Lesson Plan

Nonverbal and Cross-Cultural Communication

Objective: Students will explore nonverbal and cross-cultural communication and its impact in a diverse workplace.

Workplace Readiness Skill: **Demonstrate respect for diversity.**

Demonstration includes

- *defining **diversity** and discussing its importance*
- *identifying individual differences (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, culture, race, viewpoints, socioeconomic status, and ability)*
- *showing respect for and valuing individual differences in the workplace*
- *being self-aware and mindful of one's own bias*
- *collaborating with people of diverse backgrounds, viewpoints, and experiences.*

Correlations to Other Workplace Readiness Skills:

- Demonstrate integrity.
- Demonstrate work ethic.
- Demonstrate conflict-resolution skills.
- Collaborate with team members.
- Demonstrate big-picture thinking.
- Demonstrate career- and life-management skills.

Correlations to the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL):

- English: 6.RV, 6.RI, 6.C, 6.LU, 6.R, 7.RV, 7.RI, 7.C, 7.LU, 7.R, 8.RV, 8.RI, 8.C, 8.LU, 8.R, 9.RV, 9.RI, 9.C, 9.LU, 9.R, 10.RV, 10.RI, 10.C, 10.LU, 10.R, 11.RV, 11.RI, 11.C, 11.LU, 11.R, 12.RV, 12.RI, 12.C, 12.LU, 12.R
- History and Social Science: WHI.4, WHI.10, WHII.8, WHII.9, WHII.10, VUS.5, VUS.6, VUS.10, VUS.14, VUS.15, VUS.16, VUS.17, GOVT.1, GOVT.3, GOVT.6

Instructional Steps:

1. ***Introduce the lesson with the following quote from President Jimmy Carter:***

   "We have become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams."

   Discuss this quote and ask students what is meant by both "melting pot" and "mosaic" in this context. In what ways is our country a "melting pot?" In what ways are we a "mosaic?" Explain that a community's (or a country's) strength lies in both the similarities (complementary ideals) and differences (uniqueness, varied strengths) of its members.

2. ***Discuss the unique traits and similarities among students in the classroom.*** Use the following questions to highlight similarities:

    - How many of you are [name of school mascot]?
    - How many of you live in [name of town]?
    - In what future career are you interested?
    - What is your favorite ice cream?
    - What is your favorite pastime?
    - Do you have older/younger siblings?
    - What is your strongest subject in school? Weakest subject?

    Point out that there are many aspects to a person's identity; some aspects are related to culture while others are aligned with individual preferences, strengths, and weaknesses. Bring the conversation around to the workplace. At work (and at school) people need to be able to work effectively with a diverse array of people who have different backgrounds, cultures, beliefs, preferences, strengths, and weaknesses.

3. ***Introduce research.*** As students move into careers and/or postsecondary education, they will be faced with a diverse array of people with different beliefs, customs, and backgrounds. While diversity is a source of strength in the workforce, situations can arise where cultural misunderstandings can occur. Use the example of hand gestures. Ask, "Did you know that the hand gesture we use for "OK" in the United States means "zero" in France, and "money" in Japan?" Tell students that they will be reading one of three articles about body language and cross-cultural communication. As they perform a close reading of their article, students should take notes and highlight words and phrases that they find surprising or interesting.

4. ***Assign articles.*** Assign one of the following articles (or use other relevant articles related to nonverbal and cross-cultural communication) to each student in the class (students may work on this independently or as small groups). Distribute Handout #1: Research Notes to help students organize their thoughts and notes on their assigned article. Explain that students must be ready to share a summary of the article with their classmates.

    "3 Situations Where Cross-Cultural Communication Breaks Down" (https://hbr.org/2016/06/3-situations-where-cross-cultural-communication-breaks-down), Harvard Business Review, 06/08/2016

    "The Shocking Differences in Basic Body Language Around the World" (http://www.businessinsider.com/body-language-around-the-world-2015-3), Business Insider, 03/17/2015

5. **Share summaries.** Ask each student to share what he/she learned from the assigned article. Ask: *What did you find most surprising? Have you ever been in a situation when there has been a communication breakdown? What did that feel like? What are the consequences when communication breakdowns occur in the workplace, either among coworkers or between an employee and a customer/client?*

6. ***Brainstorm solutions.*** Share the following quote: "So Otis Redding and Aretha Franklin were right; it all starts

with R-E-S-P-E-C-T." ("Body Language for Global Business," Forbes, 12/06/2011). What does that mean? What is respect, and how can it help us in the workplace? Use Handout #2: R-E-S-P-E-C-T to create an acrostic poem of solutions (please refer to the Sample Student Response for examples).

Formative Assessment:

- Assess student understanding as demonstrated on Handout #1: Research Notes and as demonstrated while sharing article summaries.
- Evaluate student understanding of concepts within the lesson as demonstrated on Handout #2: R-E-S-P-E-C-T.

Options for Adaptation/Differentiation:

- To offer scaffolding to students and to complete this activity in a shorter time frame, choose just one article and complete Handout #1: Research Notes as a whole group.
- To offer an extension option to students, have students pair up and act out the following situations by using only body language:
    - You cannot hear your friend's voice
    - You want a child to come to your side
    - You want to wish your friend good luck from across the room
    - You don't know the answer to a question someone has asked you
    - You want to tell someone sitting close to you that class is boring
    - You want to signal to your friend that the person you are talking to on the phone talks too much
    - You want to express, "Oh, not again!"
    - You want to tell your friend that you have just forgotten something
    - You want to tell your friend to wait a second
    - You want to tell your friend to slow down
    - You want to tell your friend that everything is OK

  Discuss differences observed as a whole class.

Suggestions for Follow-up:

- Ask students to self-assess their own characteristics related to working with teams. Ask students to share strengths and challenges identified in the assessment; discuss strategies for improvement.
- Build upon the concept of diversity awareness, using resources from the Southern Poverty Law Center's "Learning for Justice" project (https://www.splcenter.org/learning-for-justice/).

Teacher Resources:

- A More Perfect Union (http://www.pbs.org/ampu/index.html), PBS
- Learning for Justice (https://www.splcenter.org/learning-for-justice/), Southern Poverty Law Center
- Workplace Readiness Skills (WRS) Assessment: Virginia Overview (https://www.ctecs.org/virginia/virginia-overview), Career and Technical Education Consortium of States (CTECS)
- Workplace Readiness Skills (WRS) for the Commonwealth: Instructional Resources (https://www.cteresource.org/resources/workplace-readiness-skills/), Career and Technical Education (CTE) Resource Center

Handout #1:
Research Notes

Name of Article: _____

Publication: _____

Date: _____

What is the main idea of the article? _____

_____

_____

With what new information did the article provide you? _____

_____

_____

Identify a favorite (or interesting) quote from the article: _____

_____

_____

How might the information in this article be helpful in the workplace? _____

_____

_____

What questions do you still have? _____

_____

_____

Handout #2:

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

R _____

E _____

S _____

P _____

E _____

C _____

T _____

Handout #2:

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

SAMPLE STUDENT RESPONSE

Realize we are not all the same.

Expect to treat others as you would like to be treated.

Self-examination: consider your own communication and nonverbal styles and how they may be perceived by others.

Patience helps with understanding.

Empathy and respect are closely related.

Counting on each other is how a great team works.

Teams are stronger when they are made up of people with diverse characteristics and strengths.