Lesson Plan

Demonstrating Professionalism
Approaching a Job Interview

Objective: Students will act out interview scenarios demonstrating positive and not-so-positive ways to represent themselves and explore the importance of making good first impressions. Students will identify positive behaviors associated with professionalism and plan for ways to approach a potential employer.

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.RV, 6.RL, 6.RI, 6.LU, 6.C, 7.RV, 7.RL, 7.RI, 7.LU, 7.C, 8.RV, 8.RI, 8.LU, 8.C, 9.RV, 9.LU, 9.C, 10.RV, 10.LU, 10.C, 11.RV, 11.LU, 11.C, 12.RV, 12.LU, 12.C
- History and Social Sciences: CE.8,CE.14

Instructional Steps:

1. ***Introduce the lesson by explaining to students that many times, an employer will decide within the first 30 seconds of meeting an applicant whether that person is right for a job.*** Ask, "Why do you think that first 30 seconds is so important? What can you learn about someone in 30 seconds?" Demonstrate by exiting the room, then entering with behaviors and body language (positive or negative) designed to elicit a response from students. What messages are conveyed through things like body language, eye contact (or lack thereof), attire, and greetings (or lack thereof)? Use Handout #1: First Impressions to brainstorm a list of positive and negative impressions and explain why certain behaviors may be seen as negative.

2. ***Explain that, today, the class is going to act out skits to demonstrate positive and negative interview behaviors.*** Use the interview role play scripts on pages 48-52 of the lesson entitled "Believe It or Not: Your Attitude and Enthusiasm Just Might Get You the Job" from Soft Skills: The Competitive Edge, from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy. Ask student volunteers to play the various roles and use the activity to continue the discussion of positive and negative interview behaviors. What are the takeaways from this activity?

3. ***Reflect in writing.*** Once whole-class and/or small-group discussions have taken place, ask students to reflect in writing on the following prompt:
   We all make assumptions—both positive and negative— about people based upon how they represent themselves. This is true of prospective employers. After participating in the role play activity today, describe three-five things you can do to ensure that you represent yourself in a way that leaves a prospective employer with a positive first impression.

Formative Assessment:

- Assess student understanding as demonstrated in the class and small group discussions, as well as during the role play activity.
- Evaluate student understanding of concepts within the lesson as demonstrated by responses to the journal prompt. Use the Journal Assessment Rubric to evaluate student writing.

Options for Adaptation/Differentiation:

- To complete this activity in a shorter amount of time, use the video from the U.S. Department of Labor entitled "Soft Skills: Enthusiasm and Attitude" in lieu of the student role play activity.
- To extend this activity and provide further enrichment, ask students to conduct an Internet search for articles that offer tips on making positive impressions during a job interview. Complete a research activity where groups of students research various articles and report their findings, or tips, to the class.

Suggestions for Follow-up:

- To complete this activity in a shorter amount of time, use the video from the U.S. Department of Labor entitled "Soft Skills: Enthusiasm and Attitude" in lieu of the student role play activity.
- To extend this activity and provide further enrichment, ask students to conduct an Internet search for articles that offer tips on making positive impressions during a job interview. Complete a research activity where groups of students research various articles and report their findings, or tips, to the class.

Handout #1:

First Impressions

Positive Behaviors	Negative Behaviors

It can be argued that it is unfair to judge a person according to brief impressions; that may be true. However, when an employer has dozens of applicants for a job, he/she must cut that number down in order to move forward with the hiring process. Below is a list of behaviors and/or impressions that detract from a person's employability. Next to each, explain why an employer might want to avoid a person who represents him/herself in this way.

Applicant wears dark sunglasses to the interview.

_____

Applicant fails to make eye contact with the interviewer.

_____

Applicant's fingernails are dirty and in need of clipping.

_____

Applicant is wearing very heavy perfume to the interview.

_____

Applicant crosses arms across chest during entire interview.

_____

Professionalism

Journal Assessment Rubric

	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)
Student displays conceptual understanding.	The student understands the concept of professionalism with regard to prospective employers.	The student somewhat understands the concept of professionalism with regard to prospective employers.	Student understanding is spotty or unclear; the student partially grasps the concept of professionalism with regard to prospective employers.	The student does not demonstrate a conceptual understanding.
Written ideas are fully formed.	Ideas within the journal are developed and clear to the reader.	Ideas within the journal are somewhat developed and clear to the reader.	Ideas within the journal are incomplete or unclear to the reader.	Ideas within the journal are not developed.
Writing is organized and clear.	Student journal is organized in paragraphs and clearly conveys all ideas.	Student journal is somewhat organized in paragraphs and conveys most ideas.	Student journal requires additional organization and attention to detail.	Student journal is not organized and does not convey ideas.
Student uses good vocabulary and language choices.	Choice of vocabulary is specific, professional, and appropriate to the audience (teacher).	Choice of vocabulary is somewhat specific, professional, and appropriate to the audience (teacher).	Choice of vocabulary needs to be improved so that it is specific, professional, and appropriate to the audience (teacher). Some slang or simplistic words should be replaced.	Choice of vocabulary is not specific, professional, and appropriate to the audience (teacher). Slang or simplistic words replace those that would better convey student ideas.
Student attends to grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.	There are no grammar, spelling, capitalization, or punctuation errors.	There is one grammar, spelling, capitalization, or punctuation error.	There are two grammar, spelling, capitalization, or punctuation errors.	There are more than two grammar, spelling, capitalization, or punctuation errors.

Handout #1:

First Impressions

Sample Student Responses

Positive Behaviors

- ***makes eye contact***
- ***shakes hands and calls person by appropriate name (i.e., Mr. Jones)***
- ***wears clothing that is neat and clean***
- ***wears little or no perfume but is obviously well-groomed***
- ***uses professional vocabulary and greetings (i.e., "Good morning, Ms. Smith; it's great to see you today.") uses good posture; walks with confidence***

Negative Behaviors

- ***puts feet on desk***
- ***keeps hands shoved in pockets***
- ***undergarments are showing***
- ***gum chewing***
- ***wears heavy perfume***
- ***uses informal words such as "dude" and "yeah"***
- ***slouches when sitting; shuffles when walking***

It can be argued that it is unfair to judge a person according to brief impressions; that may be true. However, when an employer has dozens of applicants for a job, he/she must cut that number down in order to move forward with the hiring process. Below is a list of behaviors and/or impressions that detract from a person's employability. Next to each, explain why an employer might want to avoid a person who represents him/herself in this way.

Applicant wears dark sunglasses to the interview. ***It's hard to tell what this person is looking at or thinking; it could make an employer wonder what he/she is hiding.***

Applicant fails to make eye contact with the interviewer. ***The interviewer is trying to get a sense of the applicant's character. Lack of eye contact makes this difficult and sends the message that the applicant does not want to engage.***

Applicant's fingernails are dirty and in need of clipping. ***Basic personal hygiene is expected in any workplace; this is especially important if the applicant will be working with customers or clients.***

Applicant is wearing very heavy perfume to the interview. ***As a rule, applicants should not wear anything that detracts from a professional first impression, whether that be clothing, accessories, or scents. Many people are allergic to compounds found in perfumes.***

Applicant crosses arms across chest during entire interview. ***This type of body language may send one of the following negative messages: "I am angry." "I am judging you." "I am not engaging with you."***