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

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 videos on what to wear to work.

3. ***Ask students to answer the following questions, based upon the videos:***

   What are some reasons why employers want workers to dress a certain way when they are at work? Give four reasons from the videos. (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 accommodation must be made regarding employee dress? (Answer: religious dress; employees with disabilities)

4. ***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.

Teacher Resource #1

Sample Dress Codes

[Company name] strives to embody professionalism in the field and to maintain a workplace that reflects its mission of service and professionalism. Our dress code is part of that effort. All facets of our dress policy are intended to maintain a work environment that is free from distraction and reflects positively on our organization.

Because we serve the public directly, staff members are expected to adhere to a dress code that outlines the components of a professional and businesslike image. Each staff person represents our organization while at work; staff members' grooming and appearance reflects directly on customers' impressions of our business as a whole. Any staff person who does not follow the guidelines below is subject to corrective action; staff who are asked to return home to change out of inappropriate clothing will be required to use personal leave time to do so.

We expect our staff to be dressed professionally. For our organization, that means that men should wear a collared shirt (with or without a tie), dress trousers or khakis (no cargo-style pants or denim), and loafers or dress shoes. Tennis shoes and sandals are not allowed. Women should wear dress trousers or a skirt and a shirt (with sleeves). Women may also wear businesslike dresses, and should wear comfortable, conservative shoes. Tennis shoes and sandals are not allowed. Accessories, for both men and women, should not be distracting.

During the summertime, on Fridays, and on certain occasions (e.g., the annual company picnic), we may break with this policy in favor of a more casual dress code. During those times, staff must use good judgement regarding appropriate workwear. Please refer to the following chart for guidance.

"CASUAL DAY" DRESS	
APPROPRIATE	**NOT APPROPRIATE**
Trousers	
• jeans • skorts • capri pants • walking shorts	• anything shorter than fingertip length • sweatpants • leggings • anything that is soiled, frayed, ripped, revealing, or tight
Shirts	
• polo or golf shirts • jackets or sweaters • plain t-shirts • company logo wear	• shirts with writing or logos (other than company) • crop or tank tops; anything sleeveless • sweatshirts or exercise wear
Shoes	
• loafers • clogs	• flip-flops or sandals (including slides and Crocs) • athletic shoes

In addition to the guidelines for dress, employees are expected to maintain proper hygiene. This includes refraining from strong perfumes that can be distracting and cause medical reactions in others. Hair and nails should be clean and well-kept. Appropriate accommodations will be made for employees with disabilities, as well as employees' religious beliefs in terms of workplace attire, unless the accommodation creates an undue hardship. Requests for such accommodations,

or any questions regarding the dress and grooming policy, should be directed to the human resources department.

Teacher Resource #1

Understanding Dress Codes

Use Teacher Resource #1: Sample Dress Code to answer the following:

Give five examples of attire that are appropriate to wear on a normal business day, according to the dress code.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Give five examples of attire that is not allowed, even on casual workdays.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What are two reasons why the dress code prohibits wearing strong perfume or cologne?

1. _____
2. _____

Why does this organization outline a professional dress code? _____
_____
_____

What should an employee expect if he/she arrives at work in violation of the company's dress code? _____
_____
_____

Why might an employer not want employees to wear tight or revealing clothing? _____
_____
_____

Teacher Resource #1

Understanding Dress Codes

Answering Key/Sample Student Responses

Give five examples of attire that are appropriate to wear on a normal business day, according to the dress code.

1. **Khaki pants, a button-down, collared shirt, a belt, and dress shoes**
2. **A long-sleeved dress with pumps**
3. **Grey slacks with a blouse and cardigan, loafers**
4. **A suit and tie with black dress shoes**
5. **A skirt and sweater with a blazer, low heels**

Give five examples of attire that is **not** allowed, even on casual workdays.

1. **Tank top**
2. **Ripped jeans**
3. **Flip-flop sandals**
4. **Sweatpants**
5. **Leggings or yoga pants**

What are two reasons why the dress code prohibits wearing strong perfume or cologne?

1. **It is distracting to others.**
2. **Some people are allergic to perfume.**

Why does this organization outline a professional dress code? **The dress code reflects the mission of service and professionalism. Employees are representatives of the organization and its image.**

What should an employee expect if he/she arrives at work in violation of the company's dress code? **He/she may be asked to use personal leave to go home and change; he/she may be reprimanded by a supervisor.**

Why might an employer not want employees to wear tight or revealing clothing? **Tight or revealing clothing is unprofessional and distracting in the workplace; it does not convey a positive image of the worker or of the company.**