

Workplace Readiness Skills for the Commonwealth

The Effective Use of Time

Objective: Demonstrate the ability to manage time effectively.

Materials:

The following worksheets for each student, "Doing First Things First" and "Time Management Matrix," may be accessed at

- http://www.cteresource.org/attachments/atb/aai/doing_first.pdf (PDF) or
- http://www.cteresource.org/attachments/atb/aai/doing_first.doc (Word)

Give each team an extra copy of "Time Management Matrix" for recording purposes.

Notes to the Teacher

1. Introduce the objective and distribute the worksheets "Doing First Things First" and "Time Management Matrix." You might begin the class by asking students to write down what comes to their minds when they hear the word "time." Have students form teams, and ask them to share their thoughts with team members.
2. Discuss the "Four Categories of Time Usage." State that Quadrant I should include things that call for urgent action such as a dead battery in your car; a power outage at 6:50 a.m. when you are blow-drying your hair (you will be late for work); or a major assignment due tomorrow and you have barely started to work on it. Ask students to identify other things that would be classified as urgent.
3. Give examples of "urgent" situations that cannot be avoided, such as a power outage, a flat tire, or an accident. In many cases, planning can prevent urgent situations from developing. For example, the task of working on a writing project for English that is due by the end of the week would be placed in Quadrant II, Important and Not Urgent. This important quadrant is the preventive maintenance, research and development, advance planning, and learning quadrant. The more attention we give to Quadrant II, the fewer urgent situations we will have.
4. Direct the students' attention to the list of activities. Encourage them to add others that are relevant to them under item 11 (Other). Ask them then to take each of the tasks and list it in a quadrant.
5. Organize students in teams to discuss the first 10 items and agree on where they should be placed in the matrix. Give each team an extra matrix to record team decisions.
6. Option: Give each team a transparency of the matrix and a transparency pen, or arrange for some other visual representation.
7. Ask each team to select a spokesperson to report results.
8. Ask questions that challenge their choices on some items such as 2, 6, and 7: "What are the consequences over time of sleep loss, inadequate nutrition, and lack of exercising?" [low energy, tension, tiredness, lack of patience, bad moods]. Ask students what the consequences are of not doing items 4, 9, and 10 (consequences for themselves and for one of the most important teams they'll ever be a member of---their family team).

9. Remind students that self care is a "first thing"; i.e., we must take good care of ourselves so that we can be at our best when emergencies come along. Therefore, items 2, 6, and 7 would go into Quadrant II. The same for items 4, 9, and 10.
10. Cite that there is a limited amount of time, energy, and resources to put into life. Your goals and priorities determine how you spend your time. Some key questions to consider are: Which ones are most important? Which ones enable me to accomplish other ones? Which ones help me feel better about myself, about life, and about my direction in life?
11. Ask the team members to take another look at their team's choices to see what they might place in another quadrant.

Variations/Extensions

1. Access the Internet site, <http://www.keirsey.com/>. The Keirsey Temperament Sorter is an online personality instrument that permits students to assess their preferences on four dimensions---data collection, decision-making, orientation to life, and use of time. It helps clarify our own preferences and those preferences different from ours.
2. Ask students to keep a daily log for a period of one or two weeks to record activities and use of time after school. Have them bring in their log for feedback from the class. Develop, as a class, ideas for more effective use of time. Have students work in pairs to share information and ideas.

Note: Incorporate data on wellness and performance into this topic. The National Sleep Foundation (<http://www.sleepfoundation.org/>), for example, gives statistics on how sleep deprivation influences personal performance, including outlook on life, mood swings, and activities such as operating a vehicle while drowsy.