Lesson Plan

Work Ethic: Taking Direction

and Responding to Feedback

Objective: Students will investigate how taking direction willingly and responding to feedback appropriately contribute to a positive work ethic.

Workplace Readiness Skill: **Demonstrate work ethic.**

*Demonstration includes*

* *maintaining punctual and consistent attendance (e.g., accounting for hours worked, arriving on time for work and/or appointments)*
* *taking direction willingly (e.g., using active listening techniques, approaching the assigned task with motivation)*
* *exhibiting motivation to accomplish the task at hand (i.e., remaining on task and completing the task efficiently).*

Correlations to Other Workplace Readiness Skills:

* Demonstrate integrity.
* Demonstrate teamwork skills.
* Demonstrate self-representation skills.
* Demonstrate conflict-resolution skills.
* Demonstrate healthy behaviors and safety skills.
* Demonstrate an understanding of workplace organizations, systems, and climates.
* Demonstrate job-acquisition and advancement skills.

Correlations to Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL):

* English: 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.7, 6.8, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.7, 7.8, 8.2, 8.7, 8.8, 9.1, 9.6, 9.7, 10.1, 10.6, 10.7, 11.6, 11.7, 12.6, 12.7
* History and Social Science: CE.4, CE.14, GOVT.16

Instructional Steps:

1. ***Review the concept of work ethic.*** Work ethic is demonstrated through a variety of characteristics, such as being punctual, focusing on work-related tasks, taking direction willingly, and exhibiting motivation. Discuss the idea of taking direction as it relates to work tasks. Why would it be important to an employer for an employee to be able to take direction from others and follow directions? Brainstorm reasons.
2. ***Practice taking direction.*** Cut apart the tasks on Teacher Resource #1, place them in a bowl or hat, and ask eight student volunteers—one at a time— to pull a task from the hat and complete that task. As students do so, ask the class what they observe about the student’s body language and overall attitude toward completing the task. Record responses. Discuss what cues students gave to communicate attitudes such as willingness, enthusiasm, disdain, uncertainty, or laziness. What attitudes should employees try to convey with their actions and words?
3. Introduce the idea that part of taking direction is receiving—and effectively responding to— feedback from employers. Use lesson 21, “Praise, Criticism, Feedback,” from [Soft Skills to Pay the Bills — Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success](https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/) (<https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/>), from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy to explore this concept. Discuss students’ experiences receiving praise, criticism, and feedback at home, at school, and at work.

1. ***Research how to respond to employer feedback.*** Break students into five groups. Assign each group one of the following articles (either print these articles or ensure that students can use the Internet to access them) to explore professional advice about responding to employer feedback.

Anne Fisher, “Taking the Sting Out of Criticism at Work,” *Fortune*, December 18, 2014, <http://fortune.com/2014/12/18/criticism-work-feedback-performance-review/>

The Muse (contributor), “Taking Constructive Criticism Like a Champ,” *Forbes*, November 7, 2012, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dailymuse/2012/11/07/taking-constructive-criticism-like-a-champ/>

Jacqueline Whitmore, “5 Tips for Gracefully Accepting Constructive Criticism,” *Entrepreneur*, September 8, 2015, <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/250304>

Jacquelyn Smith, “31 Things You Should Never Say During a Performance Review,” *Business Insider*, August 13, 2014, <http://www.businessinsider.com/phrases-to-avoid-during-performance-reviews-2014-8>

Sheila Heen and Debbie Goldstein, “Responding to Feedback You Disagree With,” *Harvard Business Review*, April 14, 2017, <https://hbr.org/2017/04/responding-to-feedback-you-disagree-with>

Each group should do the following:

* 1. Read the article, highlighting important information (if reading a paper copy) and making notes as necessary.
  2. Discuss the article.
  3. Define 3-5 tips or “takeaways” to share with the class.
  4. Create a short presentation to convey these tips to the class (Presentation could be in the form of a brief PowerPoint, if time and technology allow. Presentation could also be a role play that illustrates the tips learned, or a simple oral presentation summary of the article’s takeaways.)

Formative Assessment**:**

* Gauge student understanding about the differences among praise, criticism, and feedback during the activity in lesson 21, “Praise, Criticism, Feedback” from [Soft Skills to Pay the Bills — Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success](https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/) (<https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/>), from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy.
* Evaluate student responses and discussion while they are practicing taking direction.
* Use the “Presentation Assessment Rubric” to score each group’s presentation of the information from their assigned article.

Options for Adaptation/Differentiation:

* To offer scaffolding to students and to complete this activity in a shorter time frame, complete a whole-group walk-through of one of the articles related to responding to professional feedback, demonstrating active reading (highlighting/making notes) techniques, and discussing the takeaways as a class.
* To offer an extension option to students, arrange for a community partner from a human resources department to come in and discuss the concept of taking direction and responding to feedback in the workplace.

Suggestions for Follow-up:

* To practice the process of giving/receiving feedback, assign a 5-10 minute slot to each student to discuss his/her progress in the class. Confidentially discuss something the student has done well as well as something the student can improve upon. The student should be using the skills learned throughout this lesson to respond to teacher feedback effectively/appropriately.
* Build upon the concepts in this lesson by asking students to complete activities associated with the lesson on page 26, “Oh, Puh-leeeeeeze!,” in [Soft Skills to Pay the Bills — Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success](https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/) (<https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/>), from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy.

Teacher Resources

*Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* by Carol S. Dweck

[Soft Skills to Pay the Bills — Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success](https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/) (<https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/>), U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy.

[The Ethics & Compliance Initiative (ECI)](https://www.ethics.org/)

[Workplace Readiness Skills (WRS) Assessment: Virginia Overview](https://www.ctecs.org/virginia/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](http://cteresource.org/wrs/index.html) (<http://cteresource.org/wrs/index.html>), Career and Technical Education (CTE) Resource Center.