went back to his Twitter community to ask for examples of what was happening in their classrooms. A high school science teacher shared a list of Genius Hour projects from his class that included understanding the circulatory system of a horse, how babies form inside the belly, how to build a small engine, how brain cancer spreads, how to improve hand-eye coordination, and what causes us to forget, as well as contemplating whether Big Foot exists (which included studying the history of the myth). That teacher confessed that not all of the ideas were particularly good

ones, but he thought that having students learn that fact for themselves—experience failure and move on—was an important part of the hour.

The kids in Warner's class came up with their own ideas—although at first they were not particularly ambitious. One student wanted to learn to serve a volleyball. Another wanted to learn how to make Rice Krispies squares. But with practice and encouragement over the course of the year, the kids started to think bigger. Some of the students were most enthusiastic about what they could teach each other, and how to make learning exciting. One student borrowed the school board's projection tent to use as a mini-planetarium in order to teach her classmates about black holes.

The more they discovered their own potential, the more excited the students grew. And in year two, with a new group of students who had heard about the previous year's class and had had a chance to wrap their heads around the idea, the start-up period was much shorter. It wasn't just the kids who were paying attention. The other Grade 7/8 teacher incorporated Genius Hour into her classroom, and then the Grade 6/7 teachers tasked their students with developing self-directed "action plans" as a part of their health curriculum. Warner started working with teachers across the school division through a twice-yearly professional development "EdCamp," where he supports them in bringing Genius Hour into their schools.

There is a sense of urgency around Warner's innovative class-room projects. Genius Hour exercises skills often underused and undervalued in our education system: it allows students to stretch their imaginations, follow their own whims and curiosities, and define their own measures of achievement. It helps kids find different ways to succeed at an age when many are struggling with what success means. Genius Hour provides them with an opportunity to achieve outside the traditional borders of academia, and can actually bolster their confidence and engagement in the classroom.

The other reason Warner is committed to making space for creativity in the classroom is related to the larger world. Creativity is a vital life skill. It doesn't just enrich day-to-day life; it is key to job-readiness in the broadest sense. As Warner notes, "Sixty percent of the jobs of the future haven't been invented yet."

This insight echoes Sir Ken Robinson's argument, in the most-watched ted Talk of all time, titled "Do Schools Kill Creativity?". Robinson made the case that creativity is central to developing education that will "take us into a future we can't grasp." Robinson believes that we must take seriously the fact that we cannot know what the world will look like. He is an advocate for school systems where creativity is considered as important as literacy and afforded the same status. There is an urgent need for original thinking to solve current and future problems—and original work will not happen unless children are prepared both to take risks and to put the tremendous talents with which they are born to use.

The standard definition of creativity is the generation of novel ideas or products. Creativity has also been defined as openness to exploration and as divergent thinking, which is the ability to generate numerous, diverse options or solutions. Creativity exists across traditional academic disciplines. While you can easily identify it in the fine arts, creativity is also a key aspect of domains as wide-ranging as business strategy, mathematical theory, and cooking.

Creativity is recognized as a critical "twenty-first century skill" by business groups, arts groups and international organizations like unesco and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (oecd). It is seen as essential to a rich and satisfying life, to the generation of new art and useful technologies, and to the solution of the world's problems. Exercising creativity can also help to better prepare us emotionally for the unpredictable—training us to innovate and problem-solve on the fly, and strengthening our ability to take calculated risks.

Before becoming an international intellectual celebrity, Sir Ken Robinson chaired a national committee tasked with reviewing creativity and culture in British education. The resulting report, *All Our Futures*, wrestled with the challenges of trying to institutionalize creativity in the school system. Part of the challenge, the committee acknowledged, was achieving widespread recognition of creativity's importance—another was determining how to actively change practices in schools. In an education environment dominated by test scores, boosting the status of creativity as one of schools' core activities means working hard to challenge the primacy of measurable outcomes in the education system.

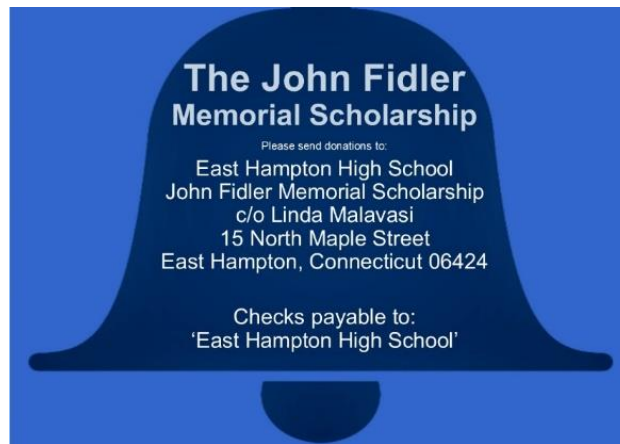
This process is not simple—it requires, for example, an approach to assessment that encourages students to make mistakes. You can't "teach" creativity standing in front of a classroom, and "judging" a creative process or output is more

complicated than marking a test. And there are differences in how people perceive creativity. To be creative, does something have to be completely original? In order to teach creativity, must schools mandate that their students produce a breakthrough in existing knowledge, or is a more permissive definition of creativity possible?

James Kaufman and Ronald Beghetto, cognitive psychologists who work at the University of Connecticut, are best known for developing a scale for creative acts, and in 2010 they co-edited [Nurturing Creativity in the Classroom](#). Kaufman has been a leader in the study of creativity as a core aspect of psychology, and Beghetto has specialized in studying creativity in the classroom.

Their scale begins with what they call “mini-c creativity”: essentially, the pursuit of a creative project for personal enrichment. One step up is “little-c creativity,” which involves some mastery of a creative process. “Pro-c creativity” refers to creativity conducted on a professional level: graphic design; architecture; professional dancing, writing, or making a living as a musician. “Big-c creativity” is the stuff of legends: the discovery of the double helix, or the musical legacies of Mozart and the Beatles. Right now, schools mostly work in the range of mini-c and little-c creativity, although they can be given the tools to lay the groundwork for pro-c and even perhaps big-c creativity.

[Read the remainder of the article online by clicking here.](#)



How many times have you said something kind this year?



Paul K. Smith

