Lesson Plan

Demonstrating Professionalism  
Understanding Dress Codes

Objective: Students will explore sample school and professional dress codes, and the rationale behind them.

Workplace Readiness Skill: **Demonstrate professionalism.**

*Demonstration includes*

* *defining* ***professionalism***
* *practicing punctuality and attendance*
* *adhering to work-schedule expectations*
* *exercising etiquette (e.g., language, manners, and behaviors suitable for the workplace and online; appropriate verbal and nonverbal communication)*
* *exhibiting professional self-representation (e.g., using a firm handshake, introducing oneself, making eye contact)*
* *maintaining professional appearance (e.g., maintaining personal hygiene, adhering to a dress code).*

Correlations to Other Workplace Readiness Skills:

* Demonstrate work ethic.
* Demonstrate customer service skills.
* Demonstrate big-picture thinking.
* Demonstrate career- and life-management skills.

Correlations to the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL):

English: 6.2, 6.6, 6.7, 7.1, 7.2, 7.6, 7.7, 8.2, 8.6, 8.7, 9.1, 9.5, 9.6, 10.1, 10.5, 10.6, 11.1, 11.5, 12.5

History and Social Science: CE.1, CE.4, CE.14, GOVT.1, GOVT.16

Instructional Steps:

1. ***Introduce the lesson by asking students for their opinions about the school’s dress code (if the code is available online, you may choose to project it in the classroom to spur discussion).*** Likely, students will have definite opinions about the policy, some of which may not be positive. Using the issue as a jumping-off point, ask students, “Why do you think an organization such as a school has a dress code in the first place?” Encourage students to consider the reasoning behind the school’s dress code and to predict the consequences of a school without guidelines for student and teacher dress.
2. ***Explain that, today, the class is going to explore dress codes in the workplace and the rationale behind them.*** Ask students to watch the following video (length is just 1:19) by the British organization, ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service), entitled [“What should I wear at work?”](https://youtu.be/HnRs5TEUj3Q) (<https://youtu.be/HnRs5TEUj3Q>).
3. ***Ask students to answer the following questions, based upon the video:***

*What are some reasons why employers want workers to dress a certain way when they are at work? Give four reasons from the video.* (Answer: an employer may want to convey a corporate or professional image; an employer may require a uniform; an employer may set standards based on health and hygiene [e.g., employees must wear a hair net while working around food]; an employer may be adhering to safety standards [e.g., no loose clothing around industrial machinery])

*How do workers know what they should wear when they come to work?* (Answer: the company dress code policy)

*What are some examples of situations where accommodations must be made regarding employee dress?* (Answer: religious dress; employees with disabilities)

1. ***Explore a sample company dress code.*** Individually or in pairs/groups, ask students to actively read and highlight important points on Teacher Resource #1: Sample Dress Code and answer the questions on Handout #1: Understanding Dress Codes. As a class, discuss the rationale behind the dress code, as well as student responses. Ask, “Ultimately, dress codes are meant to protect both the organization and its employees. In what ways does a dress code accomplish this?”

Formative Assessment**:**

* Assess student understanding as demonstrated in the class and small group discussions.
* Evaluate student understanding of concepts within the lesson as demonstrated by responses to Handout #1: Understanding Dress Codes.

Options for Adaptation/Differentiation:

* To complete this activity in a shorter amount of time, complete Handout #1: Understanding Dress Codes, as a whole class. Teacher Resource #1: Sample Dress Code can be read aloud to students who struggle with reading skills.
* To extend this activity and provide further enrichment, ask students to create a bulletin board entitled “Tips for Dressing Professionally.”

Suggestions for Follow-up:

* Invite a manager or a human resources professional from business and industry to discuss the importance of professional dress in the workplace.
* Ask students to reflect in writing on the activity by answering the following essay questions:

*Why might an auto repair shop have policies regarding jewelry, hair length, and footwear? Explain.*

*What industries’ dress codes are impacted by laws governing the health and hygiene of employees? Why do you think these laws exist?*

*How does the clothing worn by employees impact the culture of a workplace? Explain.*