Lesson Plan

Big-picture Thinking

Understanding Organizational Culture

Objective: Students will explore the relationship between individual employee values and organizational culture.

Workplace Readiness Skill: **Demonstrate big-picture thinking.**

Demonstration includes

- *defining **big-picture thinking** as an understanding of one's role in fulfilling the mission of the workplace and a consideration of the social, economic, and environmental effects of one's actions*
- *identifying the organization's structure, culture, policies, and procedures, as well as its role and position within the community, industry, and economy.*

Correlations to Other Workplace Readiness Skills:

- Demonstrate integrity.
- Demonstrate work ethic.
- Demonstrate conflict resolution skills.
- Demonstrate career- and life-management skills.
- Demonstrate professionalism.

Correlations to the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL):

- English: 6.RV, 6.RI, 6.C, 6.LU, 6.W, 7.RV. 7.RI, 7.C, 7.LU, 7.W, 8.RV, 8.RI, 8.C, 8.LU, 8.W, 9.RV, 9.RI, 9.C, 9.LU, 9.W, 10.RV, 10.RI, 10.C, 10.LU, 10.W, 11.RV, 11.RI, 11.C, 11.LU, 11.W, 12.RV, 12.RI, 12.C, 12.LU, 12.W
- History and Social Sciences: WHI.10, WHI.12, VUS.10, GOVT.1, USII.3, USII.5, CE.1, CE.11, CE.12

Instructional Steps:

1. ***Introduce the lesson by asking students to list words that describe the school's culture.*** Record them. Using a site such as WordClouds.com, create and display a word cloud of the terms brainstormed (these can be styled to match school colors and to display in various shapes). Explain to students that every organization, whether it be a school or a corporation, has its own unique culture. While people's main reason for finding jobs is to earn money and work toward something meaningful, organizational culture can play a large role in whether a particular company is appealing to prospective employees.

2. ***Assess student values.*** Ask students to use the Virginia Education Wizard website to take a values self-assessment. Explain that getting a sense of one's values helps in finding appropriate career pathways. Finding a company with organizational values and culture compatible with personal values increases the likelihood of job satisfaction. On the site, each student will drag and drop statements into categories based upon their perception of the importance of each statement. Once a student sorts each statement, he/she will click "Finish" (button on the lower right-hand side of the website) to see the results of the values assessment and to see suggested

career pathways and occupations.

3. ***Use informational interviewing to learn about the culture of a specific company.*** In this mock interview activity, students will ask and answer questions related to organizational culture. Using the cultural profiles of fictional companies on Teacher Resource #1: Workplace Profiles and the questions on Teacher Resource #2: Questions to Ask a Prospective Employer, assign each pair of students one of the four profiles (others may be added or substituted). One student will act as the company representative in the mock interview; the other will act as the prospective employee. Students will practice asking and answering questions based upon their assigned workplace profile. Ask a few student pairs to demonstrate their interviewing techniques in front of the class. This is a great opportunity to discuss interview etiquette such as looking a person in the eye, offering a firm and appropriate handshake, and using appropriate body language, vocabulary, and a professional tone of voice.

4. ***Reflect upon and extend the activity.*** After the mock interview activity, emphasize to students that, when interviewing, it is important that they be prepared to ask questions of the interviewer. Not only is that an opportunity to glean important information about the culture of a company, it also demonstrates to the interviewer that the applicant has done his/her homework and is interested enough to want to learn more about the organization. Ask each student to compose three additional questions that could be asked in an interview situation. Share. Conclude with the following journal prompt:

   > *In this lesson we have explored the idea that companies and organizations have unique cultures. You have assessed what values are important to you as a worker. Based upon what you've learned, describe your ideal workplace. Include information about the setting/environment, the organizational structure, and the people and daily interactions. Your description should paint a picture of an organizational culture of which you would like to be a part.*

Formative Assessment**:**

- Assess student understanding as demonstrated in the class and small group discussions/interviews.
- Evaluate student understanding of concepts within the lesson as demonstrated by journal responses. Use the Journal Assessment Rubric.

Options for Adaptation/Differentiation:

- To offer scaffolding to students and to complete this activity in a shorter amount of time, choose just one of the workplace profiles on Teacher Resource #1 and complete the mock interview activity as a whole group.
- To extend student learning, ask students to use the Internet to research the relationship between cultural fit in the workplace and employee retention.

Suggestions for Follow-up:

- Invite a manager from business and industry to discuss the importance of company culture and how a positive culture is nurtured within an organization.
- Ask students to think about the cultures of various organizations within the school (e.g., student government organizations, clubs, sports teams). Using what has been covered throughout this lesson, challenge each student to identify a school-based organization that he/she feels is compatible with personal goals and values.

Teacher Resource #1: Workplace Profiles

Profile #1: AUTO PARTS DISTRIBUTOR

Corporate statement: It is the mission of our company to provide personal vehicle owners and enthusiasts with vehicle-related products and knowledge.

Additional Company Information: People at this company tend to remain in jobs for a long period of time; there is low turnover. Because of this, the diversity of the company does not reflect that of its community, which is changing rapidly. The company makes it a priority to invest in employee professional development; loyalty is expected in return. Policies related to things such as work hours and dress codes are traditional.

Profile #2: ONLINE NETWORKING COMPANY

Corporate statement: We give everyone the power to build communities around their own interests.

Additional Company Information: This up-and-coming company has a young and diverse demographic. Workers are fiercely committed to the company's mission and values, and it shows in the work ethics demonstrated. It is not unusual for workers here to log 80-hour workweeks. Employees work hard, but they are rewarded in many tangible and intangible ways. The culture is casual yet competitive, and the hours, although long, are flexible.

Profile #3: FINANCE GIANT

Corporate statement: Our goal is to be the most esteemed financial services firm in the world.

Additional Company Information: This well-established company has many lifelong employees. However, due to shifts in the marketplace and in the importance of new technologies, there is a recent upsurge in younger workers. This is beginning to change and challenge some traditional company practices. Leadership is grappling with swift market changes. This is a company in transition that prides itself on professionalism and being respected above all else.

Profile #4: AGRIBUSINESS

Corporate statements: We are a company of people who produce food, seek truth, and demonstrate integrity.

Additional Company Information: This agribusiness is involved in a variety of food production. The company highly values workers with impeccable integrity. The company welcomes constructive criticism and offers employees a variety of ways to suggest changes and best practices. Company leadership does not believe in "top-down" change. Rather, they rely on their employees, customers, and other stakeholders to help them define future goals and initiatives. Company leadership prioritizes work-life balance for all employees.

Teacher Resource #2: Questions to Ask a Prospective Employer

What is the company's practice regarding the training and professional development of its employees?

Where do you see the company in five years, and how would the person in this role contribute to this vision?

What is your company's view on work-life balance?

How would you describe the work environment? Is it fast-paced? Formal? Competitive? Collaborative?

What opportunities exist for employee growth within the company?

Beyond the hard skills, what do you think are the most important qualities for someone to excel in this role?

How would you describe the culture of the company?

What do you like best about working for this company?

How would you score the company on living up to its core values? What's the one thing you're working to improve?

My Ideal Workplace

Journal Assessment Rubric

	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)
Student displays conceptual understanding.	The student understands the relationship between personal values and organizational culture.	The student demonstrates an understanding of most aspects of the relationship between personal values and organizational culture.	Student understanding is spotty or unclear; the student partially grasps the relationship between personal values and organizational culture.	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.